

Oak-Bough and Wattle-Blossom

Stories and Sketches by Australians in England

Edited by Martin, A. Patchett (Arthur Patchett) (1851-1902)

A digital text sponsored by
Australian Literature Gateway

University of Sydney Library
Sydney

2003



<http://purl.library.usyd.edu.au/setis/id/maroakb>
© University of Sydney Library. The texts and images are not to be used for
commercial purposes without permission

Source Text:

Prepared from the print edition published by Walter Scott London 1888
187pp.

All quotation marks are retained as data.

First Published: 1888

RB1588.25 *Australian Etext Collections at short stories 1870-1889*

Oak-Bough and Wattle-Blossom
Stories and Sketches by Australians in England edited by
London
Walter Scott
1888

Introduction.

LESS than a year ago a clever French writer, M. Léo Quesnel, contributed an essay, entitled "Littérature Australienne," to the *Revue Bleue*, of Paris. This essay was translated and reprinted in more than one Australian journal, and considerably commented upon at the time by the English press. Its writer, M. Quesnel, is in a sense the innocent and unconscious parent of the present unpretentious collection of stories written by "Australians in London." As I was one of the small band of Australian writers who received special, and, in my case at least, quite unmerited laudation at the hands of the French critic, it cannot be said that, in pointing out the oversight and defects of his essay, I was in any way actuated by a desire to vindicate my own claims. But when a discussion arose on the subject in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, I wrote as follows on behalf of those authors who are thoroughly Australian by birth and training, but whose literary work has been accomplished in London: —

"What constitutes an Australian author? If it mean one born and bred in the Colonies, then neither Lindsay Gordon, nor Marcus Clarke, nor Brunton Stephens was an Australian author, all three having been born and educated in the Old World. I admit that they wrote and published in the Colonies, and that much of their writings is the outcome of their colonial environment. In that sense, and in that only, are they Australian writers. Henry Kendall was an Australian pure and simple; he was not only born and nurtured under the Southern Cross, but he composed and published his poems in the Colonies, and died there, never, I believe, even seeing the land of his forefathers. There is yet another class of Anglo-Australian *littérateurs*, of whom Mrs. Campbell Praed is by far the most shining example — those who, although born and educated in the Colonies, have made their name purely by writing and publishing in England. Surely Mrs. Praed, Mr. Farjeon, and Mr. Haddon Chambers have as much right to the title of Australian author as those cited by the French or English critic."

Mr. Farjeon was, I understand, born and educated in England, and merely resided for a few years in Australia and New Zealand; but the claim of the other two writers I have named to be classified as Australian authors can hardly be disputed. That they and others were completely ignored by M. Quesnel was undoubtedly an oversight and a defect in his otherwise comprehensive, though far too laudatory, "Littérature Australienne."

It has been suggested by my publisher that a few personal particulars concerning my contributors would not here be out of place. Mrs. Campbell

Praed, so well known to what Mr. Sladen would call “the English of three Continents,” by her remarkable series of stories of Anglo-Australian life, is the daughter of the Honourable Murray Prior, formerly Postmaster General, and always a prominent politician and leading colonist of Queensland. Rose Murray Prior was born at Bromelton, Logan River, in that colony. She is on both sides of good Anglo-Irish family, hailing from what Mr. Froude would call the gentry of the Pale. Her grandfather, Colonel Murray Prior, was in the 11th Hussars, and fought at Waterloo, and his father was a member of the last Irish parliament — a parliament, be it remembered, purely composed of the Protestant gentry, or, as the phrase now goes, of the English garrison in Ireland. Miss Rose Murray Prior married in 1872 an English gentleman, Mr. Campbell Praed, a son of Bulkeley Praed, banker of Fleet Street, and a relative, of course, of the most accomplished and brilliant of our minor poets, Winthrop Mackworth Praed. After her marriage Mrs. Campbell Praed lived on Curtis Island, Gladstone, which her husband had bought. Those of her admirers who are familiar with the graphic and beautiful descriptions of Australian scenery in many of her books will not fail to realise that the future novelist was storing up material while residing, during her early married life, on this far-away Antipodean island. Mr. Praed, having sold this property, came to England with his wife in 1876. In 1880 Mrs. Campbell Praed began her career as a novelist by publishing *An Australian Heroine*. This was followed in quick succession by a number of other works of fiction, none of which failed to excite the attention and interest of the public. Many of these were entirely Australian in character and incidents — such as *Policy and Passion*; *Moloch*; *The Head Station*; *Australian Life*, *Black and White*; and a bright and most entertaining Queensland story, called *Miss Jacobsen's Chance*. In conjunction with Mr. Justin M'Carthy, Mrs. Campbell Praed has written a novel, entitled *The Right Honourable*, which contains several Australian scenes and characters. I am not attempting to give any thing like a complete catalogue of the long series of fictions which she has published in these brief eight years; but those I have named are, I think, quite sufficient to justify her claim to be the leading novelist of Australia. In fact, with the exception of the late Marcus Clarke, author of that powerful but painful story, *His Natural Life*, there is no other Australian novelist, in any sense of the word, who can for a moment be compared with her. Marcus Clarke's romance is *sui generis*; it is a record of the early convict period of Van Diemen's Land, and has little or no bearing on the social life of the Australian Colonies of to-day. But such a story as *Miss Jacobsen's Chance*, or *The Head Station*, reveal to us the varying phases and conditions of existence in a free, vigorous, self-governing English Colony at the present time. As such they surpass anything in current English literature, and for this reason I place Mrs. Campbell Praed as the first of Australian novelists.

The short original story, “Miss Pallavant — An Episode,” which Mrs. Praed has been kind enough to contribute to my book, is an English one. But to me,

at least, even her English stories have a kind of Australian flavour, which is, perhaps, due to the fact that I in fancy see her at work in her exquisite room, warmed to almost Queensland temperature, and with her favourite wattle-plant beside her desk.

Mr. Charles Haddon Chambers was born at Stanmore, Sydney, New South Wales, in 1859. He traces his descent from a very old West of Scotland family which had migrated to the north of Ireland and been incorporated in the famous "Ulster plantation." His maternal grandfather, John Ritchie, was the first shipbuilder in Ireland. In the middle of the last century this enterprising North Briton went over from the Clyde and founded the yards where now are built the big Atlantic liners — White Star. Mr. Haddon Chambers's father, John Ritchie Chambers, was an old colonist of New South Wales, and for many years an official in the Lands Department of that colony. He himself was educated, or as he wisely prefers to say, "schooled," at Marrickville and Fort Street public schools, and in 1875 passed the necessary examinations and entered the local Civil Service. The young New South Welshman was hardly the stuff out of which Charles Dickens's ideal public official could be manufactured — the mild and gentlemanly being with a silk umbrella and a grievance. In a year or two, relieved from the cares of office, which he had relinquished we find him in the "back blocks" with a squatter friend, enjoying what he calls "stirring Bush experience." But even the vast domain of New South Wales was all too narrow for his aspiring soul, and in 1880 Mr. Chambers, then in his twenty-first year, took it into his head to cross the wide waste of waters, and pay a nine months' visit to his North Irish cousins and these three little kingdoms. Returning to Australia, he renewed his pastoral acquaintances, and it was then that he felt his first inclination to put his varied experiences into literary form. Two years afterwards the youthful wanderer reappeared in London. His literary fever was now rising. In February 1883 Mr. Chambers met by chance, on the top of a Bayswater omnibus, a gentleman now well known as an author, who, after listening to one or two moving experiences, advised him to turn his attention to the writing of short stories. The result of this advice was a tale called "Outwitted," which appeared in the original *Society*. The story must have had some merit, for it was promptly reproduced in the *Melbourne Leader*. Encouraged by success, Mr. Chambers wrote a sheaf of small stories, which have appeared in *Truth*, *The Argosy*, *Belgravia*, *Court and Society*, *Sunday Times*, *Cassell's Saturday Journal*, and other periodicals. A story of a murder, entitled "In Cold Blood," treated in a pseudo-scientific and realistic manner, drew a leading article from the *Daily News*. The young Australian next turned his attention to the stage. Feeling his way cautiously at first, he produced a two-act farce at Margate in 1886. Next year a little domestic drama of his, entitled "The Open Gate," was played with success at the Comedy Theatre, London. He then dramatised, in conjunction with Mr. Stanley Little, Rider Haggard's novel, *Dawn*. This play, which was called "Devil Caresfoot," was an artistic rather than a financial success. Mr.

Chambers's next dramatic venture was a four-act original drama, which Mr. Beerbohm Tree so highly approved on hearing it read that he undertook to test it at a *matinée* at the Haymarket Theatre, with himself, his wife, and Lady Monckton in the cast. This play, "Captain Swift," proved on that occasion a great success, and is about to be produced both in England and America.

The sketch entitled "In the Back Blocks" is by Mr. Edmund Stansfeld Rawson, one of the most popular squatters in Queensland, who certainly does not commit the common fault of writing on a subject of which he has no personal experience. Mr. Rawson was born at Wastdale, in Cumberland, educated at Durham, and went out to Queensland in 1864 to join his brother Charles, then the lord and master of Teningering Station, in the Burnett district, where they had four thousand head of cattle. The brothers Rawson pushed out north in 1866, and took up some country on the Pioneer River, which they stocked with cattle, and where one or other of them has resided ever since. They and their homestead, "The Hollow," near Mackay, are household words in Queensland. I would refer the English reader who may be curious as to the mode of life of an Australian squatter to the description of this place and its owners in the Honourable Harold Finch — Hatton's *Advance Australia!* To complete the fraternal picture of these two typical Australian pioneers, I should add that they married two sisters, daughters of an English clergyman, and that they alternately reside in London, England, and "The Hollow," Queensland. Mr. Edmund Rawson is far too vigorous a type of the Australian squatter to waste much of his time as an amateur author. But his sketch is at least graphic and taken from the life, and the story running through it has the merit of being perfectly true from beginning to end.

With regard to Mr. Douglas Sladen, who has favoured me with a story of the Great Australian Carnival, "The Melbourne Cup," I have no need to add anything to the biographical sketch appended to *Australian Ballads and Rhymes*. But I would say that in producing that work, and the larger volume, *A Century of Australian Song* (Walter Scott), Mr. Sladen has made all lovers of Australian literature his debtors. The same work also contains a short sketch of the present editor.

In introducing Mr. Philip Mennell's "New Chums," I have thought it well to present a life-like sketch of a painful, but too common, "colonial experience" undergone by countless middle-class English youths who are shipped out to Australia with the parental blessing and the conventional five-pound note. Parents and guardians commonly forget that Australia is only in journalistic parlance, "a young country," and has to provide for her own sons and daughters, who are increasing at a rate to alarm prudent Malthusians, and all of whom are compulsorily "educated" beyond the usual English standard. What chance, then, has your average English youth who arrives in Melbourne or Sydney with a pocket-full of letters of introduction, and a rooted aversion to drudgery or manual labour? But I must leave my contributor to tell the story. Mr. Mennell was born at Newcastle-on-Tyne, emigrated to Victoria, and

passed some years in the "Bush," whence he emerged to light in Melbourne, and filled a responsible position on the *Age*, the journal which he now ably represents in London.

Of my somewhat eccentric contributor, Mr. Oldmixon, I know little beyond the descriptive phrase appended to his signature. Accompanying his sketch, "Mr. Barcoo at Kensington Gore," I received by the Scotch mail a bundle of somewhat disorderly looking manuscript, which, however, I have not as yet had time to peruse.

A.P.M.

Oak-Bough and Wattle-Blossom

“In Memoriam Matris.”

*[“In vain man prays and tells his futile beads.
Alas! he never heard the faintest sound
Of voice divine in answer to his cries.
He knows full well that when at length he dies
He will be laid, with grief, in burial ground:
If in Celestial glory he shall rise,
Why do the weeping mourners stand around?”*]*

IN my hot youth I rashly penned
A Sonnet of the After-life.
It was the time of stress and strife
Through which the ardent soul must wend.

It was the Spring-time of my days,
When Doubt, like an inspired sage,
With creeds did eager warfare wage,
And looked with scorn on ancient ways.

But gazing back across the years
That separate my youth from me,
These words and thoughts now seem to be
All dim, as through a mist of tears.

For then I saw, with eager eyes,
A coming world where joy would reign,
And evil pass away, and pain,
When man was rid of priestly ties.

While now I turn a *backward* gaze
On visions fled, and vanished hours,
On dead dry leaves and perished flow'rs,
That make the story of my days.

And midway on that dreary track
I see a grave-stone, standing white —
Far off. I see it in the night;
It says, “Thy mother comes not back.”

We brought her from the Austral land,

To this the land that gave her birth;
We laid her cold, in English earth,
My sire and I — and now we stand,

Like aliens, on a dreary shore,
Though once he fondly called it “Home.”
Now, old and mateless, he would roam
Back to that southern land once more.

For there her spirit seems to be,
There lie her babes beneath the sod;
And there, but for the hand of God,
Her grandchild would have climbed her knee.

* * * * *

These verses of the heedless Past,
They echo not my saddened thought,
— I held that after death came nought:
The earth was not then on *her* cast.

Denial now is dumb within,
Without I can but grope my way,
And trust that in some brighter day
Man's soul shall live — absolved of sin.

ARTHUR PATCHETT MARTIN.

* “Beyond the Grave.” — *Fernshawe*.

The Pipe of Peace.

C. Haddon Chambers

I

BERTRAM and Conway Osborne were more than brothers — they were staunch friends. The death of their mother when they were both too young to understand, much less to measure the extent of their loss; the indifference and neglect of their father, a cold and selfish egotist; the absence of brothers and sisters to create domestic cliques and engender estrangement; dispositions which harmonised, and many other circumstances, combined to lay in childhood the foundation of an affection which the subsequent assaults of time and trial only served to strengthen.

A year, so terribly short to the middle-aged, is very long and important in the life of a child.

Only twelve months divided Bertram and Conway, and at seven Bertram was the guide, instructor, and protector, while his little companion looked up to him with becoming veneration. It was Bertram who planned their adventures and directed their sports; it was to him that the younger, and, at that age, frailer boy looked for comfort in distress and assistance when weary.

But as the years went on these conditions underwent a change, slow but certain. At the ages of thirteen and twelve respectively, the brothers were of equal height and strength, but three years later Conway had developed into a vigorous youth, powerful for his age, and an inch taller than his brother. Bertram was, in fact, destined never to exceed the medium height and average strength, while it was Conway's fortune to be gifted in his maturity with six feet of splendidly proportioned manhood.

At Harrow Conway thrashed a hitherto unconquered bully who had dared to insult his brother, and Bertram secretly coached his champion so that they might go up to college together. At Oxford Conway presented a stalwart bargeman with a pair of black eyes for having knocked his brother down during a street broil; and Bertram put the brake on his studies so that the inseparables might have the satisfaction of being plucked in company.

When they returned home subsequently with their triumphs, their father, who was deep in a realistic French author at the time, scarcely gave them a second glance, and returned to his novel. The brothers decided upon a visit to the Continent. They came home, more firmly attached to each other than ever, after rambling for a year; and were then separated for the first time.

Bertram, very much against his inclination, was sent to London to enter political life under the auspices of a prominent member of the House of Commons, an old friend of his father's. Conway was directed for the present to remain at home — which was a small estate in Hertfordshire, known as the Ferns. Mr. Osborne had never engaged actively in politics, or, for that matter, in any other pursuit except that of pleasure; but he was under a promise of many years' standing to attach himself to a certain party, and it was to avoid further embarrassing importunity that he now sacrificed the inclinations of his eldest son. The stalwart Conway, he reasoned, would relieve him of a great deal of trouble in managing the estate.

“Good-bye, Bertie,” said Conway, feeling rather ashamed of his abortive attempt to speak lightly, as he wrung his brother's hand at the railway station. “I shall be most horribly dull without you. The governor's not very congenial society, you know. You have the best of the bargain, for you're bound to get excitement of some sort or other in town. And perhaps,” with a jealous pang, “you'll make a new chum.”

“No fear of that, Con,” replied Bertram, heartily. “I'll meet lots of fellows, of course, but I shall never have but the one chum.”

They had shaken hands several times, the train came up, and Bertram jumped into it. “All aboard!” cried the guard, facetiously, waving his flag. Another grip of the hands, and Conway stood alone on the little platform, looking dimly after the fast-receding train. When it had disappeared he left the station without hearing the porter's suggestive salutation, “It's very chilly to-day, sir,” and drove home, making up his mind on the way to seize the very first excuse of a run up to town.

As he had anticipated, Conway found life at the Ferns without his brother very slow. He further found, upon a little investigation, that the estate, with the assistance of an old and prosy steward, whose probity was *sans reproche*, managed itself very comfortably, and he wisely decided that interference on his part would simply serve to display his own ignorance. There was a trout stream and an abundance of game, but he found such things stale and unprofitable without Bertram. Eventually he decided that if boredom was inevitable he might just as well take it on horseback as on foot. Accordingly he selected a stout roadster, on which he explored the neighbouring country.

On one of his dismal rides he met the parson of a neighbouring parish, who asked him to dinner. Parson Helden had frequently asked Mr.

Osborne to dinner, but that gentleman, being timid of placing his digestion, which of late years had been far from robust, at the mercy of a local cook, had made excuses. Conway being more polite, less dainty, and thoroughly weary of his own society, gladly accepted the invitation.

When, on the following evening, he presented himself at the parsonage, and received a hearty welcome from Mr. and Mrs. Helden, Conway experienced no regrets; and when Miss Helden entered the room and was introduced, his feelings were akin to those of the settler who suddenly discovers that the piece of land on which he has failed to raise crops is richly auriferous.

For Miss Helden was a vision of loveliness. She was *petite*, with a slender, supple form just ripening into womanly beauty. Her small head was crowned with a mass of hair the colour of virgin gold, cunningly arranged to display its uncommon wealth to the greatest advantage. Her large eyes, both in colour and in softness, plainly said "Forget-me-not," an entreaty which Conway decided from the first moment was quite superfluous; while the long lashes which fringed them and the thick eyebrows above — too thick, perhaps, for absolute perfection — were several shades darker than her hair. If her features were not strictly regular they were none the less bewitching for that. Your classical beauty is often apt to lack expression: Una Helden bewildered you with a hundred new charms of face in an hour, notwithstanding that her nose might have been more exquisitely chiselled and her mouth less richly developed. But no one had ever ventured to suggest a blemish in the beauty of the parson's daughter. One glance from the "Forget-me-not" eyes, one quiver of the heavily-fringed lids, and the critic who came to criticise remained to adore. Men may admire the pale, faultless, *spirituelle* loveliness, but it is the intensely human, seductive beauty, such as Una Helden possessed, that sets their hearts aflame.

From that evening Conway found life at the Ferns more tolerable, and he missed the companionship of his brother less, although it is probable that he would have knocked the man down who ventured to hint such a thing to him. But after all, what could be more natural? He was young, and deeply, passionately in love. Cannot a great love for a woman and a great friendship for a man live peacefully side by side in a man's heart? A man would answer the question in the affirmative, a woman in the negative. Not, necessarily, that the feminine heart is smaller, but because it is more concentrative — because it contains but one chamber, and when that is filled there is room for nought else. The sentiment of friendship, as it is understood by men, is almost unknown among women, and they are suspicious and jealous of it accordingly.

Conway was bewitched. He saw Una Helden daily; he would not have missed a day for the wealth of the Indies. The sun might burn up the grass; the rain might flood the valleys; the hurricane might lay low the

forest trees; but at some time during the twenty-four hours the young man would have presented himself at the parsonage. Love at twenty-two laughs scornfully at the elements, and defies them.

The brothers maintained a regular correspondence, and be it recorded to his credit, Conway's passion did not make him neglectful in that respect. He still wrote as warmly and as frequently as ever, but for the first time in his life he withheld a confidence from his brother. It was very unwise, and certainly a deviation from the principles which had always governed their friendship. Conway said nothing in his letters about Una, lest, as he naïvely and foolishly reasoned to himself, "Old Bert might be jealous."

At the end of three weeks, during which he walked, talked, rode, played tennis, and spent nearly all his time with Miss Helden, Conway was unable to determine how far, if at all, he had won his way into the young lady's affections. One evening an unmistakably tender glance, or a lingering, regretful softness in the good-bye, would send him home in an ecstasy of happiness; the next morning he would be greeted as though in the meantime his idol had forgotten the fact of his existence.

The truth, however painful, must be told: Una was a most accomplished coquette. An occasional visit in the season to Aunt Rachel, a relative in London who was "in society," had afforded her opportunities of perfecting the dangerous gift Nature had bestowed upon her — opportunities of which Una had fully availed herself. Conway was some distance down in the list of Una's captures.

"I think, Maria," remarked the parson to his spouse, one Sunday morning as they walked home from church some paces in the rear of the young couple, "I think that young Osborne is, to say the least of it, palpably attentive to our child."

Mr. Helden's tone was that of a man who had just discovered an interesting phenomenon.

"So do I," replied the wife, laconically.

"He is a fine, manly young fellow," continued the parson, after a thoughtful pause, "and he will have a tolerable fortune — probably in cash. It would not be a bad match for Una."

"Not bad; but not particularly brilliant, considering Una's beauty and accomplishments. Rachel tells me that she could number her admirers in London by the score. Now, if it were the other brother — —"

"Maria, I fear you are terribly worldly," remonstrated the parson, gently. "Remember that all things are ordered for the best. Our innocent child's affections" — the fond parents often spoke of Una as their "innocent child" — "will not be influenced by mundane considerations; although," he added gravely, after another pause, "it is of course your duty to give her the benefit of your experience and advice."

That very afternoon Mrs. Helden acted upon her husband's gentle

suggestion.

“Una, my dear, do you think Conway Osborne is in love with you?”

“I am sure of it, mamma,” was the answer, soft but decisive.

“And do you reciprocate his feelings?”

“I am not sure of that, mamma.” And Una's face at that moment fully justified the expression, “our innocent child.” “I don't think I shall know until I have seen Bertram.”

Mrs. Helden, recognising the influence of Aunt Rachael, who was more “in the world,” though perhaps not actually more worldly than herself, felt that a responsibility had been lifted from her shoulders, and said nothing more.

Bertram was coming home, and Una knew it, for Conway had told her. He had not volunteered the information; Una had gently pumped it out of him. She had also heard that Bertram was a “grand old fellow,” and a “perfect brick,” and she had permitted herself to display a curiosity — a childish curiosity, of course — to see the absent paragon.

On the day after the two brief conversations just recorded Conway made his way to the parsonage with a firm purpose in his heart. Ostensibly the object of his visit was a game of tennis with Miss Una; in reality it was to put an end once for all to the miserable uncertainty regarding the relations which were to exist between them. For weeks and weeks she had, in her own pretty, infantine, cruel way, played fast and loose with him. He now vowed that it must end at once, for he could bear the torture no longer. Bertram would arrive at the Ferns in the morning, and would remain for a month, and Conway felt that he could not be the jolly companion that his brother expected if he remained in his then state of mind. It must be Yes or No that very afternoon.

Una was pleased to accord her lover a kind welcome. She was in one of her brightest moods, which made Conway's gravity and pre-occupation more marked. They played tennis for half-an-hour, and then Una threw down her bat, declaring that he was too horribly dull to be endured, and that she would leave him to bore himself. Conway suggested that they should sit in the arbour and talk, but the young lady, scenting his deep design afar off, made for the house.

But Conway was too quick for her. Resolutely imprisoning her tiny hands, he led her to the arbour, and gently pressed her into a seat. Then he stood before her, with brows gravely contracted, and an eager, anxious, yearning expression upon his handsome face, looking into her great Forget-me-not eyes — which gazed up wonderingly and innocently at him — and trying to read the thoughts that lay within their depths.

He could read nothing, poor fellow! And after all, she looked such a veritable child, with her straw tennis-hat bedecked with blue ribbon thrown back on her small head, and her dead-gold tresses escaping from their bondage, that he had not heart to speak as seriously to her as he had

intended. "You are my prisoner, Una," he said, still holding her hands in his.

"So it seems," she replied, laughing. Then, with a bold determination to hasten what she felt to be inevitable, she added, "What ransom do you require, Signor Brigand?"

"Yourself, Una, yourself — to be my wife I love you with all my soul," he went on, passionately. "It began when I first saw you, and it has gone on increasing ever since, until it has become too big for me to restrain. But I know you have seen it in my face, have heard it in my voice for days and weeks. And you have shut your eyes to it, and not given me one little peep at your heart to see if it was returned. But I must know now, dear."

"Now you are making game of me," said Una, pettishly, trying to withdraw her hands.

"I fear it has been the other way," replied Conway, somewhat reproachfully. "But it's time now that the game was called. I must know how I stand to-day."

"And suppose I don't choose to enlighten you?"

"But you must choose to enlighten me," cried Conway, angrily. "I'm not a boy, to be trifled with. The most beautiful woman on earth shall not make a tennis-ball of my love."

Una rose to her feet and struggled to release her hands, but she was unable to, so firmly did he hold them. Her face had changed, and now wore an expression that Conway had never seen before. Her eyes were contracted and their colour was deeper, while her trembling lips were unpleasantly contorted. For the moment the latent demon that lay unsuspected at the girl's heart had broken from control. Una was not beautiful then.

"No, you are not a boy to be trifled with," she said, tauntingly. "You are a man; a great, strong, brave man, with the power and will to bully and coerce a weak woman; a courtly, gallant, chivalric man; in fact, a gentleman."

Conway turned pale to the lips. Releasing her hands, he stepped back, still, however, barring her exit from the arbour.

"I am at least an honest man," he said, simply. "I have not the art of concealing my feelings, nor the inclination to do so. I am not practised in deceit. Because I love much I am vehement in the expression of it. Some people prefer vehemence to self-control, as being honest. I ask you once more, Una — Do you love me? If you are honest you will answer me Yes or No. If you are not honest — I will never willingly look upon you again."

"Another threat! What a dangerous fellow you are, Con." This extraordinary young girl, whose mood was as changeable as the wind, was soft and smiling now — the Una as she was best known. "I'm sure

that you must have practised just a little deceit, for you have never given me the slightest reason to suspect that you are the volcano you have shown yourself to be to-day. Now don't look black, but come and walk in the garden like a reasonable being, and when I've collected my poor scattered senses I'll answer your question."

"You will answer me honestly?" asked the young man, eagerly.

"I will, from my heart."

They paced the garden silently for some minutes — Una with her head bent, and her hands behind her, kicking up the gravel at each step with the point of her tiny shoe, and Conway, his anger, but not his anxiety, having flown, looking down at her golden head, wondering how much of the woman and how much of the child there was in this inexplicable little being.

Suddenly Una paused, and, looking up demurely into his face, said, "Now repeat your question, please."

"Una, do you love me?" he asked, slowly and earnestly.

"Truly and honestly and from my heart I reply" — she stopped for a moment as he bent over her eagerly — "I don't know."

Then she sprang lightly from him, and fled, with a swiftness that defied pursuit, towards the house.

As he watched her till she disappeared Conway muttered a hasty word. The best of us are impatient at being tricked. It wounds our self-love, which is the most enduring if not always the strongest of our passions. There was as much hatred and contempt as love for Una in Conway's heart at that moment.

"Bah!" he muttered again, "women are cheats — and men are fools!" A cynical observation for a youth of twenty-two, but the tenter-hooks upon which he had been kept dangling for the last few weeks had aged Conway wonderfully. "I'm glad it's over," he continued, looking the reverse of glad; "and, thank God! old Bert will be down to-morrow."

Then, to prove to his own satisfaction that he really was indifferent and light-hearted, and not in the least upset, he took up a bat and began to strike the balls over the net. They all went over the net, and also over the hedge, some distance beyond, and were lost in the adjacent corn-field. When the supply of balls were exhausted he threw the bat in the air several times, catching it dexterously by the handle as it descended. Then he tossed it away on the grass, picked up the walking-stick he had left on a garden-seat, and whistling with ostentatious cheerfulness, walked off towards the front gate. As he passed under the shadow of the house he heard a small, soft voice calling him.

"Con! Con! Con! — Conway!"

Conway whistled louder, and walked on.

"Con — way!!"

This time he could not fail to hear. The call was louder than his

whistling, and decidedly more musical.

"I beg your pardon, U — — Miss Helden; you called me?"

Una laughed gaily. She was leaning from a little window just out of her lover's reach, with her face between her hands, and her arms resting on the sill.

"'Miss Helden' is beautiful," she said, unconscious of the double construction that might be placed on her words. "How absurd that you should be the first to call me anything else but Una. Do I look more than a simple Christian name?"

Conway was fain to acknowledge to himself that she did not; but he said nothing nor relaxed his gravity.

"Yes, I called you," she continued, "because I won't allow you to go away angry with me."

"I am not angry with you but with myself," he said, coldly.

"And very properly so. I'm glad to see that you still have a conscience. Con!" — and her voice sank to inexpressible softness — "you should not be hasty and unkind to me. I couldn't answer your question honestly in any other way. You must have patience with me, Con. At present I only *think* — perhaps before long I shall be *sure*. I'm only a baby, you know."

It is not surprising that Conway relented under those soft words and still softer voice, both of which so plainly said, "You may hope!" As he looked up he saw the crystal tears gathering in her eyes, and he thereupon felt that ten years hard labour would have been a lenient sentence for his brutality.

"Forgive me, Una, dear. I'm afraid I was born a rough animal. I promise to be more gentle and patient in future."

"And you will come and see me again very soon?"

"Yes. The day after to-morrow, if you like."

"And bring your wonderful 'old Bert,' with you?"

"Yes, and bring my wonderful 'old Bert,' " he answered, smiling, and tossing up a rose to her. And so they parted in peace.

But Conway, as he wended his way to the Ferns, did not walk on air, as successful lovers are popularly supposed to do. On the contrary, he trod the more prosaic and substantial road like any of his father's cottagers, only on this occasion more slowly and thoughtfully. He was thinking less of the great tear-brightened, forget-me-not eyes, the ripe, tender mouth, and the small, beautiful face, with its halo of gold hair, that he had just left, than of the weeks of coquetry that had drawn him on and ensnared him, and the pitiful trick by means of which Una had evaded the direct reply that his simple avowal of love deserved. He was so honest himself that he could endure nothing that approached deceit in those he loved. Perhaps in this respect the constant companionship of his brother had spoiled him, or at any rate left his nature too tender for a man to live at ease in this world of small and big deceits. The words "Only a baby"

kept ringing doubtfully in his ears. "Only a baby," he repeated, as he passed through the big gates of the Ferns. "And I certainly have no genius for nursing!"

II

AT the railway station again. The train rolls in, and once more the strong right hands of the brothers are joined. They have so much to say that they prefer to walk to the Ferns, and arm-in-arm they stroll along, Bertram for the most part doing the talking, and Conway the listening. Bertram had got over his repugnance for politics, but he had conceived a sturdy dislike for the party to which his father had introduced him, and for their principles, and he was on the eve of casting his lot with the enemy. A general election was looming in the near future, and he had great hopes of securing a seat in the House. Conway entered into his brother's hopes and fears, and listened to a great number of experiences and adventures with profound interest. In return he had nothing interesting to relate, unless he spoke of Una. But that was a confidence he preferred to postpone for a time, especially in view of the distressing uncertainty that prevailed regarding his relations with that young lady.

On the following morning, however, Conway, remembering his promise to Una, proposed a visit to the parsonage.

"Una Helden is an awfully jolly girl," he affirmed, "and a capital tennis-player. I think I mentioned her in one of my letters," he added, with a mendacity very foreign to his nature.

"Did you? I don't remember," replied Bertram, unsuspectingly.

Una was at home, of course. She expected them, and her cunningly simple toilet was more studiously simple and more becoming than usual, although Conway, being short-sighted in such matters, did not remark it. Bertram had met many beauties in the season that had just passed, but he had seen no such original loveliness as Una's. She made even a stronger impression upon him than she had upon Conway when he had first seen her.

Una exerted herself to please that afternoon; but it was not for Conway's benefit, and the young man saw it. He knew Una pretty well now, and, although his passion was by no means dead, he more than suspected her sincerity, and was inclined to form but a moderate estimate of her moral calibre.

"She's the sweetest girl I ever met," declared Bertram, enthusiastically, as they walked home, "and by far the most beautiful. It's a marvel to me, Con, that you haven't fallen head-over-heels in love with her."

"Perhaps I'm not very impressionable," was Conway's evasive answer. Evasion with his brother! Una, you had even then much to answer for!

Unconsciously Bertram felt relieved. If Conway had not fallen in love

with Una, nothing stood in the way of his doing so, and something told him that that was not an improbable contingency.

“I don't think that Una would be a very safe girl to fall in love with,” continued Conway, with affected lightness. His loyalty urged him to warn his brother, while his sensitiveness restrained him from saying too much, lest he should afterwards appear in the unpleasant position of the fox in the fable.

“Why so?” asked Bertram, quickly.

“Because I fancy there's — what shall I say? A want of depth and solidity in her character. She strikes me as being naturally something of a coquette.”

“Nonsense, old boy. You're no judge of women. The child is artlessness idealised.”

A mental ‘Humph!’ — a painful, anxious one — and Conway said no more.

What need to linger here in this veracious history? The story is a sadly old and tatter-torn one: the story of a fair, false woman, with an exterior to love and a soul to hate; a canker-worm hid in a blush-rose. Una fascinated Bertram Osborne at first sight, and she knew it. From that moment Conway was numbered among the numerous fleeting flirtations, and she made up her mind to marry the elder brother.

Conway saw it, and suffered alone. With his love for his brother and his love for Una, it was a hard case with him. In a few days he saw that Bertram's whole soul was bound up in the girl; and then he went out alone, sought a lonely place in the woods, and fought with himself. It was a great battle — the hardest by far he had ever fought, the longest and most fierce. But he came out a victor. No school bully ever received such a thorough and complete thrashing as Conway that day gave himself.

III

THAT same evening Bertram announced that he was going to ask Una to be his wife, and Conway took his hand and said, “Bert, old boy, the greatest happiness that man could have, whatever it may be, I wish to you.”

Conway had avoided the parsonage of late, but chancing to meet Una face to face in the village one day, he was obliged to stop and speak to her. After the awkward interchange of a few common-places between them, he suddenly said, seriously —

“Una, I loved you once, and you trifled with me. My brother loves you now, and you know he is very dear to me. You will make Old Bert happy, won't you, Una? He well deserves it.”

“Indeed I will try hard,” she replied. “And you forgive me now, don't

you? You know I could not control my heart — no one can do that.”

He looked at her a little suspiciously, but could see nothing but innocence and earnestness in her upraised face.

“Yes, I forgive you. If you love Bert well, I can forgive you for not loving me.”

Then he left her, and as she stood looking after him, biting a corner of her full lower lip, there was much of anger and something of regret on her pretty face.

Bertram, like an impatient lover, urged a speedy marriage, and easily secured his own way. In a few short weeks the marriage-bells were ringing. It was a quiet affair, by mutual consent. The bride was a vision of loveliness. The bridegroom was earnest, and a little pale. The best man was calm, and a little paler. And so the irrevocable deed was done, and a few hours later Mr. and Mrs. Bertram Osborne were on their way to the Cumberland lakes.

From thence the happy pair were summoned home within a fortnight of their stay by the receipt of a telegram from Conway, short but imperative — “Come home at once. Our father is dying.”

It was strangely and terribly sudden. Mr. Osborne had gone forth for his daily walk in apparently as good condition as he had been for years. He had been seen erect and firm by some of the villagers, and had received the respectful salutations of several of his tenants with his usual cold courtesy. But he had surprised the old woman who kept the lodge gate by asking her for the loan of a walking-stick, and when Conway met his father in the hall a little later he was inexpressibly shocked.

“Why do you look at me like that?” asked Mr. Osborne, irritably.

Receiving no reply, he supported himself to a mirror, and saw the reflection of a face grotesquely distorted and twisted on one side. The effect upon him was singular; he burst into an hysterical laugh. An hour afterwards Mr. Osborne was in bed and unconscious. “A stroke of paralysis,” said the doctor; “not a very severe one, but the story, I fear, has a sequel.”

The doctor was right. Mr. Osborne had a second and severer stroke, after which he never regained consciousness. He died the day after Bertram's return.

The brothers were shocked and grieved, but their father had ever shown such a lack of affection for them that their sorrow could not be expected to be so deep and lasting as it might otherwise have been. Una wept copiously; partly because she hated events of a dismal character, partly because she thought she should look hideous in black, and the rest for the sake of appearances. But when, upon trial, she found that black was most becoming to her, acting as a capital foil to her gold hair and forget-me-not eyes, she was consoled.

But the world wags on despite the sweeps of the reaper's scythe.

Bertram had his politics to attend to, and Una was burning to renew her acquaintance with fashionable life: not now as the pretty daughter of a poor parson, but as the wife of a landed proprietor of ancient name, with a rent-roll of six thousand a-year. And so the Ferns was deserted for South Kensington. Conway, whose portion was thirty thousand pounds in the Funds, also took up his residence in London for the present, partly because he had nothing better to do, and partly because he wanted to be near his brother. He refused a pressing invitation to stay at the house in Kensington, preferring to set up bachelor "diggings" of his own; but the brothers saw each other daily, and were as inseparable as ever.

Una made her second bow to society under the wing of Aunt Rachel, and was an immediate and decided success. She was beautiful, original, and piquante; her husband was regarded as a coming man, sufficiently wealthy for a young commoner of ability, and Aunt Rachel's introduction was all-powerful.

Elated with her success, Una gave herself up wholly to enjoyment. Her dream of happiness was realised; at least she thought it was.

Some months had passed away when one evening, in the wane of the season, Conway found himself alone with Una. His love for her having long since died out, or been self-slain, he had not avoided such an event. But on that evening he lamented his want of caution, for Una persisted in bringing the conversation round to the days when they had first known each other, before she had seen Bertram.

"You couldn't have loved me so very much, after all, Con."

"Oh, no. A boy's fancy — very ardent and very brief. Are you going to Lady Lessington's garden party to-morrow?"

"No; you couldn't have loved me very much, or you would have told Bertram, and then things would have been very — different."

"Very different," replied Conway. "You would not have been my sister. I think I'll run down to the House and see what Bert is doing."

"If I had not been your sister I might have been your — wife," she murmured, in a tone which left it doubtful whether she was in jest or earnest.

Conway reddened. It was a subject that it was not in his nature to jest upon; and if she was in earnest — — But that was a thought he would not entertain for a moment.

"You showed me plainly enough that you never desired that honour, and I never cared for you sufficiently to ask you twice," he said, rudely.

"Con, you are telling an untruth."

She was looking him straight in the face — a look which made him turn pale and tremble. Una was deliberately trifling with him; perhaps only for vanity's sake; but, in any case, it was terribly bad — she was his brother's wife.

"I never tell an untruth," he said, rising in anger, and a few moments

after he had left the house.

As Conway walked rapidly away his heart was in a tumult. "Fool that I was," he thought, bitterly, "not to have told him that she was heartless and shallow, unworthy of any true man's love. Oh, Bert, Bert!"

Meanwhile Una, with a strange, unpleasant light in her eyes, had sunk into a chair with an unmusical laugh.

"He is a fool," she purred softly. Then she set her white teeth fiercely, and added: "I hate fools!"

A few days afterwards the brothers were alone together in Bertram's sanctum. Conway sat in an easy-chair puffing at a cigar, while the master of the house stood with his back to the fire-place and his hands behind him, with the palms turned towards the grate; but there was no glow to the cigar, and the fire in the grate had been suffered to go out. The most unobservant onlooker, with any knowledge of the two young men, would have detected something very unusual in the atmosphere — an uneasiness and unpleasant constraint. Bertram's brow was moody and preoccupied, and on the handsome face of the younger brother, notwithstanding his easy attitude, there was perplexity and anxiety.

"Bert," said the latter, breaking a long silence, "there's no use trying to disguise it from me; something has gone wrong with you. Tell me all about it. You never keep secrets from me."

"Have you ever kept any from me?" asked Bertram, meaningly.

"None worthy of the telling," replied Conway, colouring slightly. Then, to cover his confusion, he went on quickly: "It is some political worry, I suppose. I'm sure politics must be a disappointing pursuit — when you gain the prizes you'll find them Dead Sea fruit. Perhaps you are tasting the bitterness already. Is that it? Tell me the trouble, old fellow, whatever it is."

Bertram shifted uneasily, and made a nervous attempt to clear his throat. Then, looking at the carpet, at the window, at the book-shelves, at the marble statuette of Psyche, at the painting of Una in a great garden hat which hung over his bureau — anywhere but at his brother — he began —

"I *am* upset, because I have something to say to you that I would give years of my life to avoid saying. But my honour and your honour are at stake, and it must be said. The fact is, Con" (how painfully he stumbled over that dear old familiar name), "I'd rather you didn't come to the house again."

He paused and moistened his dry lips. Conway, deadly pale, sat as if frozen to stone.

"Not come to the house again?" he repeated, in a low, inquiring voice. But he saw it all — saw the deception that had been at work to separate him from his brother.

"No, it would be better not," replied Bertram. "Of course we can see as

much of each other as ever elsewhere; because, after all, we are brothers, and — and have always been chums.”

“How little you know me,” said Conway, with a strange calmness, “to think that I could accept such a proposal; and how little I can have known you, when I would have staked my life you would never have made it to me. But, as you have enlightened me, I must enlighten you. I declare now, before God, who knows how clear of offence my heart is, that I neither understand nor will accept any half measures. You and I, Bert, must be the same brothers” — here his voice trembled in spite of him — “we have always been, or — strangers.”

“Don't say that, Con!” exclaimed his brother, greatly distressed. “I have tried to speak gently and kindly, for my affection for you is as strong as ever. But, oh! why did you not tell me that you had loved Una?”

“Because I saw how much you were bound up in her, and I feared to upset your happiness. I may have been wrong — I see now that I was — but my motives were good. And my love was but passing; it died at the birth of yours. Never from that moment have I felt anything for her but the regard of a brother. You believe that, don't you, Bert?”

“Una has told me all,” replied the other, evasively. “The poor child was bitterly distressed.”

“You believe me, don't you?” persisted Conway.

“The best of us are, after all, but human, and however strong our sense of honour may be, it is better to avoid — — ”

“Stop!” exclaimed Conway, rising from his chair. He knew that a lie had robbed him of his brother's confidence, and of more than half his love; but of the author of that lie he would say nothing. “You avoid giving me an answer, because you believe an honest one would give me pain. But I'd rather have the honesty and the pain than your horrible doubting evasion. In all the past years have I ever been false to you? Have you ever seen a false look on my face, heard a false ring in my voice, felt a false grip of my hand? No! Then why doubt me now? I want to hear from you the words, ‘Con, I believe you.’ I demand them!”

Pale and gloomy, Bertram remained silent, gazing unconsciously over at the picture of his wife. Twice he moved his lips as if to speak; but no words came.

For fully a minute — ah! what a minute! — Conway stood looking at him, awaiting a reply. As the clock on the mantel-piece ticked the seconds away his face became more and more ashen, and the moisture of mental agony gathered on his forehead. At last he said, in low, husky tones —

“Your silence is more than sufficient. We are brothers no longer.” Then he turned, and, with his heart blighted and cold, left his brother's house.

Just six months after the breaking of that companionship, which only the influence of a woman could have severed, during which nothing had

been seen or heard of Conway, Una and Bertram were in Paris. Bertram was looking pale and haggard. "Overwork," his medical adviser had said, and recommended a change, and Una had greedily seized the opportunity of persuading her husband into a visit to the City of Pleasure.

One morning Bertram was strolling aimlessly in the Champs Elysées, occasionally stopping to look in the shop-windows, when he suddenly met his brother face to face. Both paused instinctively. To pass an erstwhile dear friend and companion with cold composure requires long practice. In that moment each of the brothers must have seen how the other had changed, and have read the cause; have understood that if such a love as theirs could die, how hard and lingering a death it must be.

It was a fateful moment. The future hung upon a slender thread. A look, a word, and they would have been re-united. The yearning love was there, and the longing to forget and forgive. But pride was also there, lurking secretly in each heart. Each waited for an advance from the other; and so, alas! the heaven-sent moment passed. Conway suddenly turned and crossed the road, and with a bitter wail of regret and self-reproach in his heart Bertram passed on his way.

They heard a little of Conway after that. There came whispers of terrible dissipation in various Continental towns. He had desperately wounded a Prussian officer in a duel. He had broken the bank at Monte Carlo. (Bah! the bank is never broken!) Then the bank had broken him. After that they heard no more.

IV

FAR away in the heart of Queensland, that great half-explored country which has acquired among Australians the dreamily suggestive name of the "Never Never Land," two shepherds dwelt on the banks of a river which bordered an endless plain. Shepherding, in its old-world signification, is suggestive of green, soft pastures, clear, rippling brooks, a small flock of fat, contented-looking sheep, with gentle eyes and thick silky wool, and sportive lambs, tended and guided by one who carries a crook and is picturesque, and who weaves garlands of sweet-smelling clover.

But very far removed from such an occupation as that was the shepherding known to these world-forgotten men.

A succession of hot, rainless seasons had withered the once fertile plain, scorched the trees on its border, and licked up the shallow, sluggish waters of the river, leaving but an irregular chain of dark, pestilential pools, in which rotted the body of many a starved, thirst-slain animal. Hundreds of miserable wasted sheep lay panting, with extended tongues, on arid, dusty ground, or wandered listlessly about, dragging up the thick, yellow grass roots. Among a small clump of trees behind the

shepherd's bark hut there was a very Golgotha. Scores of dying lambs had crawled to that poor shade, and there left their bones. And on all the lurid sun glared with relentless ferocity, and the burning heat was reflected back from the stricken plain into an opaque and brassy sky.

The two men who occupied the hut, one stretched on a sheepskin, his head supported on a folded coat, and the other sitting on the ground against the bark wall, were both young, and had been delicately nurtured. There was but little difference between their stories — the old story of dissipation ending in ruin. Then, when all was gone but pride and courage, the old world had been forsaken for the new. They belonged, in a word, to that too numerous class of “failures,” the more courageous and independent of which prefer a hard, rough livelihood abroad to a comparatively easy existence of polite mendicity at home. To such hardy “failures” the Colonies owe not a little of their backbone.

The man who sat against the wall was the older and slighter of the two. He had dark blue eyes and brown hair, and his face was tanned and half hidden by a short beard which grew high on his cheek-bones. His companion was a tall, grandly-built man, or rather the battered wreck of such a one. His form was wasted; his gold-brown beard was wild and unkempt; his cheeks were hollow and his eyes were dull. The former was Richard Bell, a younger son of a titled Ulster family, in the male members of which wildness was hereditary. His companion was Conway Osborne.

Conway had been in the colonies for nearly four years, during which he might have worked his way a considerable distance on the road to prosperity. But he was no ordinary “failure;” his downfall was due to no ordinary causes. His disposition had not sufficient lightness and elasticity to admit of his forgetting. With all his splendid manhood, his heart was as a woman's — tender, sensitive, and single — and the estrangement from his brother was slowly but surely breaking it.

He had lost the power of concentrating his energies, and was consumed by an eternal restlessness. His Australian wanderings had commenced in Victoria, where his recklessness and self-neglect had resulted in a severe attack of rheumatic fever, which prostrated him for many weeks, and from the effects of which he never wholly recovered.

In the back blocks of New South Wales he had known both hunger and thirst, and had suffered from sunstroke. Further and further north he aimlessly drifted, until he crossed the border into Queensland during one of the severest droughts the country had ever experienced. The whole colony was suffering under the distress; pastoral and agricultural interests were dead, and labour was at a premium. A great squatter king, whose monthly losses at that time might have been reckoned by thousands, sent Conway to try and find water and grass for some of his flocks. His mission was to save as many as he could, and Richard Bell

was sent to assist him in that weary task.

Conway had been thus situated, seventy miles from the nearest habitation of man and ninety from a township, for three or four months, when two things happened to him.

He was stricken with a lingering, decaying illness — the combined result of rheumatic fever, sunstroke, exposure, heat, impure water, and hard fare, at a time when nature demanded gentle nourishment — and an old copy of a Brisbane newspaper was left in his hands by a passing traveller. Almost the first words to meet his eyes, when he opened the tattered, discoloured paper, were these: —

“CONWAY OSBORNE is earnestly requested to send his address to his brother at the Ferns, Herts., England.”

Upon reading that advertisement Conway had not hesitated a moment. There was now a possibility of that for which he had been pining for years — a reconciliation with his brother. He had no materials for writing, and he was too weak for the fatigue of a ninety miles' ride into Charters Towers, the nearest township. But Dick Bell had gladly undertaken the journey, and posted to Bertram a slip of paper simply containing an address — Conway Osborne, Post-Office, Charters Towers, Queensland.

It was of the expected letter from home that the two men were now talking. Conway was endeavouring to persuade his companion, who had ridden into Charters Towers but three weeks before for a fresh supply of tobacco, matches, tea, and other necessaries, and had found no letter waiting at the post-office, to make the journey again.

“I don't see the faintest probability of a letter arriving for another week or two,” reasoned Dick. “It's scarcely four months since we sent the address.”

“It is exactly four months and three days,” replied Conway. “I've counted every hour of the time. Do go, mate. I dreamt last night that there was a letter.”

“You dream that every night, I believe,” said the other, smiling compassionately. “I'd go in a moment, old fellow, if you were yourself; I'd ride five hundred miles for a letter that would set your mind at rest. But you're still so seedy that I hate to leave you alone.”

“But see how much better I've been lately,” cried Conway, eagerly. “I've been knocking about the place to-day, walking as straight and as firm as an emu. Dick, I feel sure there's a letter, and that it will be the making of me. You know very well that it's not the weakness and pain in my bones that keep me down. Take my mare; she's bony enough, poor beast, but she's in better condition than your nag. There's plenty of ‘damper’ to last me, and you can leave both the ‘billies’ full of cold tea, in case I don't feel up to making it; and with two or three figs of tobacco I'll be as jolly as a sandboy. Now, you'll go for me, won't you?”

“Yes, I'll go, old fellow,” said Dick, after a thoughtful pause. “And I'll bring either a letter or a doctor,” he added to himself.

Two hours afterwards Conway was alone — alone in the parched desert with the starving flocks, unseen by any but the All-seeing Eye; alone in an atmosphere which stirred but to burn; enveloped in a silence which was rendered more startlingly impressive by the occasional fretful yelp of a dog, or the low plaintive “baa” of a dying sheep. To a dweller in cities such solitude would have been appalling, but Conway had grown used to it.

After Dick had gone he felt more cheerful than he had felt for months. Unusually free from the gnawing rheumatic pains, and with the hope in his heart as a sedative, he slept that night long and dreamlessly. In the morning he walked out for a little among the suffering animals, but the implacable heat soon drove him back to the shelter of the hut. There he lay for hours dreamily thinking, a little of the future, but more of the past. His thoughts dwelt in the far distant happy days, when he and Bert had been all in all to each other. For it was Bert, always Bert! They were children again at the Ferns — wild, neglected children — delighting in the chasing of butterflies and the seizure of birds' nests. And if, after a hard day's sport, he was tired, Bert took his hand and helped him home. They were boys at school again, and Bert helped him over the donkey's bridges which beset the path of the youthful student, while he pounded the bullies into jelly. He laughed aloud — so loud that a sheep-dog that lay in the doorway looked up in undisguised wonder — as in spirit he again thrashed the bargeman at Oxford and in his solitude he was merry over their doings on the Continent.

When he came to their first parting, and his meeting with Una, he arrested his thoughts by an effort of will. He would have none of that period, and of the weary days and years of pain that had followed. He would turn down those ill-written leaves, and set a great seal upon them. Rather let him go back to the beginning, and dream his dream over again, finding out and dwelling upon the thousand little interesting incidents which, in the rush of thought, had been neglected.

In such dreaming the first two days of Conway's loneliness passed unheeded.

During the afternoon of the third day there came an unexpected but blessed visitor. A small cloud arose in the eastern horizon; light and fleecy at first, but it rapidly grew until the heavens were hid in darkness. Then the lightning flashed and the thunder rumbled in the west, and a few great drops of rain were succeeded by a heavy downpour.

It was but a passing tropical shower of not more than an hour's duration; but the elements work vigorously in those climes, and by the time the clouds had rolled away, leaving the sky perfectly spotless, and the sun had come out again with unabated intensity, what had been dust

was mud, and the pools in the river beds had grown larger and gained much in purity. The delighted dogs rolled in the cool, wet mud, the lean sheep baaed their gratitude to heaven, and the insects in the trees that had been long silent chirped a glad chorus.

Conway walked out in the shower, and took comfort in getting wet. When he returned to the hut he found his sheepskin lying in a pool of water. An old bark roof that has borne a tropical sun for many months cannot be expected to remain waterproof. The young man's imprudence in getting wet and allowing his clothes to dry on him was rewarded in the evening by a return of the rheumatic pains, during the night by sleeplessness, and in the morning by symptoms of fever.

In the meantime Dick had arrived at Charters Towers within fifty hours of leaving the hut. He found, to his intense disappointment, that there was no letter for his mate. But learning from the postmaster that the English mail was due in Brisbane that day, and that packets by it would reach Charters Towers only thirty hours later, he determined to wait, on the chance of there being a letter for Conway. In any case his horse required a good rest before commencing the return journey. An accident on the railway line and a breakdown of the coach occasioned a delay of a full day in the arrivals of the mails at Charters Towers; but Dick felt he was amply compensated when a letter was handed him directed to Conway Osborne.

Then he lost no time in starting for home; and as he had been away for many hours longer than he had intended, he urged the mare to her best pace. When he arrived in sight of the hut he expected to see Conway looking out for him; but in that he was disappointed, and the anxiety he had felt, but tried to stifle on the road, was greatly increased. As he dismounted in the rear of the hut, he heard his mate's voice within, and both words and tone half awed and wholly alarmed him.

“Oh, why does he delay? Dick would not desert me; but he may have fallen on the road, and I shall die alone. God help me, and keep my senses from failing!

“ ‘Where shall we go for our garlands glad
At the falling of the year,
When the burnt-up banks are yellow and sad,
When the boughs are yellow and sere?’ ”

The poor fellow was trying to allay the mental anguish, and to keep his brain from wandering, by repeating fragments of a poem by a bushman,* who in Victoria had been his friend.

“Dick, you've been a good, true mate; but if you don't come soon and bring Bert's letter — —

“ ‘Where are the old ones that once we had,

And when are the new ones near?
What shall we do for our garlands glad
At the falling of the year?' ”

“We're chums again, Bert and I, though the ocean rolls between us; and perhaps we'll take Dick into partnership, if he doesn't stay too long.

* * * * *

“ ‘But I go where last year's lost leaves go At the falling of the year.' ”

“Ah! Dick at last, thank God!” he exclaimed, as his mate appeared in the doorway. “And — yes, I see it in your face — you've brought me the letter.”

He tried to rise to a sitting posture, but fell back heavily again on the sheepskin. Dick saw that his eyes were hollower than ever, and lit with an unnatural brilliancy, and a chill of fear struck his heart.

“Yes, I've brought your letter, and some medicine and brandy,” he said, with a hopeless attempt to speak lightly. “I see you've not been taking care of yourself, and I must start to nurse you at once.”

“Give me the letter, Dick,” demanded the sick man, hungrily.

When it was placed in his hands, he gazed with dim, fond eyes at the well-remembered handwriting; and while Dick gently raised his pillow by adding a saddle-cloth, he covertly kissed the envelope.

“Open it for me,” he pleaded, for his hands were trembling like an aspen-leaf.

When he had performed this service, and given the sufferer some brandy, Dick walked out of the hut to leave the brothers together, and stood in the sun, gazing at the distant mirage, but seeing nothing but a red darkness. Presently he heard the weak voice calling him.

“It's no use, Dick. I can't read it. I can scarcely see. You are so read it for me.”

Then Dick — the wild, intractable Dick Bell — sat on the ground by his friend's side, and, spreading out the letter, read in a husky and oft-broken voice: —

THE FERNS, *27 October* 188 — .

“MY DEAR LONG-LOST BROTHER AND CHUM, —

Ever since I last heard of you, I have been instituting unceasing inquiries, and making every effort to find you, for I feared that, having lost your fortune, you might be in want of the necessary, which I might possibly have the happiness of conveying to you in secret. But for the last twenty months, in particular, the impossibility of seeing you, and of

holding your hand and imploring your forgiveness, has been a torture to me by night and day; for during that time I have known how deeply I have injured you.

“At last I heard that you had been seen and recognised in a country town in New South Wales, and then I directed that the advertisement, which I conclude you must have seen, although the address sent was not in your handwriting, should be inserted in all the Australian papers. When I received that address I almost decided to go to you instead of writing; but I thought it possible that you would see in the advertisement my longing to beg your forgiveness, and that your grand old brotherly heart being willing to take me back, you might have started for England, in which case I should have missed you. And so I have stayed at home at the Ferns waiting for you. But if it turns out that the mountain won't come to Mahomet — to effect which I enclose a bank draft in case you have not struck gold in Australia — then, most assuredly, Mahomet will go to the mountain.

“It was only on her death-bed that Una opened my eyes, and showed me how you and I had been parted by a lie. She died last Christmas year of inflammation of the lungs, brought on by a cold neglected in her mad race after pleasure. She could not have loved me very much, the poor child's nature was too vain and shallow. Her wickedness has given us years of pain, but if you will forgive my iniquity in doubting you — which must remain a life-long reproach within me — and take me back as your ‘old chum’ again, we will deal gently with her memory, Con, for God knows what imperfect creatures we all are.

“You will come back to me, Con; I know you will. Only one doubt — the shame of it burns me as I write — has ever come between us, and it was mine. But as you read this your brother's fault is forgiven. You are taught to forgive him seventy times — his one offence was equal to seventy; but your heart's forgiveness is big enough to cover it, and he will offend no more. Come to me; come to me without a moment's delay. I shall be counting each hour. Come to me, Con; I cannot live apart from you longer. All my own interests have been abandoned, and at thirty, without you, I am an old man.

“This is written in our old ‘barrack;’ there are two guns of yours on the wall, and a fishing-rod standing in the corner over there. The covers are teeming with partridges, and the stream is alive with trout. Make haste, old fellow, and come home! See here! I have a jar at hand of tobacco, our own particular mixture — your invention, you remember, at Oxford. Happy thought! we'll smoke a loving pipe together. There! I've charged my briar with it, and rolled up a pipeful in silver paper, which I'll flatten out and enclose with this letter. I fear it will be dust when it reaches you, but never mind that. Put it in your pipe and say, ‘Old Bert had behaved like a scoundrel to me, but I bury my just resentment, and from my soul

forgive him, and with him now I smoke the Pipe of Peace.' And when you have smoked it faithfully out, start up and come to me.

"And may God bless you, and guide you in safety home to

"Your ever-remorseful but ever-loving

"Brother and friend,

"BERT OSBORNE."

As Dick finished reading he caught his breath in an irrepressible sob. Conway had listened with his face concealed by his poor wasted hands, weeping silently like a weary child.

"My pipe, Dick." And Dick, knowing what was required of him, carefully opened the little silver paper, and poured the dry, dusty tobacco it contained into his mate's well-used clay pipe, pausing once in the delicate task to brush the blinding moisture from his sight with the back of his brown hand. Then he knelt on the ground, gently raised his companion, and, supporting him with one strong arm, gave him the pipe and struck a light for him. Weakly but eagerly Conway drew the smoke from the pipe of peace, and weakly and brokenly, but oh! so earnestly, he spoke to his mate the while.

"Tell him — I smoked it, Dick — for you must go — and tell him everything — — I know — you'll go, Dick — I don't want your word — you're so good — next in my heart — to my brother. He'll be — your friend. Tell him — how much I forgave him — as God — will forgive me — and how much — how much I loved him — — The partnership's broken — but only for a time — — Dick — mate — it's not very hard."

The pipe of peace so faithfully and lovingly smoked fell from his hand, and more heavily the dying man lay in the arms of his sobbing friend.

"Bert — there you are — dear old fellow! You'll like Dick — and perhaps talk of me — — I've smoked it all — right out — and we're — old chums again — Bert — real — dear — old chums for ever."

A great, long-drawn sigh, and the tired life slipped away.

* Adam Lindsay Gordon.

Miss Pallavant.

An Episode.

Mrs. Campbell Praed

Author of An Australian Heroine; Policy and Passion; Nadine; Ariane, etc.

WAYE HOUSE, WOODFORDSHIRE, *June 28th.*

I came down here a few days ago on a visit to my friends the Laudes. One always says "down here," though, in reality, "here" is a Midland county to the north of London. Mr. Laude is both rector and squire of Waye, a combination described by Sydney Smith, I think, under the term of "squarson." Mr. Laude is more of the squire than the parson. He pays a curate to perform his clerical duties, and devotes himself to the management of his farms, most of which he has upon his hands, to hunting and shooting, to pottering about the garden, and to other occupations befitting a country gentleman. He considers that he fulfils his priestly obligations by cottering a few favoured sick people, and preaching one sermon on Sunday. Mr. Laude frankly owns that it was not his vocation to become a clergyman. He likes farming much better than preaching. He enjoys his mild hunting in winter, and his much milder shooting — for Waye is in a shoemaking county where poachers abound — in September. He enjoys, too, his month in London during the season, when he and Mrs. Laude and their daughter Sissy go up to an hotel in Albemarle Street, and to the picture galleries and the Row and the more classical theatres — Mr. Laude draws the line at the Gaiety and Ascot and Sandown; he does not object to the Lyceum and Hurlingham. They always go to London in the middle of May. Mr. Laude likes to be back at Waye before the hay is ready for cutting and the strawberries are ripe. No one ever thought of finding fault with Mr. Laude for neglecting his duties. He pays his curate at a higher rate than most rectors, and Waye is only a small parish. Besides, everyone knows that Mr. Laude is very fairly off, and it is not to be supposed that a gentleman with an income of three thousand a-year will be contented to grind away among

poor people. He is very popular with the neighbouring gentry, and he always has a cheery word for the farmers. He is a short, spare, wiry old gentleman of between sixty and seventy, with a clean-shaven face, a Roman nose, and snow-white hair, riding as light a weight as a boy, and taking his fences as pluckily as his son, Captain Tom. Mrs. Laude is large, stout, placid, comely, and well preserved. I never knew her utter a cross word, and yet I am quite aware that she rules her husband and her household. She walks about the lawn with a little spud, uprooting plantains as she goes, and she too is interested in the farms, but in a distant, superior sort of fashion, and takes great pride in her roses and her grape-house. She is on excellent terms with their nearest great neighbours, the Lord-lieutenant and his family, and lets us know it in a well-bred manner. She never says anything clever, and she finishes up most of her remarks with a little far laugh, designed, it would seem, to give them point. She frequently takes Mr. Laude to task for small social lapses.

The Laudes' only daughter, Sissy, is a fresh, frank specimen of the English country miss, who, I confess, does not inspire me with any particular enthusiasm. She is slim and fair, and has been enough in London to have studied the approved fashion of squaring out her elbows and buckling in her waist. Mrs. Laude has done her duty to Sissy. She presented her last year, though they were only their usual month in London, and then she took her abroad for three months. Sissy came home with a large bundle of photographs, a travelled air, and a store of tourist anecdotes, in which the inevitable Italian Count figured, and in which there were many jokes about papa's John Bull tendencies. The Laudes, however, rather prided themselves upon being persons of light and leading, above paltry prejudice, not in the least Philistine or insular. Of course they are Tories. No one in Woodfordshire — no county person, that is to say, — could possibly be a Liberal, “on account of that dreadful Bradlaugh and the shoemakers and dissenters, don't you know?” So they have very strong anti-Irish views, and Mr. Laude talks of Mr. Gladstone as if he were an arch-fiend set loose to work the ruin of country squires and of England.

Sissy does not go in for politics. She has two or three dear little families of geese and goslings, which she tends most carefully, and she has her dachshunds and fox terriers, and she has also the flowers to arrange for the dining table and the drawing-room; antimacassars to see to, and then she teaches in the Sunday school, and is great on lawn-tennis, and has all the summer garden parties to think of and sundry penny readings to organise. Sissy is a very busy young woman.

The Laudes have two sons. The youngest is on a cattle-ranch in America. I mention him first to get him out of the way. There is more to say about the eldest, Captain Tom Laude, who is in a cavalry regiment,

and has been engaged for the last six months to the Honourable Henrietta Pallavant, daughter of General Lord Pallavant, who was commandant at Gibraltar or some place where Tom Laude's regiment was stationed.

Miss Pallavant is said to be a beauty, and has been very much admired. I have often heard of her, and was surprised that she should content herself with so comparatively insignificant a *parti* as Tom Laude; but she is over thirty, as Debrett testifies — rather older than Tom — and no doubt thinks it is time that she settled herself. The Laudes were at first very pleased at the engagement, especially when, through the Pallavant influence, Tom got a staff appointment; but now that the wedding is coming near, and the settlements are being prepared, I fancy they are less delighted. The marriage is fixed to take place a month hence, but the settlements are not signed yet, and from what I hear, there is little probability of the respective fathers coming to an agreement. Mrs. Laude looks a good deal worried over the business. She was alone when I arrived the other day, and I could not help telling her that I feared her London dissipations had been too much for her. They had just returned from the annual month's season.

“Oh, my dear, it isn't that,” she said.

We were in the cosy hall, with its big Japanese screen shutting off the entrance door, its cane chairs, and couches carefully covered, so that dirty boots should do no injury, its litter of newspapers, old gloves, gardening implements, parish basket, and so forth, which gives it a homely, comfortable appearance. Waye House is quite a type of English middle-class comfort and respectability. It is one of those modern-old houses, square, with casements and mahogany furniture — a cross between a rectory and a hall, and which would be ugly if it were not so homelike and so unpretentious. The whole establishment is in keeping. There is one man-servant, and the coachman comes in to wait when there are visitors. The china is old Chelsea and Worcester, and there are two or three ancestral portraits of worthy-looking squires and dames, which don't go back further than the Third George; and they are always very particular about dressing for dinner, except when there is a school treat or a penny reading or an early service which the rector is obliged to attend.

Mrs. Laude began to pour out the tea, carefully creaming and sugaring the cup she handed me. “One lump or two, dear? It's this engagement of Tom's. How could one possibly enjoy London with one's boy's happiness at stake, and the lawyers bothering one all the time?”

“I hope there's nothing wrong,” I said. “Settlements are always tiresome when it comes to the point.”

“It's Lord Pallavant who is tiresome,” replied Mrs. Laude. “He seems to think he is to get everything and give nothing. We are to provide for his daughter, and to be content with nothing more than the honour of the

connection! Mr. Laude's back is up, and he won't give in. Lord Pallavant won't give in either, and really things are at a deadlock. It's fearfully hard on Tom, who is wildly in love, and is all for taking the law into his own hands and marrying without any settlements."

"There's no fear of Miss Pallavant agreeing to that," said Mr. Laude, who had come in while his wife was speaking. "How do you do, Mrs. Ellison. Very glad to see you again at Waye. Hope the last book was a success. Now, don't you go making us the text of a philosophical essay — British Philistinism in the county — that sort of thing, you know," he added, parenthetically, as he dropped a lump of sugar into his tea. "You may do that if you like with Miss Pallavant. I should say that there's material for a dozen novels and a hundred essays on our social system in her."

"I'm longing to see her" was my reply. "I am told she is so handsome."

"Oh yes, she is very handsome," grudgingly assented Mr. Laude; "and she has a way with her that takes you whether you like it or not. She makes you think about her. But between ourselves, Mrs. Ellison, I suspect that Miss Pallavant is playing her own game and not Tom's."

"Oh, Thomas!" said Mrs. Laude with her uneasy little laugh, "I don't think it's fair to say that; and she is staying in the house too."

"Well, well!" said Mr. Laude, "You know that you think the same, wife, and you are dying to open your heart to Ruth Ellison, who is like one of the family, and as safe as a house. Take my word for it, Miss Pallavant will get a telegram in a day or two saying that she had better be at home till the settlements are arranged, and she will go. I don't know that I shall break my heart if this difficulty about the money upsets the marriage. I shall be sorry for Tom, of course, and for the wife who thought it a fine thing for her boy to marry Lord Pallavant's daughter; but it always went against the grain with me to think of my son having to say 'Thank you' for another man's leavings."

I knew to what Mr. Laude alluded. Three or four years ago Miss Pallavant had been engaged to the Earl of Lackford, and had been jilted by him. The affair had taken place at Rome, and had made a good deal of talk. Lord Lackford had been blamed, but there were people who insinuated unkind things about Miss Pallavant. In general she was the object of contemptuous pity. The charitable declared that mischief had been made by the gentleman's mother, who wished him to marry another lady. Anyhow, the engagement had been suddenly broken off, and with very little explanation. Lord Lackford went abruptly away from Rome, leaving a letter behind him. Miss Pallavant was stricken with brain fever, and before she got well again Lord Lackford had married the lady of his mother's choice. I had almost forgotten the story. It came suddenly to my mind now, and I said, thoughtlessly, "Oh, I saw in the *Morning Post* a few days ago that Lady Lackford is lying dangerously ill in her house in

Bruton Street.”

Mr. and Mrs. Laude exchanged glances. “She is in a galloping consumption,” said Mrs. Laude, gravely. “It has been known for some weeks that she could not live. But that could not make any difference to Miss Pallavant — after Lord Lackford's behaviour — — ”

She stopped suddenly. There was a sound of voices outside. Sissy Laude ran in, carrying a tennis-racquet. “We have come back,” she said. “Henrietta was tired, and Tom insisted on our leaving before anyone else. Engaged people are so tiresome. Oh, Mrs. Ellison, how do you do!” and there was a buzz of greeting and a fresh brew of tea, in the midst of which Miss Pallavant and Captain Tom entered.

She was certainly a striking-looking woman — tall, dark, slow in movement, and extremely graceful. She had soft, deep, violet eyes, jet black hair, a clear, pale complexion, and a fascinating, mysterious smile. She had a look of high fashion, and the air of expecting admiration as her due, though her supreme indifference to it was also remarkable. I have never cared much for the “professional beauty” type. Miss Pallavant distinctly belonged to it, but she was very much more than the conventional “beauty.” She was full of suggestiveness. Her face and manner indicated drama.

We were introduced to each other. She looked at me with more interest than I could have supposed myself capable of arousing, gave me a sweet smile, and said one or two pretty things about my books, and her pleasure at making my acquaintance. Then she subsided into a chair, and gently patted Sissy's dachshund. Captain Tom, a fine, soldier-like fellow, with a curled moustache, and, just now, a fiercely melancholy expression, hovered about her, waiting upon her, bringing her tea and strawberries, and receiving hardly a glance, and only a languid word of thanks in return. Presently she looked up at him. “Would you mind asking if there are any second-post letters for me?”

He obeyed. There were some. They had been given to Miss Pallavant's maid.

“Why weren't they put here?” he said, rather angrily.

“Henrietta always likes to have her letters taken to her room,” softly replied Mrs. Laude; and just then they were brought in.

Miss Pallavant read them through, all except one, which she laid on her lap. Tom was watching her with ill-concealed anxiety. I watched her too, and saw her give a little start as she tore open an outer envelope, and looked at an inner one, which she did not open. She vouchsafed no comment on the other letters.

“I think I'll go and take off my things,” she said, rising. “It must be nearly dressing-time.”

Tom opened the door, and said something to her in a low tone.

“Oh, no, nothing,” she answered, and moved away.

It still wanted an hour to dinner, and Mrs. Laude suggested a stroll. To my surprise Tom came out with us, and attached himself to me. He evidently did not imagine that Miss Pallavant would return. We had once been great friends, Tom and I; indeed, about five years ago, in the earlier time of my widowhood, Tom was in love with me, as young men have a knack of being with women considerably older than themselves. It was a phase, and Tom got through it, and was none the worse, but perhaps rather the better, and we had always been good comrades since. This was the first time I had seen him since his engagement to Miss Pallavant, and I saw from his manner that he wanted to talk to me confidentially. Mrs. Laude was soon at work digging up plantains on the lawn. Tom and I walked along a beautiful old-fashioned border set against a red brick wall, in which columbines, peonies, lavender, flaring gigantic poppies, and all the dear old flowers flourished.

“Well, what do you think of her?” was his first question.

“I think she is very beautiful,” I answered; “and I am sure she must be very charming, or you wouldn't care for her so much.”

Tom gave his moustache a wild twirl. “You are only talking platitudes,” he said. “Of course she is beautiful; of course I adore her. That wasn't what I meant. Do you think she cares for *me*? Do you think the marriage will come off?”

“Oh, Tom, how can I say? I have only been five minutes in her company. I am very sorry to hear that there has been any difficulty,” I added; “but that can be of very little real importance if you and she understand each other. The elders will squabble, but you are both old enough to take your own line.”

I felt as I spoke that I was offering weak consolation, and Tom seemed to feel it also. He uttered an impatient sort of groan.

“We don't understand each other,” he cried; “I don't understand her. Oh, what wouldn't I give to be able to read her own soul! You don't mind my opening out to you like this, Ruth? I feel as if I must talk it out with someone who is safe and sympathetic.”

“Tell me anything and everything you will, Tom,” I said. “You know, at all events, that you may count upon my sympathy.”

“You can make ‘copy’ of us afterwards, if you like,” he said, with a grim attempt at gaiety. “I don't mind who knows about the whole thing. When it's at an end, one way or the other, I don't care what becomes of me if she throws me over.”

“Tom,” I said, earnestly, “you would rather that she threw you over than that she married you without loving you, or loving someone else. If I were a man and loved a woman, I'd let her go rather than torture myself with doubts.”

“And I, loving her as I do, would hold her to me even against herself,” he exclaimed, passionately. “I'm waiting for my sentence, Mrs. Ellison. I

know it's coming. I feel as if the rope was round my neck now."

"But, Tom, if what you fear were likely to be true, Miss Pallavant would tell you. She could not be here now, staying here as your future wife. I am sure, my poor boy, that you are making yourself miserable without just cause."

"Am I?" he said. "We shall see."

He was silent for a few moments. "I won't let her go," he cried. "She could not — and we are to be married in a month! It's not that she says anything, Mrs. Ellison," he went on more quietly, "or that she cares about the money any more than I do. What does it matter to me about the settlements — whether, if I die, she takes all the money from the estate, and leaves Lionel without a penny of income? Lionel is nothing to me, and she is everything. It drives me wild — this sordid calculation, and these legal provisos about death, and children, and all the rest. She doesn't care either, but she won't stand out against her father. Sometimes I think — and the thought makes me mad — that she is waiting, hoping that there may come a deadlock. It isn't that she has said anything," he repeated. "She is always the same — gentle, and indifferent, and cold. She is much more distant now than she was at the beginning. She says it is right, when things are still unsettled. She is very kind, but she won't let me come near her. Why, it is weeks since she has allowed me to kiss her. What am I saying? What must you think of me?" said the poor young man, with a bitter laugh.

We had paused opposite a bench, which was placed in the angle of the kitchen garden wall.

"Let us sit here for a minute, Tom," I said, "and talk quietly. If Miss Pallavant really wishes to draw back, there must be some motive for it. What is her motive? You say it isn't money."

"No; she is not mercenary. She doesn't care. There's another man in the question, Mrs. Ellison; that is the truth. I daren't speak of it to her; I can't ask her; but I know it — I feel it. I think of it every time she takes up the morning paper, and reads the list of births, marriages, and deaths. You know what I mean. It's horrible, isn't it?"

I could not help saying, "Yes, it is horrible."

"Ah!" he went on, "you mustn't blame her. She told me about it when I asked her to marry me. She said she had never loved any other man, and that she never could. She said that there had been some terrible mistake, and that it could not be put right in this world without a wrong to an innocent person. To that she would never consent. Mrs. Ellison, she told me that she had only once in her life known what it was to be tempted of the devil, and that was when he tried to make her run away with him, after he was married."

"Stop!" I said. "You ought not to tell me such a thing as that."

"It doesn't matter," he answered. "She said to me, when she heard you

were coming here, that some things you had written made her long to open her whole heart to you. Mrs. Ellison, if she does talk to you, be nice to her, for my sake. Try and make her understand how much I love her.”

At that moment Sissy came running to us. “I suppose you don't know that the dressing-gong went some time ago?” she said.

“Go away, Sissy,” exclaimed Tom, impatiently, “There's plenty of time.”

“Oh, no, there isn't,” returned Sissy. “The old man's back is up, and he mustn't be kept waiting, Two messengers came over from Waybridge a little while ago. One brought a packet from old Johnson — (our lawyer,” added Sissy, turning to me in an explanatory manner) — “and the other was a telegram for Miss Pallavant.”

Tom started up. Sissy gave a little laugh — the laugh of unthinking, unsympathetic youth, which must have irritated Tom to the last degree.

“That fetches you at once, Tom; but there's no use in hurrying. Miss Pallavant hadn't begun to dress when I went up to her room just now with the telegrams. There were two of them. She was reading letters still.”

* * * * *

The atmosphere of Waye House that evening was decidedly electrical. Everyone was late, though the dressing-gong had been struck rather after its regular hour. Mrs. Laude seemed nervous and anxious. Mr. Laude reminded me of a ruffled turkey-cock; the collar of his shirt appeared to chafe his neck, he moved his head about so uneasily. Tom looked most unhappy. Sissy, in her white frock, and with her little “ways” and laughs, was the only person present who did not look as if something had happened.

“Another disagreeable communication from Lord Pallavant's lawyers,” whispered Mrs. Laude. “I really don't see how things can go on. The demands are perfectly exorbitant and unreasonable. In justice to Lionel it would be quite impossible for us to meet them even half-way. Tom is obliged to admit that.”

Tom gnawed his moustache and watched the door eagerly. Miss Pallavant did not make her appearance till some time after we were all assembled, and dinner had been announced. She came in with a peculiar gliding movement, in which there was much resolution but no haste. She was very pale. Her lips were set, though she smiled with mechanical sweetness; and there was an odd smouldering gleam in her eyes. Seeing her in evening dress, her beauty and fascination struck me far more than they had done in the afternoon. There was something magnetic about her, and I could not wonder at Tom's infatuation. I pitied him from my heart, however, for instinct told me that his doom was sealed.

Miss Pallavant went straight up to Mrs. Laude. “I am so very sorry to

be late," she said. "I had to send off an answer to the telegram, and the fact is that I was obliged to think a little while."

Mrs. Laude gave a nervous stiff laugh. "I hope your people are quite well," she said.

"Yes. It isn't that." Miss Pallavant hesitated, and looked round in a half-defiant, half-imploring way, as if she were trying to gather in strength. "My father telegraphs to me that I must go home to-morrow," she said. "I am extremely sorry," she added, turning to Mr. Laude, "but I am afraid that I must ask if you can send me to the station early in the morning."

"The carriage is at your service, Miss Pallavant," he replied.

"No, no," cried Tom, coming forward; "Etta, you don't mean it?"

She let her eyes rest upon his face in a mournful, reflective manner for a moment or two before answering. "I have no choice," she said simply. "My father thinks that under the circumstances I had better be at home."

"We have had a communication — indirectly — from Lord Pallavant. We expected something of this kind," said Mrs. Laude stiffly.

Miss Pallavant made a gesture with her hands, as if she would sweep the whole matter from her. "I don't know anything about business details. I don't want to know. I have always said that everything of that kind must be arranged without reference to me. I do what I am told; and when my father tells me that it is advisable I should be at my own home till — till things are arranged, I yield to his judgment without question. I am extremely sorry," she repeated, as if conscious of self-contradiction. "I did not send off my answer without having considered it."

"I have no doubt that Lord Pallavant considered the matter also, and that he is right from his point of view," said Mr. Laude, rather grimly. "Tom, you can talk it over later. I think that now it is time we went in to dinner. The carriage is at your service, Miss Pallavant, for whatever train you wish. Come, Mrs. Ellison," and he offered me his arm.

The meal was awkward and constrained. As if by common consent, allusion to Miss Pallavant's departure was dropped. Mrs. Laude talked in a perfunctory manner about my London life, about common friends, and about my literary undertakings. Miss Pallavant joined in sometimes with a show of interest. I fancied that her eyes sought mine every now and then, and that there was a sort of questioning appeal in their glance, as if she wanted me not to judge her harshly, and was wondering what I did think of her. She hardly spoke to Tom. He was trying to mask his misery by a spasmodic effort at gaiety. He started one or two heavy bucolic jokes with his father, laughing at them immoderately, and chaffed Sissy about her admirer, the Italian count. ... Sissy, to a certain extent, acted the part of a buffer. It was a relief when we rose from the table. Tom remained to talk to his father, and we ladies went back to the drawing-room. The windows stood wide open. I seated myself in one of the

window-seats, and presently Miss Pallavant joined me.

“I am sorry that I am going away to-morrow, Mrs. Ellison,” she said. “I have wanted to meet you for such a long time. I like your books. I am not going to gush about your knowledge of human nature, because you must get rather tired of that sort of talk; but they are ‘real’ books, I think, and I have always had an idea that you must be a real woman — above petty prejudices.”

I thanked her for her good opinion, and said that I hoped she was not going to qualify it by saying what so many young ladies said to me — “I like your books, Mrs. Ellison, but why do you always write about dull philosophy and religion? Why don't you write novels?”

Miss Pallavant shrugged her shoulders contemptuously. “I am not a young lady,” she said; “I'm past thirty, and I like philosophical books far better than novels. The people who are most interested in novels are those who have nothing interesting in their own lives.”

“I understand,” I said. “Your life is so interesting that you don't need novels to amuse and excite you. I can well believe that.”

She looked me straight in the face. “It is quite true,” she said. She seemed to be thinking. “I've had a great deal of excitement in my life, and a good many experiences; and I've come to one conclusion, among several.”

“I should very much like to know what that is,” I said, really interested.

“Well, I'll tell you. Everyone wants to know what sort of investment pays the highest interest, in the shape of happiness, don't they?”

“Ah! Your opinion ought to be a valuable one — on that subject, Miss Pallavant.”

“I am not sure. I can't speak from personal knowledge except in the negative way. Some people think riches pay best; others, rank; others, fame. I suppose you'd say the last?”

“No, indeed, though I'm afraid my personal knowledge doesn't count for much either. I believe that the most celebrated men and women in the world, if you asked them their honest conviction, would say that fame is — husks.”

“Almost everything is — husks. I'm certain the only thing that pays steady interest is — friendship.

“Friendship!” I repeated.

“You thought I was going to say love. Does love pay? No; no; no! Do you know what love really is, Mrs. Ellison? It's an infinite capacity for being miserable. It's more than that; it's an infinite capacity for anomalies — for being dishonourable and quixotic at the same time; milk-soft and cruel; passionately revengeful and passionately forgiving — — ” She stopped abruptly. The door opened. Mr. Laude, more like a diminutive turkey-cock than ever, came in, followed by Tom. He went up to his wife and daughter, and Tom made for the window.

Miss Pallavant smiled a curious smile as she made a little motion of her hand, waving him off for a moment as it were. "Our subject isn't a very appropriate one for discussion just now," she said to me. "I wish I were going to see more of you, Mrs Ellison. It is too bad that we cross each other 'like ships on the sea,' in this way. I don't think I'm given to gushing; but I do want to talk to you. Will you let me come and see you in your room this evening?"

"With the greatest pleasure in the world," I rejoined.

Miss Pallavant smiled now at her lover, thus giving him permission to approach.

"Etta," he said, "I want you to come out into the garden. I have brought you a wrap."

She took the wrap from him, a light woollen cloud, and held it thoughtfully for a moment or two. Then she said, "Yes, I will come," and they went into the garden together.

We indoors had rather a dull evening. Mr. Laude went to his study, and Mrs. Laude, begging me to excuse her, and murmuring something about an important letter which had to be written and sent to Mr. Johnson, the lawyer, in the morning, followed him. It was evident that they had some private business. I guessed that it was connected with Tom's marriage, about which they wished to take counsel together. Sissy brought out her bundle of photographs, and we talked guide-book for a little while. At ten o'clock Mr. and Mrs. Laude came back, and the servants were called in for prayers. The lovers, if they may be called so, had not returned. When the candles were lighted and I had bidden Mr. Laude good-night, Tom entered by the hall door alone. He looked haggard, and a little wild, I thought, but he spoke composedly enough.

"Good-night, Mrs. Ellison; good-night, mother. We shall have rain to-morrow. You had better get your hay up, father — all that in the meadow down there. It's packed too close to the water. I've just been down by the river, and if the floods are out ever so little you'll lose a lot of it for ever."

"You've been down by the river!" said his mother. "Was Etta with you?"

"No; Etta went in some time ago. She asked me to say good-night to you. She was tired, and she had packing to do."

Mrs. Laude put her hand out with a quick gesture of sympathy. "Etta is going away to-morrow, then, Tom?"

"Yes, mother, by the eight train. That was another message I was to give. I'll see Roote about the carriage. You needn't mind."

"Things are not wrong, are they, Tom?" I heard Mrs. Laude say anxiously, though I moved on up the stairs so that they might not be embarrassed by my presence.

"About as wrong as they can be, mother — for me," Tom answered out loud.

I did not wait longer, but went on to my room. Sissy followed me and saw that I was comfortable for the night, but I did not see Mrs. Laude again. I wondered whether Miss Pallavant would come as she had suggested. I almost hoped she would not. I had put on my dressing-gown, and was reading, as my habit is, before getting into bed, when there came a knock at the door, and she softly entered. She wore a long white robe, with a great deal of lace about it, and wide sleeves. The sleeve fell back from one round white arm as she held the candle up before her face. She looked picturesque and tragic. Her dark hair was unbound, and hung in a thick plait behind. I got up and pushed forward an arm-chair. She sat down, but for a minute or two she did not speak. Suddenly she threw back her head, and, fixing her great serious eyes upon me, said —

“You are very fond of Tom?”

“Yes,” I answered. “I have known him for a long time. We are great friends.”

“I know that. He wanted to marry you once and you refused. I wish you had not done so. In that case he would not have been so mad as to think of me for a wife. I am not going to marry him, Mrs. Ellison, and I have told him so to-night.”

“I guessed as much,” I answered drily. I was very angry with her.

“I suppose so. He told me that he had been talking to you about me. He told me what he had said. They were things he had no right to say. Still I do not mind. I am going to tell you the truth. I shall not care who knows it, or if the whole world knows it ... after six months. You can try your hand on a novel then, Mrs. Ellison, and take me for a heroine.”

I was disgusted with her flippancy. “Doesn't it strike you, Miss Pallavant,” I exclaimed, “that you have been playing a heartless and unwomanly part?”

“I don't know what you mean by ‘unwomanly,’ ” she returned, in a placid manner. “It is a word that is used in so many different senses; and I am not heartless. I wish to God that I were,” she added, passionately.

“You have acted cruelly to poor Tom,” I said.

“Ah! Tom!” She seemed to be thinking again, and roused herself as if with an effort. “I am not so cruel as you may think. He went into it with his eyes open. He said he preferred running the risk to losing me altogether. I told him when he asked me to marry him that there was only one man in the world whom I loved or could ever love.”

I was silent. There was nothing I could say. I waited for her to tell her own story. She went on after a minute.

“I told Tom this. He knew his risk. I told him that I didn't love him, that I should probably make him a bad wife, that I was only marrying him because I was tired of my life, and of being pointed at as that Miss Pallavant whom Lord Lackford had jilted. Well, he didn't care. He

wanted me in spite of all that. I didn't even give him a definite promise. It was conditional. I said that I would marry him, unless one thing happened before our wedding-day. I was reckless. I threw a challenge to Fate. That one thing has happened. You shall know what it is."

She had been holding one hand closed. She opened it now. Within it was a crumpled piece of pink paper. She unfolded the paper.

"It is true that I got a telegram from my father, bidding me go home," she said, quietly; "but that was not the only telegram I received, nor was it that which made me determine upon leaving this place early to-morrow. I got another telegram as well; I expected it. A letter came to me by second post, which told me that I might expect it. You may read."

She smoothed out the paper, and handed it to me. The telegram was sent from a London office. It had no signature, and consisted only of these words: —

"Lady Lackford died at three o'clock to-day."

I could not repress a cry of horror. She was looking at me intently, leaning forward, her chin upon her hands.

"What if this had come a month after your marriage instead of a month before?" I asked, with grim emphasis.

"I don't know. I ran that risk. It might have been worse for Tom," she said, in a low voice.

We were both silent. It was a curious position. I folded the telegraph paper, and laid it on the table by her side.

"You are horrified," she said. "You think that I am a very wicked woman."

"I am horrified that you can plan the future; calculate on this; act deliberately, while the woman for whom you were forsaken lies still unburied. In common decency — —"

"Oh, I know all that you would say," she interrupted. "You would have me go about with a lie on my lips, deceiving these good people, torturing poor Tom, for the sake of 'common decency.' I thought you were greater than that. You are nothing but the British Philistine after all, and I made a mistake in coming to you to-night."

"Indeed, no," I exclaimed.

"I felt that I must speak to someone," she went on, passionately. "I felt that I couldn't bear it alone any longer. I have never had a woman friend in my life; perhaps that is the reason why I said friendship was the best moral investment one could make. I know what I would give for a friend now, from whom I might hope for a little sympathy."

"My dear," I said, deeply moved — the girl's self-abandonment touched me to the heart — "I wish that I could help you. I would sympathise with you, if I could — if I knew. I see that you are very unhappy. I am certain that you feel more for Tom, of whom I cannot help thinking, than you will let me believe. I could not wish you to be true to

an engagement which you have found out to be a mistake. It is all the circumstances" — I hesitated. "It is what you have just shown me that is repellent to me. I am doing you injustice, perhaps. This terrible news has awakened you to the real state of your feelings? It has convinced you that you cannot marry a man whom you do not love?"

"It has convinced me that I must marry the man whom I do love, and, who is free," she answered, solemnly. "I will marry Lord Lackford as soon as he pleases — as soon as decency permits." She laughed in hysterical fashion. "Oh, I hardly know what I am saying," she cried. "I am not myself."

Her bosom heaved. She flung her hands suddenly across her face, and burst into sobs. Her whole frame was shaken with the violence of her emotion. I slipped down on the floor beside her, and tried to soothe her as best I could. Presently she grew calmer.

"I have loved him for so long," she said, between her sobs. "I have suffered so much. Oh, you don't know what the strain of the past few months has been. I felt that only a miracle could save me — and the miracle has happened. You would pity me if you knew."

"I do pity you, from my heart," I whispered.

"You wouldn't think so badly of me," she said, brokenly, "if you knew. I don't know whether I am glad or sorry that she is dead. Death isn't such a frightful thing. I have often wished that I might die; and she died in happy ignorance. I made him promise that she should never be told, and he was a man to keep a promise, except that one promise which he broke." She said this with infinite pathos. "He didn't trust me enough to keep his promise and be true to me, when that would have saved us both; but I forgave him that."

"You forgave him!" I repeated, in bewilderment; "and you could trust him after that?"

"A woman always forgives the man she loves — when he loves her. He always loved me. Appearances were against me. His mother made him believe things. I will try and tell you how it was. You know we were engaged in Rome. It's five years ago. I wasn't very young then — I was six-and-twenty — and I had led a fast sort of life, allowed to do what I pleased, and to flirt as I pleased. We had no mother, and you can imagine how things were in garrison towns. I was made so much of, and all the men were in love with me, and my father angry because I threw away the good opportunities, and *would* compromise myself with men I couldn't marry. I did it out of bravado, and because I hated the idea of marrying for a livelihood. We have no money, and it has always been dunned into us that we must marry. I wasn't a marrying girl. I liked my liberty too much, and I liked flirting. I did the maddest things. I thought I could hold my own, and that a look from me would keep a man at a distance. I didn't care for one of them, but I enjoyed the excitement. You can understand?"

“Yes,” I said, pressing her hand. The clasp seemed to embolden her to confidence. “There was a man on the staff — it was at Malta. He used to boast, I believe, that he could make me do anything. He had a sort of fascination for me. It is quite true that he made me do things I shudder now to think of — not actually wrong things, but dangerous. It was like walking along a precipice. He was a married man too. His wife was in England. One night I met him. I don't know why, unless it was in a fit of madness. He persuaded me to go with him to what he told me was a place of entertainment. ... You can imagine the rest. I was fatally compromised. My reputation was at his mercy. This was the story which old Lady Lackford made use of against me. She showed her son proofs of what he believed to be my guilt. He gave me no chance of clearing myself. He went away, and the next thing I heard of him was that he had married as his mother had wished.” She stopped.

“But you met again? He learned the truth?”

“Yes; we met in Paris a year ago. He believed me. He told me that he had always loved me. He wanted to leave his wife and take me away. It was not the fear of the world that kept me back. I would have gone joyfully. I would have given him everything, and thought it no shame — yes, it is true. Think me a wicked woman if you choose! But I wasn't wicked enough to stab another woman who had done me no wilful wrong, and who was more innocent than I — who loved him too. I couldn't do that. But, oh, the struggle! — and the awful blank when it was all over! That was why I engaged myself to Tom. I wanted to place a real barrier between him and me — between my love and me. We never met again after that struggle, nor have I had a line from him of any kind till to-day. He told me when we parted that if he was ever free I should know it from himself, and that that should be a sign to me that he was mine for ever. The sign has been given. Thank God! it has not come too late.”

She rose as she spoke. Her agitation was so great that she was obliged to lean heavily against the mantel-piece to keep herself from tottering. She trembled in every limb. Presently she mastered herself, and came to me, holding out her hand. “Mrs. Ellison, will you try and make it easier for Tom? He knows the truth. I told him last night. I'm going by an early train. I have asked that the carriage might take me to the station before breakfast. I can't see Tom again, or any of them. They have every reason to think badly of me, and to hate me. I have written to Mrs. Laude. Mrs. Ellison, I'm going to leave you a legacy. I daresay we shall never meet again. I leave you the right to console Tom. Good-bye.”

She laughed a dreary laugh, and taking up her candle, went out without another word.

In the early morning I heard the carriage drive off, and when I went down to breakfast Miss Pallavant had gone.

A Christmas Nugget: a Tale of the Victorian Gold-Fields.

A. Patchett Martin

IT was Christmas Eve. We were seated under the shade of a broad, low verandah, which overlooked the River Yarra, some few miles above Melbourne. The house was of that class which denotes that its occupant had, in the expressive vernacular of the Colony, "made his pile." It was to English eyes a kind of glorified cottage, being all on one floor, standing in its own grounds, and entirely surrounded by the verandah, in the front portion of which we were lazily reclining in long cane "deck chairs." Gazing over the bright expanse of garden that stretched from our feet to the river, one felt, without entering it, that "Eureka" must be a snug, nay a luxurious, dwelling-place. I, who had grown familiar with its inner recesses, can testify that it was so. In fact, as I constantly remarked to my kind host and hostess, there was nothing to distinguish "Eureka" from the home of a wealthy English gentleman a few miles out of London. Of course I made a mental reservation in saying this, for, despite the elaborate bed-curtains, I had provided an enjoyable meal for the demoniacal mosquito which haunts the willow-fringed banks of the Yarra in numbers compared to which the hosts of Kaiser Wilhelm are as naught. Besides, it was Christmas Eve, and the thermometer stood, in the shade of the verandah, at something over 100 degrees Fahrenheit; while I could fancy my folks on the Surrey hills looking out from beside their blazing hearths on a world of snow and ice. But, after all, these are external and superficial differences. Intrinsicly "Eureka" was an English home, and its inmates English in thought and sentiment, with a patriotic pride in the achievements of our race which one misses only too often in the old country.

It was while dilating on these points with Mr. James Fletcher, senior, the father of my hospitable host, that I chanced to hear the story which I will endeavour to relate. Mr. Fletcher was a tall, powerfully-built, and still straight-backed old man of over three score, and though dressed in good broadcloth, and possessing a singularly self-contained manner, one felt that he was a person who had made rather than inherited wealth. There was also something indefinable about him which distinguished him from a well-to-do yeoman or a self-made townsman in England.

Still, as we sat there under his son's verandah, smoking, I, indolently turning over the leaves of a recent English monthly magazine, said, not for the first time —

“What strikes me, as a visitor, most is the amazing similarity of Colonial and English life. Melbourne is only London with the ‘East End’ eliminated and the ‘Unions’ destroyed.”

Mr. Fletcher slightly shifted his position, and slowly removed his pipe.

“I was quite a youngster,” he said, “when I left the dear old Home, and like enough will never see it again, though I assure you I often long to. But I imagine my life would have been a very different one had I remained until now in Warwickshire.”

“Yes,” I replied, “that may be. I can quite understand that all this civilisation and culture, this busy commercial and political life of Melbourne or Sydney, have not been produced by a wave of Harlequin's wand. But, sir, looking at you now, I cannot realise that your own life has differed widely from that of thousands of successful men in England.”

I admit that I made this remark rather to “draw him out,” in the hope that he might have some episode of his early colonial experiences to relate, which I fancied might be of more interest than an ordinary chapter in the life of a successful man of business in England. As my object was to beguile the old gentleman to relate some of his pioneer experiences, I certainly succeeded; but, although I listened with great interest to his narration, I fear I shall not be able to tell the story again — at least in such a style as to interest others. Mr. Fletcher, however, began somewhat in this way —

“You will please remember that for many years I passed through life without a surname. It was from no desire on my part to hide my identity; but it was a common habit on the gold-fields to call one another by our Christian names, or by a nickname. A ‘Mister’ was almost as uncommon as a ‘bell-topper.’ I was known for a dozen years at least as ‘Long Jim,’ and at last almost forgot that I had any other name to go by. Those were the days of the old Eureka Stockade. Ah! I forgot, you don't know the story; but I must tell you some other time. This house is called ‘Eureka,’ a name known to every Australian digger, for it calls up the time when, on Old Ballarat, the miners rose in arms against Sir Charles Hotham's soldiers, and though they got the worst of it, the liberties of the community were then won.

“I am,” continued Mr. Fletcher, “what you in England would call a Tory, or rather a Tory Democrat; but knowing what I do of the ‘early days’ on Ballarat, I sympathise entirely with those who rose against the local government of the day. But enough of the ‘Eureka.’”

I remembered that Mr. Fletcher, a day or two before, had introduced me to a big, burly, one-armed man, in Collins Street, whose name I have forgotten, but who, he told me, held the high office of Speaker of the

Assembly, although he had lost his arm while leading the Ballarat rioters. This, I infer, was this same story of the "Eureka."

"Well," continued Mr. Fletcher, "I was known only as 'Long Jim,' and my son, who mightn't thank me for telling you all this, was called, p'raps to distinguish him from me, and p'raps because he was always hopping and skipping about, 'Kangaroo Jim.' "

When I heard that Mr James Fletcher, junior, who was somehow more sophisticated than his worthy father, more like the conventional well-to-do Britisher, and who was, besides, a Member of Parliament, and a churchwarden to boot, had gone by the sobriquet of "Kangaroo Jim," it seemed to throw more light on the social life of the Victorian gold-fields than I had been able to glean from a careful perusal of the voluminous writings of the industrious Mr. James Bonwick.

"Now, this story," continued the old gentleman, "more closely concerns my son than it does myself; but, perhaps, you won't refer to it unless he leads trumps. Won't you help yourself? — the whiskey's near your corner."

I could not fail to notice that as Mr. Fletcher, senior, proceeded, his language seemed to assume "the tone of other days." The hint not to broach this little family history to the M.L.A. and church-warden was not lost upon me, nor the suggestion — startingly like a bribe — to help myself to the excellent, if somewhat fiery, beverage.

"It's over a quarter of a century ago," continued the old man — "Lord! how time slips by! I was then in my prime — a hale, strong, hearty man of forty — and Jim, that is my son, was a slip of a lad of, maybe, sixteen or seventeen. His mother was dead — got washed out of the tent in a storm one night, and she and Jim's little sister, sir, died from exposure; and the boy and I were left to shift for ourselves."

Here Mr. Fletcher reached out and helped himself somewhat liberally to the potent spirit, paused a moment, sighed heavily, and drank off the contents of his tumbler in a gulp.

"Well, after this young Jim and I," he continued, "tried our luck wherever there was a 'rush.' Somehow we didn't find any. We had settled down for a bit at Cain's Gully — not a pretty name, but the old diggers were fond of Murderer's Flats, Devil's Creeks — anything strong and theological. Cain's Gully was near Break-o'-Day, and we used to go down to the township, at least once a-week, for stores and to see the 'boys.'

"Break-o'-Day," added Mr. Fletcher, "was quite a thriving township. Why, I've heard the 'Inimitable Thatcher' sing there in the parlour of the 'Bull and Mouth.' "

I would have liked to hear, but thought it better not to inquire, who this Homer of the gold-fields was, whose very advent to a place singled it out as one of importance and distinction.

“Ah!” continued the old man, after a pause, during which he carefully filled his pipe, “they were happy times! Next to us on one side worked a couple of swells who had been to Oxford, and on the other side a couple of scoundrels, who had graduated at quite a different kind of University. But we didn’t inquire into pedigrees in the early days.”

Mr. Fletcher here made another pause, which he turned to good account by reaching for the whiskey after which little ceremony he proceeded, without interruption, with his narrative.

“One day we heard that a stranger, accompanied by an old woman and a yearling child, had taken possession of the tumble-down shanty on the old disused track to Break-o'-Day.

“This old hut was close to Hangman's Flat, and the place bore the reputation of being haunted — — ”

I looked up at the narrator.

“By bushrangers,” he added; “and though it was a short cut to Break-o'-Day, only for the big gully to be crossed, very few cared to go that way. So the new-comer who had taken up his abode at the shanty remained a stranger.

“After a long spell of ill-luck our party at Cain's Gully struck the stuff, and struck it rich for a while. There were queer customers prowling about the gully, so we thought it best to send down the gold into Break-o'-Day. Jim, my son, sir, was told off to take it down. He was to remain the night in Break-o'-Day, and return next morning with stores and things we wanted.

“Well, something induced Jim to take the short cut. Dusk was coming on as he neared the Flat and left the hut at some distance on his right. After a time it became so dark he found he had to dismount and lead his horse, which had stumbled more than once. Suddenly he felt himself seized from behind; a grip on his throat and a clutch at his belt, and while struggling to release himself the gleam of steel caught his eye. With a sudden bound he freed himself, and sprang forward, turning to face his assailant, who again threw himself upon him, knife in hand. Though no match in point of strength against the older man, Jim was very spry; he sprang back, drew his weapon, a flash and a report, and the figure before him fell heavily forward, face downwards.

“An hour later he rode into Break-o'-day, and went straight with his gold and his story to the police magistrate. There was no reason to disbelieve it, for human life was then cheap on the gold-fields. So the dead man was left all night lying where he had fallen, and when the magistrate, the coroner, and Jim rode out next morning, with a couple of troopers, they found the body lying precisely as Jim had described it, a stiffened corpse, still firmly gripping a hunting knife in a dead hand.

“There was an old crone at the hut, who expressed neither surprise nor sorrow when she heard the news. ‘As to the child,’ she asked, with an

avaricious leer, 'what was to become of the little dear? She couldn't keep it any longer. Who was going to look after it now that Moonlight Bill was dead? Could any Christian gentleman present tell her that?'

"To his own surprise, perhaps, my son Jim heard a voice that was distinctly his own replying that he would; and he could hardly believe the fact, until it became a tangible and somewhat inconvenient reality in the shape of a plump little damsel of about three, who climbed upon his knee and nestled close to him as if for shelter.

" 'My God!' said Jim, as the child put up her little face to be kissed, 'she must never know what work my hand has wrought.'

" 'And it's Christmas morning,' he added, with a wild laugh. 'Well, gentlemen, I can't stop here any longer, and, with your leave, I'll take back to the camp this "CHRISTMAS NUGGET.'" Without another word he caught up the child, mounted his horse, and in a moment was out of sight.

* * * * *

"Until the age of twelve the child followed the rude fortunes of the rough lot among whom her lines had fallen. But we were never rough to her, not even Bill the Bo'sun, an old man-of-war's man, who had given Her Majesty's service the slip to seek a fortune on the gold-fields. Bill, who found it difficult to express his meaning on any subject without an oath or two, positively became respectable in her presence. We were her nurses, play fellows, teachers of A B C, and, later on, of strange and incongruous scraps of learning. Bill paid especial care to the matter of the young lady's education, and often insisted on explaining such phrases as 'abaft the binnacle,' being apparently under the impression that navigation was an essential feminine accomplishment. Of course, she lived with Jim and myself, and we grew fonder of her every day.

"But there dawned a day when it suddenly flashed across us both, like a revelation, that she was springing out of childhood into a tall, slim maiden, fair and pleasant to behold.

" 'Her frocks is too short,' said the old 'bosun,' when we discussed the matter with him.

"I don't think anything else would have made us realise so plainly that there was something incongruous and even wrong in keeping her with us; but that night we agreed, painful as it might be to all round, that she should be sent to Melbourne, and placed at some good school. It was a pretty stiff parting scene; but she went, Jim taking her on to Break-o'-Day, and there seeing her safely in one of Cobb's coaches.

* * * * *

“Four more years passed away in the same manner. We failed to make our ‘pile’, but every fresh defeat only caused hope to grow the stronger; and as for the girl, though we didn't see her, I knew, even if he didn't tell me, that Jim wrote once a-week to the school at St. Kilda, and that everything was going on well.

“At last the luck came, and Jim and I awoke one morning, not to find ourselves famous, but what's a great deal better, rich. We had at last struck the reef. I was not sorry, for the way of life and my age were beginning rather to tell on me; as for Jim, he was in the prime of his manhood; but he had been a digger from a boy, and he, too, longed to settle down.

“It was Christmas time. We had decided to sell out and go down to Melbourne; but before doing so I had consented that *she* should come to us, and once more see the scenes familiar to her childhood, before we all bade them a final farewell.

“I could see that Jim was uneasy all day. He kept moving about restlessly, but I pretended not to notice him.

“ ‘Do you think,’ said he, at last, ‘that I ought to tell her?’

“ ‘What?’ I asked.

“ ‘That it was I who killed her father. I must do something, and that quickly, for I know that when I see her again I shall long, with all my soul, that she should be my wife.’

“ ‘It is true you killed him, but in self-defence. The story is known to everyone at Cain's Gully; but whether she ever heard it I doubt. Wait a while.’

“ ‘I can't wait,’ he moaned. ‘Unknown even to you I have written the whole story down and sent it to the mistress of the school. What will *she* think of it?’

“Suddenly, in the dusk, a figure glided into the tent. Jim buried his face in his hands; when a voice said, first addressing me, in passionate tones —

“ ‘Dear old dad, I remember no father but you.’

“Then flinging herself on her knees before Jim, with a gesture of infinite pity and tenderness she drew down his hands from his face and covered them with kisses.

“ ‘My poor Jim!’ was all she said.

“At this stage I felt myself rather in the way, and silently went out to see if the Southern Cross was attending to business as usual.

“You can guess the rest, perhaps,” said Mr. Fletcher, with a curious smile.

Just then the garden gate was flung open, and a tall, gentlemanly-looking man, with a singularly handsome, fashionably-dressed woman on his arm, came up the path towards us.

“Jim,” I said, *sotto voce*, “is your son, Mr. Fletcher, the Member of

Parliament; — and Mrs. Fletcher — — ?”

“*Is* Mrs. Fletcher,” he replied, “but she *was* ‘OUR CHRISTMAS NUGGET.’ ”

At the Melbourne Cup.

Douglas B. W. Sladen

I HAD received the appointment of aide-de-camp to an Australian Governor, and I was on my way out to my colony to enter upon my duties. My ship stopped a couple of days at Melbourne, and we arrived there — as the large mail-carrying steamers so generally do — on a Monday. Why they do so I don't know. I have heard it libellously asserted that it was to prevent the ships' companies eating their heads off at Adelaide, Melbourne, or Sydney on a Sunday, which is a *dies non* in port, but which does not impede navigation. Howsoever, we arrived in Melbourne on a Monday, and the next day happened to be that particular Tuesday in the year which was Cup Tuesday. Of course, as I was on my way to a Government House in another colony, I had the usual Government House civilities extended to me, including an invitation to take up my quarters with the Governor until I left Melbourne. After six weeks of it I was glad to get off ship-board for a stretch, though I had had a most enjoyable voyage; and, besides, a ship is a dreary place while she is in port, for all the passengers, whether or no they be leaving the ship for good, desert her. So I accepted, came up to Melbourne from Williamstown, and drove off to the Domain. It wasn't a very cheerful start. Everyone was out except the servants and the Governor's wife, who was too ill to see anyone. But the porter, a very experienced individual, after inquiring whether I cared for any lunch — which I refused, having lunched already — suggested that if I drove to the Melbourne Club I was pretty sure to find one or other of the Victorian A.-D.-C.'s there among the crowds congregating in the club in Cup week. So off I drove again, to inquire of the club porter. "Oh, yes," he said, — — was there, and went off to fetch him, and in a minute or two came back with him. I introduced myself, and he said: "As an A.-D.-C. you're an *ex-officio* member of the club; come and have a drink." This we managed without the least awkwardness or trouble; but we were not so successful afterwards. He wanted to get back to the men with whom he had been playing whist, and I didn't know another soul in the place, and we didn't seem to have any ideas in common but soda-water, sugar, lemon — and whiskey. At last a bright idea struck him. "I'll Introduce you to Paget.

You'll like to meet Paget; he's not long out from home." This idea struck him after running his eye over every man hanging about the verandah or the lawn, and calculating their suitability for saddling with me. Paget was alone. He had just done playing billiards with a man who had gone out of the club a minute or two before. I was introduced to him right off, leaving my brother aide at liberty to resume his whist, which he did after telling me what time they dined at Government House, and begging me to apply to him for any kind of information or assistance, accompanied, no doubt, by an inward prayer that he might never set eyes on me again.

Paget turned out to be an officer in the Victorian forces. "Not a bad billet in its way," he said. "It gives me the *entrée* here as an *ex officio* and perpetual honorary member, and gives a fellow a good status, the run of Government House and all the best people. One gets asked everywhere and to everything, and it's a fair 'screw;' but it doesn't lead to anything, and it isn't enough, because the people with whom it brings one in contact are all so thunderingly rich. I suppose you're going to the Cup tomorrow?"

I was ashamed to confess that I had never heard of the Cup until a couple of days before, when a flood of Adelaide people poured upon the steamer to take passage round to Melbourne for it.

"Of course you're going," he said. "There'll be a drag starting from the club to-morrow, some time in the morning, and I'll get you a seat. I know D — — , who's 'shouting' it, will be glad to give you one."

"But how about the Government House people?" I inquired, dubiously; "won't they be going?"

"Yes; they'll be going, but they won't go until after lunch, and, except that you get a good view from the Governor's box, it's the poorest fun at the races going with His Excellency. You'd feel bound to be minding your P's and Q's instead of minding the horses. And he won't mind your not being there. Bless your soul! comfort yourself; he won't miss you."

"Oh, very well, then. It'll be very kind of you to take me. What time shall I be here?"

"Oh, come early; they wouldn't wait for you if you were behindhand."

* * * * *

The next day I turned up in good time, which was lucky, as the drag rattled round the Spring Street corner at twelve o'clock sharp, with its top sprinkled over with ladies, and the club porch and steps were thronged with gentlemen, whose field-glasses, slung over their shoulders, betrayed their destination. What kind of weather one might expect at a Melbourne Cup was transparent from the delicate silk and lace of the ladies, and the tall white hats ("white bell-toppers" in the colonial vernacular) and dust suits of the gentlemen.

I had barely time to notice that the ladies — mostly girls and young married women — had the slim, upright figures, regular features, and piquant expression which I afterwards found to be characteristic of colonial girls, when I heard Paget saying, “Jump up here, old man. I've spoken to D — — . He's busy now; I'll introduce you some other time.”

I climbed up where he pointed, and found myself amid a bevy of ladies. Paget introduced me to them all, and one of them made room for me beside her, and at once plunged into an easy, natural conversation. Paget sat down opposite me, and in a minute or two the rest of the men were in their places, the horn was tootled, and with a few slips and kicks from the wheelers, off we started down the noble thoroughfare of Collins Street, as far as the centre of the town, where we turned up to the right, along what was once the Sydney Road. I had plenty of time to take stock of the street, because, apart from the steepness of the descent and the crowdedness of the road, I found that the municipal bye-laws of Melbourne compel horses to come down to a walk at every crossing within the city boundaries.

The ladies came up to the club in a shimmer of light silks and laces, calculated to take the citadel of bachelorhood by storm, but I had noticed that as we were going down the street they had one by one slipped into their dust-cloaks of yellow china silk, and as we shot round the corner into the street running north and south I recognised the prudence of their precaution, for, eddying down the street as if it had been charging itself with dust and grit all the way from Carpentaria, swept a gust — I think I ought to say a black squall — of north wind, almost blinding us and obscuring the view like a fog. As this kind of thing lasted with brief intervals all the way to Flemington, where the race-course is situated, I think the less said about that drive the better. But for the vivacity of the girls it would have seemed interminable; but the frank, hospitable, though not in the least undignified, colonial way they had made me quite one of the party. Paget seemed to be particularly much one of the party with a lady at his side.

It is needless to say that the whole road from the heart of indeed from the farthest suburbs on the other side — was choked with vehicles and foot passengers. But though all classes were represented in the throng there was not the slightest symptom of rowdiness. Everyone seemed to be going to a picnic where everyone was to enjoy him or herself in an orderly way. Arrived at the racecourse we drove down a long incline with an incipient avenue to the gates, where we were requested to show our tickets or pay. Most of the other gentlemen were members, and could muster between them enough ladies' passes to frank all the ladies, but I had to fork up a half-sovereign, which I expect I should have saved if I had gone under the wing of His Excellency — there is something in vice-royalty after all.

Arrived on the course, it was simply delightful. King Dust was not admitted, and I found myself bowling along the soft turf of the carriage paddock into a bevy of drags and carriages, and the waggonettes which do duty for cabs in Melbourne. The course was a kind of amphitheatre in the elbow of a hill, at the foot of which stood, in the middle, the magnificent grand stand, flanked on one side by the saddling paddock, and on the other by a carriage paddock. In front of the saddling paddock, beyond the judge's box, stood the stands for the stewards and those connected with the horses; in front of the grand stand was a delicious lawn of soft matted grass, and at the foot of the stand a broad pavement designed as a promenade for the occupants of the stand, to which those who had paid their ten shillings for admittance to the enclosure were admitted free. The lawn was left sloping, except just by the rails, in order to accommodate people who chose to stand there while a race was being run. Behind the grand stand was a hill — the “hill” famous in Gordon's poems and the annals of Melbourne racing. This was already, although the first race was not to be run for some little time yet, literally alive with people, one bizarre, seething mass. And when I lifted up my glasses to survey the noble course, so smooth and level and green even in this severe climate, I saw, right away on the far side of the river, considerable knots of people on every eminence.

The enclosure itself was very full. Not only was the grand stand crowded, but the lawn and the pavement were thickly studded with groups of promenaders; each group, as a rule, consisting of a gentleman walking between a couple of ladies, whether in the interests of propriety, or because the supply of gentlemen was short, I wasn't told. The ladies did not promenade without a gentleman, and I found, when I examined it closer, that the stand was filled almost entirely with ladies. Would the stand have been deserted if there had been a gentleman forthcoming for every pair of the disconsolate ones? I should be afraid to say no. The saddling paddock contained quite enough gentlemen for the job. I have said that there was still some little time before the first race. Paget was dreadfully uneasy.

“My dear fellow,” he said, “you won't want to be ‘stuck up’ with the ladies now. You'll want to come away and hear the odds.”

I felt as if I should excessively like to be stuck up with the ladies now. More than one of them was distractingly pretty, and all were piquant to a degree. Besides, from Paget's previous behaviour, I should have judged that he would not have cared how much he was stuck up with the ladies. However, I felt in a manner bound, in return for his kindness, to follow his lead, so down I went with him to interview the ring. Siren voices invited us to back our opinion.

“Do you care to put anything on,” he said, “because, if you do, I know a beggar who always has the straight tip for anything from Ballarat, and

this is a hurdle race. Ballaarat people are death on anything with a jump in it.”

“Well, if you can get any ‘information,’ ” I said, “I rather like putting a pound or two on a race.” He found his friend from Ballaarat, who pronounced Lady Hampden the best thing at the money, and forthwith we each invested a pound — or, as Paget called it, a “note” — on her ladyship at six to one, with one of the numerous little cash bookmakers who congregate round the low wooden steeple where the latest scratchings are posted.

“Now I want you to come along to the side by the stewards' box — that's where the big fish of the ring, Leviathan Joe and his brother and Josephs and Barnett and those kind of people lie. I want to do a bit of hedging. I've got a thousand to ten against Dirk Hatteraick for the Cup, and I want to lay some of it off, as I don't feel quite sure of him. The fact is that I've backed him ‘on the ticket’ of that famous dream. A man who has dreamt some wonderful prophecies about horse-racing had a dream that Martini-Henri would win the Melbourne Derby and Dirk Hatteraick the Melbourne Cup, so I told a fellow to take the double for me about a week ago — a thousand to ten the odds were then. A thousand would just set me up. I'm engaged to be married; that's to say, I'm engaged to a girl, but her governor won't hear of it till I have a house to take her to; and I could just furnish it nicely and have a bit of a reserve to fall back on besides my pay if I won this thousand.”

I must confess that I felt inclined to tell him how much I admired his simplicity. I don't know much about the ring, but I know enough to know that it isn't exactly the place I should go to if I wanted to find a marriage portion. However, I spared him a good deal because I wanted to hear further divulgings.

“The girl's awfully well off — one of the best people — and her governor says he'll ‘come down heavily’ when he allows her to marry; and he hasn't any objection to me, he says, only he wants some guarantee of my having something to live on — in fact, of my not being an adventurer. So he has promised to let me marry her as soon as I have furnished a decent house for her to live in, and show him the receipts of the furniture's being paid for. I was talking to the girl as we drove here,” he continued.

“I thought so,” was my mental ejaculation, “and the reason why you aren't talking to her now is that you expect to make your pile, where many a smart fellow, though long-headed, familiar with horses from his cradle, and thick as thieves with the whole racing fraternity, has gone down. *O sancta simplicitas!* Go forth, beloved of heaven, only the stars will have to take more interest than they generally do in human affairs if your frail bark is going to make its haven.”

One after the other of the big bookmakers, as he tackled them upon the

subject of Dirk Hatteraick, burst out laughing and said, "Why, you're joking, Mr. Paget; you never think anyone's going to back that thing?"

"Why, he did thundering well over in Adelaide."

"But, lor', look at the company; he ain't any more chance for the Melbourne Cup than one of Goldsbrough's dray-horses."

"That's what you said about Zulu, when it was dreamt that he'd win. 'Take back the little lame pony,' one of you bawled out when he was stripped for the race; and he won the Cup in the fastest time on record, bar Darriwell's year."

"Zulu kicked the pot over."

"Well, what can you do for me about Dirk Hatteraick?"

They all shook their heads dubiously, and one of them said — "The quoted odds aren't anything so wonderful; but you can't find a backer that I know of."

Paget looked at the clock. "They'll be starting soon; we'd better go up into the stand to look at the race."

"Shan't we go back to the drag?" I asked, feeling a rather rueful hankering after the dainty girls who had made my drive to the course so pleasant.

"Oh, no," he replied; "you'll see much better in the stand. Besides, if we went to the drag we might not be able to get away again directly to get back to the ring — we might have to trot some of the ladies up and down the lawn."

I felt in my heart of hearts that this wouldn't be such a very dreadful alternative to trotting after him and Dirk Hatteraick all day, but of course I could say nothing; so up to the stand we went. There were still a few minutes before the race started, and everybody on the stand seemed to be occupying the time with getting up "sweeps." Each little party was putting its half-crowns, or shillings, or sovereigns into a hat, and was tearing up and folding the printed forms for "sweep" drawing which are affixed to the end of the S. R. C. official programme for every race. These slips were then thrown into the hat, and drawn out amid vast excitement. Then everybody plunged into his or her programme to make out the colours of the horses they had drawn, and discussed chances.

Paget looked on at the whole business with undisguised contempt. "This is one of the reasons why I like to give the drag a wide berth," he said. "The ladies pester you so about 'sweeps.' They're awful rot. You'd much better choose your horse, and put a 'note' on him. If you only bet on the post you're certain of a run for your money then. But Melbourne's just mad about 'sweeps.' There's a man called Jimmy Miller handles thirty or forty thousand pounds of the public money every Melbourne Cup, and takes his ten per cent off the lot. However, he's very 'square' and above board about it all; and such as it is you have your chance for your money. He has 2000 subscribers at a 'note' each in each of his

‘sweeps,’ and he gets up nearly twenty ‘sweeps’ over each ‘cup.’ The first horse gets £900, second and third so much each, starters so much each, and even non-starters so much each, so that everyone who draws a horse gets something. But it's all ‘piffle’ going in for ‘sweeps.’ If you're going to touch a race at all, make your opinion, and back it.”

Suddenly the bookmakers' screech is stilled, and a hoarse murmur going up from the stand announces that they're off. I offer Paget my glasses. He fancies that he is a connoisseur, and can judge the form of horses for future betting. I have no faith in my powers in this respect, and prefer taking in the *tout-ensemble* with my naked eye to having it focussed by the glasses on a little mob of horses which every other second is lost behind some obstacle or other. Paget calls out hopeful things of the white, green sleeves, and red cap of Lady Hampden, but hope's a poor anchor, and Lady Hampden comes in second instead of first, amid shouts of “Ringwood! Ringwood!” and we go down into the paddock to pay over our pounds and look pleasant.

Then Paget said, “I know a little chap who's awfully thick with the Flemington stables. He can always lay you on to a safe thing, where it's in their hands. Ah, there he is!” he called out, making a dive into the crowd. “Wait there until I come back.”

In a little while he came back, pronouncing Falka to be “stiff for it,” so we accordingly invested upon Falka, he stifling my insinuations as to whether the “little chap” was as reliable as his friend from Ballarat with, “Well, you know, anything with a jump in it is always an open thing, but Falka's ‘stiff’ for this.”

Falka didn't prove “stiff for it,” but could only crawl in as far as second, as we saw to our dismay from the stand, where we had again taken up our position for the race. As we went down the steps after it, he said, “I should like to go and see if I can do anything with Dirk Hatteraick, when we have settled up over this.”

I felt that this was rather much, and quoted with glee to him that the ladies had told us we were to be sure to come back the very minute after this race to help to give them some lunch, after which I felt that I could do the champagne justice, for I was beginning to find Paget and Dirk Hatteraick rather dry work.

“You men out from home are no better than the colonial article,” said the pretty girl who had made room for me on the drag-seat as I came up. “Hardly one of you gentlemen has been near us since we first came in, and as for Mr. D — — ” (the owner of the drag) “not even lunch can make him gallant.”

The honour among thieves would not permit me to “round upon” Paget, so I had no confess to the soft impeachment, and to try and look knowing about horses; but I registered a vow to do full justice to the ladies and the luncheon before returning to the charge with Dirk

Hatteraick.

The girl I was talking to — I never made out her name — was what many men would call a real beauty, with her *petite* graceful figure, short straight nose, violet-blue eyes, auburn hair, and complexion an impersonation of cleanliness and freshness; and the luncheon, alike in poultry and spicy meats, delicate sweets, delicious fruits and cream, and choice champagne and whiskey, was a triumph. Among the fruits there were some not very usual in England, but I didn't trouble them much, confining myself to things that went better with champagne. After lunch, while the other gentlemen were smoking, I took my fair and nameless friend and another lady for a promenade upon the lawn, where, what between the charms of their society and capital music from a band with the very imposing title of the Australian Military Band, I began to blossom into a thorough sense of enjoyment, when Paget, walking with the lovely pleading-faced girl who was to become his wife whenever he made his grand *coup* over the races, swerved towards us and said, "We'd better be back in our places soon, if we want to do anything."

I emphatically didn't want to "do" anything except resign myself to the sense of enjoyment; but Paget seemed to have a right, so I said meekly, "After this turn," and in a few minutes back we went to Dirk Hatteraick.

But about one thing I was firm. Paget's renewed confidence in the "little chap" could not persuade me to back his opinion for the Railway Stakes, the next race on the card. I said I'd stand out this race. He backed some brute, I forget what, who never came within a hundred yards of it, and then remarked, as if it was for the very first time, "Let's go and see what we can do about Dirk Hatteraick."

I mournfully submitted, and once more we proceeded to interview the leviathans near the stewards' box.

"Can't touch Dirk Hatteraick," was his greeting, in pure Hebrew-English. "You might perhaps have got a stray backer at the rooms last night at 100 to 3, but this morning — Lord bless you! the public ain't what they used to be. They know almost as much about it as we do ourselves nowadays."

"I'll see what I can do for you," Mr. Paget, said a very gentlemanly-looking young bookmaker. "There's no one I'd sooner oblige than you, but I fancy that there must be others like yourself with some Dirk Hatteraick money to lay off. We laid a good many doubles between us in the ring over that dream. If you'll stand somewhere about here, so as to be handy, I'll see what I can do for you."

Stand somewhere about, and think about Dirk Hatteraick, I suppose. That seemed a lively lookout to meet, but then Paget had a right.

"Hang it all!" I said to myself, "there's one thing I'm not going to I'm not going to talk about that blessed horse all the time until somebody takes compassion on him." And then an idea struck me to try and find

out something about the colonies from Paget by way of killing time.

No admirers turned up, so just before three o'clock, the time at which the Railway Stakes were to be run, we trotted back to the stand, where Paget had the honour and glory of seeing the brute he had backed come in absolutely nowhere, and obliged to slacken off because the crowd had begun to encroach upon the course when he came in.

When Paget went down to settle up he began to get rather desperate. So far he had betted on every race and lost on every race, and he hadn't been able to lay off one halfpenny of his Dirk Hatteraick money.

I was growing desperate too. I didn't want to be chained to the saddling paddock all the afternoon at my first Melbourne Cup. I am not a betting man, though I like an occasional flutter, and I wanted to see something of the sight, which everyone told me was the sight of Australia. So I said, "I vote we go and have a stroll upon the lawn, before we settle down to business again."

"Of course, we will, old man. I know it's awfully selfish of me, but I'm so worried about that horse. Dreams are all very well, but the 'little chap' who's given me all the tips says he absolutely can't win, that he hasn't a mortal show of being placed, so I must try and do something with the money. However, we'll have a spell on the lawn."

So off to the lawn we went, and before we had been on it five minutes he had picked up the lady he was engaged to, with his usual, "Just wait here until I come back, old fellow," and there I was, stranded, while he was pacing her up and down, asking her commiseration for Dirk Hatteraick, I have no doubt.

As I had promised to wait for him, I had nothing on earth to do but stand and look at the people. The men I didn't think dressed up to the occasion, as a body. To be sure there were a fair number in "white bell-toppers" and dust suits, but there were also plenty of tweed jackets, and not a few unsightly cheap helmets. Even the gentlemen who had come with ladies were not by any means all of them scrupulously dressed. The "masher" element was conspicuously absent. The idea that would suggest itself to an *habitué* of Pall-mall would be that all the men had some greater attraction elsewhere. But in spite of their unceremonious dress, on occasions of ceremony I found afterwards that there are not a better lot of fellows living, and the heat of the climate is some excuse for an unstarched appearance. But if the "dandy" element was wanting in the men, the dainty element is found as conspicuously present in the ladies, who rejoiced in a climate whose regularity of sunshine ensured them impunity in airing all manner of delicate and perishable fabrics. Lace parasols, hats with valuable plumes, soft lace, silk dresses of delicate tints, gloves and slippers the daintiest and most perishable, told of their confidence in the dryness of their climate, and their dread of its heat. Although so richly dressed, none of the ladies seemed overdressed, for

their light costumes suited the sunshine, and there was an absence of anything garish or inharmonious in their toilettes, and many of the girls were so pretty, with their tall, slim figures, pleasing features, and piquant expressions. Prettiness is certainly very prevalent in Australia, whatever absolute beauty may be.

Suddenly I heard Paget call me. "Dirk Hatteraick," again I groaned to myself.

But it wasn't. "Chandos," he said, "let me introduce you to Miss Audley; I wish you two'd wait about here till I come back. I must go and do something about that horse, and I don't want to miss Miss Audley in the crowd."

I had no objection, and Miss Audley was willing to waive any delicacy she might have felt in order to oblige her lover during his anxiety. So we waited there on the lawn in front of the stand.

I could not help looking at my charge. She had that beauty well described as pleading. She was very fair, with pale gold hair, and a complexion naturally pale and colourless, but now flushed with excitement. Her features were finely-cut and soft; her eyes almost a forget-me-not blue; and her whole form lily-like in its fragility and slenderness. She was not of the healthy Australian type of beauty, but more of the exotic American type. She was beautifully dressed — richly but quietly, although the fabric was light and bright; distinctly one of the loveliest and most attractive girls on the lawn. I wondered how she would break the ice. But she started off as if there were none to break.

"Is there any chance of any horse beating Dirk Hatteraick?"

If a gentleman had asked me such a question, I should have thought he was poking fun at me; and if he wasn't, I should certainly have thought of poking fun at him. However, it was different where one's interlocutor was a lovely girl, and the question asked in perfect *bona fides*.

I fenced. I said, "I don't think Dirk Hatteraick will win, because Mr. Paget has gone away to bet against him, and he is sure to know."

This was logic with a woman about her lover, and she seemed fairly satisfied; but she continued very excited, and talking to me as animatedly and unreservedly as if she had known me all her life.

The race drew nearer and nearer, but still no Paget. I asked her what we should do — whether I should take her back to the drag, or what?

"We promised to wait," she said, "so we must wait; only I think, as we shall miss all the race except the finish, we might edge up to the railings, so as to see the horses fly past and hear the thud of their hoofs." Again the hush of the bookmakers, followed by the hoarse murmur of the grand stand, told that they had started, and in three minutes and a-half, as poor Gordon wrote —

"They came with the rush of the southern surf

On the bar of the storm-girt bay;
And like muffled drums on the sounding turf
Their hoof-strokes echo away."

Thud — thud — thud — thud. In front of them all flies a bright bay horse, with streaming charger's tail. Dirk Hatteraick is a chestnut, and a chestnut is second; but it is not Dirk Hatteraick. When the numbers go up we read: 1 — Martini-Henry; 2 — First Water; 3 — Commotion. So gallant five-year-old Commotion has carried 10st. 1lb. to a place; but my attention is attracted elsewhere. I feel a daintily-gloved hand on my arm, and a pleading face, pale once more with nervousness, bares its soul before me, and says: "He did bet against Dirk Hatteraick, didn't he?"

"I can only say he went away to, I know."

How sorry I feel for that girl! It almost sickens me of horse-racing; and then comes along her lover, as white as a sheet himself, but laughing excitedly.

"Did you lay any of that money away?"

"No, I couldn't get rid of a farthing, but I saved my ten pounds at the last minute by taking ten to five about Martini. Still, ten pounds isn't a thousand, is it, Queenie? I wouldn't mind having lost the ten; it isn't that, but when I saw a chestnut second, I thought it was Dirk Hatteraick 'coming' just at the last, and believed that I really had won a thousand. Oh, Qucenie, I must give up betting, my nerves can't stand it."

Ten pounds is a good deal to a girl, and Miss Audley thought it was a great thing that he hadn't lost that. In fact, she felt quite relieved, though she sympathised with his not winning his thousand pounds just when he actually seemed to have it within his grasp.

At that moment the "little chap" came along. He was a "gentleman," and knowing Miss Audley, raised his hat to her, and came towards them with a beaming smile. Paget thought he must have forgotten all about his disappointment — for it was the "little chap" that he had commissioned to back the dream double, Martini-Henry for the Derby and Dirk Hatteraick for the Cup, at a thousand to ten.

"You settle up that tenner with Joe, will you, and I'll send you a cheque," he said.

"What tenner?" was the reply; "you don't suppose that I was going to let you be such a fool as to touch that brute, Dirk Hatteraick?"

"Then I havn't lost that ten pounds after all, Queenie, so that the ten pounds I won on Martini-Henry is all to the good."

"Ten pounds!" said the "little chap" — "thousand you mean. I protected you against yourself."

"What do you mean?" asked Paget, turning deadly pale with excitement. "Don't joke, man; it's too serious a matter."

"I mean that when I found that Dirk Hatteraick hadn't a show (I made

inquiries as soon as you asked me to make the bet), I backed the two Martini-Henris for you instead at a thousand to twenty-five, and if your ears can't believe me, let your eyes go and see it in Joe Thompson's book."

"Then I really have won a thousand pounds?"

"Honour bright."

"Good — —"

Paget was all of a stagger; in another minute he would have fainted. I said to the "little chap," "Hadn't we better get him a nip of raw whisky?"

"I've got a flask in my pocket," he replied, whipping it out; and twirling off the top he put it to Paget's lips. Paget took a pull; the raw spirit nipped the back of his throat, and checked the dizziness. Two minutes after he was all right again.

I felt that I had wronged the "little chap" as an authority for tips, and grew quite penitent. Miss Audley did not understand the transaction, or her beautiful lips might have put the "little chap" to the blush with the fervent words of her gratitude.

It is needless to say that Paget did not trouble the paddock any more that day, and I, as I had no one to take me there, was quite content to walk up and down the lawn between the races with the young lady with the violet eyes who had taken compassion on me from the first. For each race we climbed on to the top of the drag to watch the horses, and Paget took his hat round to get up the half-a-crown "sweeps" in the most docile manner, after all his diatribes against the practice.

And so the afternoon wore away. To avoid the interminable delay in getting the drag home through the congestion of vehicles which takes place at the end of a day's racing, a deputation of the ladies asked the gentlemen to take them home by train, and let the grooms take the drag home. I was considerably surprised, knowing the kind of thing one would have to expect from an English railway on such an occasion. I hinted my surprise to the young lady with the violet eyes, but she did not see why there should be any difficulty. Nor was there. There are only two classes on the Victorian railways. On race days at Flemington all the first-class carriages are at one end of the train, all the second-class at the other. A barrier right across the platform divides them. A separate entrance gives ingress to each; when the station-master thinks enough people are on the platform to fill the train, he shuts the door, so arranged as to shut easily in spite of the pressure of a large crowd. These people are then shipped, the train started; and when a fresh batch of people have been admitted to the platform, a new train is brought alongside, and so on until all the thousands and thousands have been entrained. There is no crush, no disorder, no scrambling. Ladies in the most delicate and destructible fabrics can go by train without the least fear of their being spoiled. A short run brought us to Melbourne, where we made our exit

from the station just as easily and comfortably, and then, after seeing the rest of the party into their cabs, I bade good-bye, and took a hansom out to Government House to dress.

That night, I learned afterwards, Paget and Miss Audley devoted to ecstasy and the wildest castle-building; and next day he went to her father, and stating that he was now in a position to furnish a house, asked for the paternal consent to their early marriage. The "little chap" had given him a cheque for £1000, saying that he would get the money himself on settling day if Paget gave him his order on "Joe" for the amount. Paget was thus enabled to show Mr. Audley his bank-book as evidence. Of course, neither he nor Miss Audley let out to the old gentleman where the money came from. He had already, imagining it to be a mere farce that would never be claimed, given his permission for their marriage, on condition of the furniture being forthcoming. So all he could do was to submit, which he did with good grace, a good dowry, and a good big cheque for a wedding present to give them an impetus at their start. When I come down to Melbourne for the spring races the Pagets always have a bedroom for me, and lovely Mrs. Paget, with her pleading face, is only as much less cordial than her husband as delicacy demands. Both feel that a barrier is broken down between us by my participation in the climax of their drama.

Paget, as befits a man who won his *coup* by the wise disobedience of his agent, has left off dabbling in the ring, and when he goes to the races, is quite content with paying his devoirs to the wife he idolises. I am unregenerate; I always go to the races with the "little chap," and when he says plunge, I plunge, and I make money because I am wise enough to own to myself that I am an absolute duffer in betting, and don't know one horse from another without its jockey.

In the Back Blocks. A Queensland Sketch.

Edmund Stansfeld Rawson

WE were camped on the banks of Mundooren Creek with a draft of two hundred and fifty head of fat cattle, bound for Port Larcom.

A good time had arrived for the squatters of the Heaton district, an actual buyer having suddenly come amongst them, and for the time, at any rate, they were independent of "the Pots," as the boiling-down establishments were called. A certain Captain Jackson had lately arrived from the South, and made arrangements to purchase all the available fat cattle in the district for shipment from Port Larcom to New Zealand. The Captain, as may be supposed, immediately became the most popular man in the North. Apart from his naturally genial qualities, and an unlimited fund of good stories, he was armed with credentials of the highest order, no mean accompaniment in those days of doubtful cheques and promissory notes so often "referred to drawer." He completely took every station by storm; the best horses were saddled for his use, and the somewhat limited larders ransacked to the last piece of spiced beef and bottle of fruit to prepare a feast suitable to the occasion of his visits.

Our "fats" had been collected from three different stations, and the last draft of fifty head had only joined us that morning. They were rather a "rowdy" lot, and we had, therefore, made a long stage, about seventeen miles, in order to reach Mundooren Creek, where we knew that the camp was a good one, a favourite spot, in fact, for travelling-stock. An elbow in the creek, with deep water all round, and a moderately high bank, formed a sort of peninsula, about twenty acres in extent, with a narrow neck not more than fifty yards across; a fire at either side of this, and one man on watch was sufficient to guard two thousand head of cattle; consequently with one small lot we felt that we were in for a comfortable night. Jack Mackenzie, part owner and manager of Wetheringo, from which station the main portion of our cattle had come, was in charge, and with him were Jim Donovan, his head stockman, Bob Nicholls, and myself. Bob and I had arrived from England six months previously with letters of introduction to a Brisbane firm, and had been located with Jack Mackenzie at Wetheringo to be "broken in." "Jackeroos," we were called, a term signifying young men acquiring colonial experience.

This was our first trip on the roads, and we were both very full of the romance of camping out, and the excitement of watching; but like most “new chums,” a little too nervously inclined to worry the cattle. “Shove them along,” said Jack, “in the early morning, when it's cool, and break the neck of the day's journey, but never hurry them after that.”

Jim had the first watch, and we three had made all snug for the night, and were lying on our blankets near the fire in various and thoroughly lazy attitudes, our pipes going freely, and a quart pot of tea within reach. A tin billy, containing a piece of salt beef, simmered on the fire; an occasional sputter from this, the tinkle of the horse bell in the distance, the chink of a hobble chain, and a long-drawn *blow* as some beast in the mob settled himself for a snooze, were the only sounds that broke the stillness. Now and then a flash from the watch fires denoted that Jim was throwing on a log; sometimes he approached us, either for a minute's talk with any one who happened to be awake, or to take a pull at the pot of tea.

“What a lovely night,” exclaimed Jack, blowing out a cloud of smoke sufficient to have eclipsed the moon had there been one. “You boys” — he always called us *boys* — “are certainly having a good time of it. We ought to have one wet night just to break you in properly.”

As we were not provided with any other covering but a single blanket, the bare ground for a mattress, and our saddles for pillows, Bob and I replied that we were quite satisfied as things were, and contented to leave the wet night to imagination.

“Thank goodness,” presently said Jack, “there are no blacks likely to come poking round and sticking a spear into one, or starting the cattle, which would be worse. I remember when they were pretty lively about here, but that's a good many years ago, and they are all civilised enough now.”

“Did you ever have any adventures with them?” I asked.

“Well, only once,” he replied, “but that was up North when I was out pioneering. That *was* a shave,” he went on, with a deep sigh, “and no mistake.”

“Oh, do tell us,” Bob and I exclaimed together.

“Look here,” said Jack, “if I begin spinning yarns to you boys, you'll be going to sleep on watch, and that would never do.”

“Not we,” we scornfully rejoined; “at any rate tell us this one, and then we'll turn in.”

“Very well,” assented Jack, “the night's young enough yet, and I don't think the cattle will trouble us much. Give me a pannikin of tea, Ted, to start with. Thanks. Now for a light; that's right. Well, here goes.

“It was towards the close of the wet season, some years ago, when I was camped on the north bank of the Somerset with a small lot of sheep on my way to Warrindah, which, in three days, was an outside run. I had

only one man with me, old Joe Halliday. We had just crossed the river in time, and established ourselves in very comfortable quarters; a nice dry ridge, lightly timbered and sloping gradually towards a large lagoon, full of ducks and all sorts of water-fowl, about a quarter of a mile back from the river. Here we had pitched our tent, and, as it were, anchored ourselves until the weather became more settled, and the creeks ahead of us sufficiently low to cross. Joe was a regular old hand, a splendid shepherd and excellent cook; he had been for many years in a pastry-cook's shop in London, and, report said, had 'come abroad for the good of his health, but not at his own expense,' but into this part of his history, it is needless to say, I never inquired. As a rule, a man's antecedents are not very carefully examined in the Colonies; as long as he works well and doesn't annoy anybody particularly, he is free to go where he will and do what he pleases without remark. Joe was a great reader, and very fond of airing his learning at every possible opportunity; frequently, however, he would get mixed up in the meaning and pronunciation of words. On one occasion he had been dosing himself with some quack medicine, a flowery account of which had appeared in the columns of the local thunderer, or *Rag*, as it was popularly called. When I asked him if he had benefited by it, he said, 'Well, sir, it may renoviate the h'animal spirits for a time, but as far as the CORPORAL *body* is concerned, it's my belief it will never do it no good!' Poor old Joe! I always digress when I speak of him; he was a real good old fellow, and one of the best mates I ever had on the road."

Here Jack took another pull at his pannikin, and re-lit his pipe with a fire-stick. After a pause, during which he drew hard at his pipe, he resumed: —

"Our camp was about eight miles from the nearest settlement, a small cattle station lower down the river, where we used to buy our rations. To get there we had to pass through half-a-mile of dense scrub, through which a narrow track, just wide enough for a horse, had been cut by some old explorers; it was a great saving in distance, and we always used it; some of the station hands also would visit us on Sundays by the same track, bringing us a newspaper, and taking back with them a few ducks. The township of Stonehampton was about fifteen miles down the river on the south side, and there was another station, Erlesmere, owned by the Bowmans, old friends of mine, on the same side about twelve miles away. We had been over six weeks stuck up by the floods, and were fidgeting to get away. Although we had plenty of grass and abundance of water, the delay was a serious one, as we were obliged to be on Warrindah by a certain time, or would run the risk of forfeiture, or possibly of some other pioneer 'jumping our claim.' Well, one Sunday morning, after the usual post-prandial pipe and everything had been swept and garnished in and around the tent, I took my gun, an old

muzzle-loading Purdey by the way, and telling Joe that I would return about noon with some ducks or pigeons for supper, strolled away towards the lagoon and scrub. Joe was just settling himself comfortably on his bunk with a volume of Macaulay's *History of England*, which he had brought with him for the trip. The sheep were well in sight, in fact, they hardly required any shepherding now; their usual run was almost like a paddock, fenced in as it was by the river and scrub. I wandered about for two or three hours, in and out of the scrub, and along the river bank, resting now and then and having a smoke. I had collected a lot of ferns which I intended to press and send home, had shot a few rare pigeons which I also meant to preserve for the old house at home, and at last found myself back at the lagoon with both barrels loaded, but no more ammunition. With one shot I potted a couple of ducks, to get which I had to strip and swim in. By this time it was well past noon, so I slowly returned to the camp. Throwing the game down on the shady side of the tent, and placing my gun against a rough bench Joe had manufactured — a sort of baking-board, washing-board, and dining-table combined — I called out to my mate, but receiving no answer, concluded he had gone to look after the sheep which were not then in sight. I never can forget the sudden and awful thrill which at that moment went through me! My heart seemed to stand still for a second or two, and then to burst out in quick, wild pulsations, as hard as a postman's knock! What was it? All around where I stood by the door of the tent, grass had been worn off, and the ground swept clean; in the scattered ashes from the open fire, only the back log of which remained smouldering, were the tracks of naked feet, the unmistakable tracks, once you have seen them, of *Blacks*. Here and there a patch of flour whitened the dust, and a broken spear was lying at my feet. I was so stunned that for the moment I forgot about Joe. We had been told that there were blacks higher up the river, but that there was nothing to fear from them if we kept them at a distance. We certainly had not had any chance of encouraging their visits, as we had never seen even a sign of them up to that time, and, perhaps, had become careless in consequence. But where was Joe? Something told me that he was inside the tent; yet I dare not lift the canvas, fearful of what I should see. How long I remained in that state of indecision I could not tell, probably only a few seconds; I was recalled to my senses by a faint *cooee*, and glancing in the direction of the sound, plainly saw the figure of a girl, outlined against the sky, at the summit of the ridge, about four or five hundred yards away. She was gesticulating, evidently to someone on the other side. I faintly called again, 'Joe,' and then, with trembling hand, pulled aside the opening of the tent."

Here Jack sat up on his blanket, gulped down a mouthful of tea, and, nursing his knees, said impressively, "Boys, I hope you may never have such an experience as that was; that you may never be compelled to look

at what I saw in that tent!

“Joe *was* there, sure enough — all that remained of him. Lying across the tent, his legs on the low stretcher which formed his bed, his body on the ground, and his head just touching my stretcher, was poor old Joe. His right arm, the hand still grasping his loved Macaulay, was stretched towards me, his head completely shattered, the white locks black with gore, and the features hardly recognisable.

“My first impulse was to rush madly out and defy the wretches; to fire my last charge into them recklessly, and meet my death fighting to avenge my murdered mate. Reason, however, returned to my rescue. One glance round the disordered tent was sufficient to show me that all I wanted was gone; powder, caps, bullets, and shot were nowhere to be seen. I had one charge of duck-shot in the gun, and that was all. What made me think of pursuing the tactics I did I could not tell. Some unseen hand guided me, some powerful mind urged me on, and kept me from going mad. I shouldered the gun, and walked away from that tent as calmly as if I had just received instructions from the head keeper, and was going to take a stand in a cover shoot at home — slowly down to the lagoon, and along its banks towards the scrub. I felt that I was being watched, and that my only chance was to pretend that I had seen nothing and was still in pursuit of game. It was, perhaps, a wild idea, but I reckoned that if by an appearance of indifference I could once reach the opening in the scrub before the blacks, who, I knew, were behind the ridge, divined my object, I would cover the eight miles which separated me from friends in a time which would have done credit to the fastest ‘crack run’ on record.

“I carefully stalked the ducks as if I meant to shoot them, raising my gun now and then and pretending to be about to fire. How I longed at that moment to be as safe as the plumpest old mallard was within twenty yards of me! I would even have changed skins with the bob-tailed coots who were dodging about among the reeds and lilies at my feet!

“The end of the lagoon was close to the track in the scrub, and, at last, I reached the cutting. A cold, numb feeling crept over me when I saw foot tracks in the dust at the entrance; the toe of one foot-mark in particular was deeply imprinted, as if its owner had made a sudden spring to conceal himself. A slight rustle in the scrub made my heart leap into my mouth, in momentary expectation of seeing a shining black figure spring out to attack me. Still I managed to retain my presence of mind, and edged away on quietly, as before, to the opposite side of the lagoon. This would bring me more quickly to the river, and that I now knew was my only chance.

“Swollen as it was, running strongly, and full of hidden dangers in the shape of snags, drift-wood, and, horrible to think of, alligators, I must risk it or die. Again I pretended to be in quest of ducks, raising my gun at

intervals, sometimes even going back a few paces towards my hidden enemies. I knew this could not last long, and that every second was important, and to keep up this outward show of indifference and to walk slowly, when I longed to make a bolt for it, was a work of several lifetimes. I even sat down when I reached the end of the lagoon, but it was with an object; my boots and socks were off and hidden in the rushes, while I pretended to spell. Then to make the river! It was the longest quarter of a mile I ever experienced.

“I gained it at last, but what a prospect! Two hundred yards at least to the opposite bank, the water rushing along in oily and treacherous-looking eddies, while here and there the head of a *ti* tree broke the surface and told of dangers lurking underneath. A large dead tree came sailing down the stream; checked for an instant by some hidden undertow, it slowly rolled half over, displaying its ragged roots, like the fangs of some hidden monster, then, with a shake, as if angry at the slight detention, it once more swirled away towards the sea. I shuddered as it passed, it looked so life-like and horrible. Then a huge raft of drift-wood, firmly wedged together, came steadily along in mid-stream, and inspired me with fresh confidence, it seemed so safe and solid. I thought I might reach it, perhaps, and rest halfway; but even as the thought passed through my mind there was a sudden, half-smothered crash, and the raft was ground-up and scattered in a hundred pieces; it too had met with some foe concealed beneath the muddy waters. I hesitated, and feared to make the plunge. I turned round, hoping to find some other means of escape, but only to see about a score of naked blacks creeping towards me along the bank of the lagoon. They had me, as they thought, hemmed in, apparently with no escape. Instantly my clothes were off and thrown into the river. I knew there was no chance in them, and I had slipped down the bank, which was only about four feet high, and was being whirled away down stream. I am a good swimmer, but to breast that raging torrent with one arm, as I kept my gun above water with the other, was anything but an easy matter. Luckily, I decided to keep the gun, otherwise I might have attempted to strike out at once for the opposite shore; as it happened, I was carried swiftly along within twenty feet of the bank, and so concealed from the approaching blacks. This, no doubt, saved me. In a few moments it seemed they appeared on the bank where they had last seen me. By that time I was well away down stream, and had paddled myself about a third of the distance across. They saw me, and, with wild yells, hurled some spears, which, however, fell far short of their mark. I could not help half raising myself in the water, and, as I flourished the old Purdey, yelling a defiant cry in return. They ran along the bank, screaming and gesticulating wildly, but I had enough then to do to look after myself. Twice I struck against something, but eventually got ashore about a mile down the river, and dragged myself on to the bank,

where I lay exhausted and half-unconscious for some considerable time. I could not help smiling when at length I stood up, clothed in an old cabbage-tree hat and a double-barreled gun; my left shin ornamented with a streak of blood from a scratch below the knee. I was safe, at any rate, for the time, but where should I go?

“The main western road from Stonehampton, at that time little better than a bush track, was within a short distance; so hoping to meet with a drag or some white man, I struck out for it. I soon reached it, and starting away towards the township had hardly gone half-a-mile when, to my great delight, I saw a man on horseback approaching. You would scarcely believe it, perhaps, when I say that he sheered off into the bush when he was within a hundred yards of me, and, notwithstanding all my shouts and entreaties, gave me a wide berth and cantered away.

“I afterwards heard, in fact a paragraph appeared in the local paper about it, that he had taken me for a madman, and perhaps his conduct was not to be wondered at. If you had suddenly come across a man, stark naked and with a gun in his hand, wandering about in the vicinity of a township, noted, as all new bush townships were, for drink of the most fiery and poisonous description, you would have acted as this traveller did, and given him also a wide berth. The country was quite familiar to me, so, after a short consideration, I determined to leave the main road and take a bee-line through the bush for Erlesmere, where I was well known, and would get every assistance. It was only now that I began to notice the effects of the sun on my bare skin, which was gradually assuming a scarlet hue and feeling particularly sore. I made a sort of umbrella out of a few branches, which protected me a little, and so trudged on, foot-sore and weary. It was quite dark when I reached Erlesmere, and I crept cautiously round to the bachelors' quarters. There was no one in the room, so I took possession of the first garments I could find, and, arrayed in these, presented myself in the verandah of the house, where some half-a-dozen men were reclining in hammocks and lounges, smoking their after-dinner pipes. It was no uncommon thing for visitors to arrive at Erlesmere at any time of day or night, consequently no surprise was manifested at my sudden appearance.

“ ‘Hullo, Jack, how are you? Have you let your horse go? I suppose you'd like some dinner?’ was the cherry greeting I received. It was only when Tom Bowman and I went into the dining-room together that he exclaimed — ‘Why, old man, you look rather scared; anything up?’ I asked for some brandy, and after a stiff nip, and while some dinner was being prepared, told him briefly that poor old Joe had been murdered, and that I had only escaped by swimming the river and walking through the bush to the station.

“The rest is soon told. Volunteers were not wanting, you may depend; even the next day, by noon, six guns, accompanied by an officer of the

Native Mounted Police and four troopers, were on the ill-fated spot. An inquest was held by Tom Bowman, who was a magistrate, after which we buried the old man in the sweetest spot we could find. A little knoll on the bank of the lagoon, overlooking that lovely bed of water-lilies and graceful reeds, was the last resting-place of poor old Joe.

“The following day we found the sheep, but fifty of them were missing, and never recovered.

“The blacks, I suppose, had killed them, and the native dogs dispersed the rest. It was many a long day before I got over the exertion I had undergone, and the scorching from the sun; and up to the present moment I have never got over the sight that met me when I looked into that tent!”

None of us spoke for a few minutes after Jack had ceased. He replenished his pannikin with tea from the great pot, and after drinking a mouthful, sat gazing thoughtfully at the fire. Suddenly he exclaimed — “Now, boys, turn in, and don't dream of blacks!” Not feeling disposed to talk, we did turn in, rolling ourselves in our blankets, our heads on our saddles, and our feet towards the fire.

* * * * *

How it happened I don't know, but I was on watch, sitting on my horse, near the creek. Suddenly I was aware of something creeping up the bank through the long bladey grass which grew near the water's edge. One, two, half-a-dozen shining black forms were slowly dragging themselves along the ground towards the camp fire, where my companions were peacefully sleeping. There was no mistaking them — they were *blacks*, and they meant *murder!* I dug my heels into my horse's ribs and tugged at the reins. What was the matter? My horse would not stir an inch, and my reins came away in my trembling hands. I pulled and pulled, but could not feel my horse's mouth. I screamed out in my eagerness, and a yell of rage from the leading black as he jumped to his feet answered my despairing cry. Through a misty sort of haze I heard a voice saying — “What the mischief are you after, Ted?” I awoke to find Bob standing over me. It was only a dream after all. Notwithstanding Jack's caution, the blacks had haunted me, and I was sitting up with Bob's blanket firmly clutched in my hands. This was the rein which would not resist my pull, and his was the cry which brought me to my senses!

The Little Gold Nugget.

C. Haddon Chambers

IT was given to Effie to take care of. It was not a great prize, for it weighed only seven ounces; but it represented the only result of a strong man's hard toil for many weeks, and, as nuggets go, it was considered by no means a bad "find."

John Archer decided that the nugget would be safer in his little daughter's keeping than in his own. There were thieves and lawless men at this new gold rush, as at all new gold rushes, and they would know of his prize. They would probably try to annex it. They would search all sorts of cunning hiding-places in the neighbourhood of his tent; they might even creep into the hut at night, to feel under his pillow and among his rough bedding for the yellow earth that folk hate each other for. If he caught the thief he would shoot him, but better not to run the risk of losing his treasure. And so he gave it to Effie to put in her old work-box. The thieves of the T — — diggings would be too cunning to think of examining such an improbable hiding-place.

"You must take great care of it, darling," said John Archer. "It is for your mother." And Effie stowed the little nugget away in a corner of the old work-box — which had been her mother's — under the cotton and the socks she was darning for her father. She felt duly weighted with the responsibility. She knew that this yellow earth was of great value, for her father, leaving her mother, who was very delicate, with some friends in Brisbane, had come a long, weary way to find it, and she had seen his sorrow, his despair, as day after day he had eagerly worked with pick and spade, without finding what he sought.

Having hidden the little nugget away, Effie came out of the hut to look round and see if anyone was near who might have seen her. No. No one was near who might have seen her — only Billy the black — King Billy, the Aboriginal monarch, who loved rum and tobacco, and who was chopping some firewood for her. King Billy evidently had not seen, for he was wielding the axe with quite exceptional vigour; and if Billy had seen it wouldn't have mattered very much, for Effie trusted him.

This little girl's reason for trusting King Billy, the black, was somewhat strange, and is worthy of being recorded. She trusted him because she

had been kind to him.

But Effie was only twelve.

As the child stood in the broad light, her tumbled hay-hued hair kissed and illumined by the bold rays of the sun, and her round, trustful blue eyes shaded from the glare by two little brown hands, watching King Billy at his work, a flock of laughing jackasses alighted in a neighbouring gum-tree and set up a demoniac cachinnation. What made the ill-omened birds so madly merry? What was the joke? Effie's trust? Billy's gratitude? They failed to explain; but their amusement was huge, and sardonic.

"Drive them away, Billy," cried Effie, and the obedient king dropped his axe and threw a faggot of wood at the tree, which stopped the laughter, and dispersed the merry-makers.

"Billy tired now," said the black, grinning — "too much work — plenty wood," and he pointed to the result of his labour.

"Yes, that will be enough, thank you. You're a good boy. I'll give you some tobacco."

"Billy's thirsty."

"Then you shall have some tea."

"No tea. Rum."

"No, Billy. Rum isn't good for you."

"Good for miners; good for Billy."

"No, it's not good for miners," said Effie, emphatically; "it makes them fight and say wicked things."

"It makes black feller feel good," declared Billy, rolling his dusky eyes.

This last argument was effective. Effie went into her hut — her father had returned to his work — and poured a little spirits from John Archer's flask into a "pannikin." Billy drank the spirits with rolling eyes, smacked his lips, and then lay down in the shadow of the hut to sleep.

The long afternoon passed very slowly for Effie. Her few trifling duties as housekeeper were soon done. The little hut was tidied, and the simple evening meal prepared; and some hours must pass before her father returned. How could she pass the time? She had only two books — a Bible and a volume of stories for little girls, which she had won as a prize at school in Brisbane. But she was too young to appreciate the first, especially as the type, being very small, it was difficult reading, and she had grown beyond appreciating the stories for little girls, having known them by heart three years before. She would like to have slept. Everything around her suggested and invited the siesta — the steady heat; the brightness of the light without the hut; the distant murmur of miners' voices which came from beyond yonder belt of wattle gums; the monotonous hum of the locusts in the forest; the occasional fretful cry of a strange bird, and the regular snores of the fallen King who slumbered

in the shade of the hut. Even the buzz of the annoying flies assisted the general effect, and brought drowsiness.

To remain still for a few minutes would have meant inevitably falling asleep. Effie felt this, and remembered the little gold nugget. If she slept, some thief might come and take it. And so she put on her hat, and, forsaking the seductive cool and shade of the hut, went out into the brightness and heat.

Archer's hut stood on the edge of the valley, over against the foot of the blue, heavily-timbered hills. About fifty yards distant from it, hidden among the trees, was a high moss-grown rock, at the base of which Effie had discovered the smallest and sweetest of natural springs. Thither the child ran — looking back often to see that no one approached the hut in her absence — to bathe her face. In a few minutes she returned, drying her face in her apron, and shaking her wet hair in the sun. No one had come; but King Billy was now awake, and was slouching lazily off towards the bush. Effie laughed as she saw him — his great head bent forward, and his thin, narrow shoulders bowed. She laughed to think of his laziness, and that he should look so tired after such a very little wood-chopping.

She was still laughing at King Billy as she opened the old work-box to take another peep at the yellow treasure, and to make quite sure that the heat hadn't melted it away. And it was quite slowly that the laugh died from the pretty eyes and mouth — quite slowly, because of the moments it took to realise and accept a misfortune so terrible — when she lifted the coarse socks and looked and saw no little gold nugget — saw nothing. Then horror and great fear grew in the blue eyes — and pale agony crept over the childish face and made it old, and the poor little heart seemed to stop beating.

Effie said nothing, and made no cry; but she closed her eyes tightly for a moment, and looked in the box again. No, it was no illusion; the little nugget was not there — the first gold her father had found, which had been entrusted to her care, which was to have been taken to her mother — it was gone. She put down the box, quite quietly, and walked out into the day; but the sun was shining very strangely and mistily now, and the blue sky had grown black; and the trees seemed to move weirdly; and the locusts had ceased humming from fear; but the strange bird was somewhere near, shrieking brokenly, "What will father say? What will father say?"

But as the child stood there, despairing, her sight grew clearer, and she saw a black figure among the trees, and she was conscious of a pair of dusky eyes watching her through the leaves. Then only she remembered, and she knew who had done this cruel thing. King Billy! And she had been kind to him. Effie suddenly burst into passionate sobbing. The black figure still hovered among the trees, often changing its position,

and the dusky eyes still peered through the leaves. And the laughing jackasses flew down to the old tree again, and laughed more madly than before — laughed at Effie's trust — at Billy's gratitude!

* * * * *

It was ten o'clock, and darkness and quiet reigned in John Archer's hut. Over among the tents behind the wattle-gums a few gamblers and heavy drinkers were still awake, and their voices, raised in anger or ribald merriment, might occasionally have been faintly heard from the hut. But Archer, who had sown his wild oats, was a true worker; and he had his little daughter, for whose sake he had built the hut away from the noisy camp.

Archer had come home late and weary, as usual, had eaten his supper, and gone to rest without, to Effie's intense relief, speaking of the little gold nugget. The child was afraid to speak of the loss, and she was not without vague hopes that a beneficent providence would restore the nugget during the darkness, and save her from this great trouble.

For this she prayed very earnestly before she lay down to sleep. Or did she sleep at all that night? She never quite knew. But she thinks that it was then that she first experienced that terrible, purgatorial condition which is neither wakefulness nor sleep, when the body and mind are weary enough to bring the profound sleep which they require, but which the brain is too overladen and too cruelly active to allow; when dreams seem realities and realities dreams. It must have been a dream when she saw something small and yellow float through the tiny window on the ghostly silver moonbeams. And yet, when, having closed her eyes, she opened them again, it was still there hovering about in the darkness — less bright now, and with a pale yellow halo. But it faded quite away; it was a cruel, mocking dream.

Then was it a dream when the old curtain, which divided her corner of the hut from her father's, moved near the ground — bulged slightly towards her? It would be curious to see, and she lay still. From under the curtain seemed to come a thin arm, and slowly, cautiously, after the arm a head with a great shock of hair. And the moonbeams just touched a face — I think they kissed it, though it was black, for they found in a black hand the little yellow object which had floated in the first dream.

It was all so real, so beautiful, that the child lay still, scarce daring to breathe, lest the vision should melt away; and when in her dream came the voice of her father, with the words, "Speak, or I'll fire," her lips refused to open.

But it was no dream when the shot came, and the Black King rolled over on the earth, dead, with the little gold nugget he had come to restore pressed in the death agony against his heart, where, too, was a little gold.

And the laughing birds in the old tree, startled from their sleep by the shot, laughed once more, wildly and madly, at Billy's honesty; but there was bitterness in their merriment, for their master, the Devil, had been cheated of the soul of a Black King.

New Chums. A Victorian Sketch.

Philip Menell

THE term “new chum” is one of so wide and indefinite an application that, were I not to narrow its significance after a somewhat arbitrary fashion, I should find myself, in endeavouring to portray a few of the chief characteristics of the species, inditing a book instead of a sketch. How long the poor immigrant caterpillar must remain in the dark chrysalis of new chumship before he can be supposed to have expanded into the full-blown Colonial butterfly is a question upon which a great variety of opinions prevails, even amongst “old hands” (I use the term, not opprobriously, but in a perfectly parliamentary and Pickwickian sense, to denote old Colonial residents). Some limit the period to five years, the duration of an ordinary trade apprenticeship; some think seven years “the cheese;” whilst others, again, whom we charitably credit with an awful experience of new chum ignorance and stupidity, would, like Laban, of Biblical celebrity, protract the date of emancipation “yet other seven.” Leaving these highly respectable parties to their opinions, I will briefly explain what, for the purposes of the present sketch, I mean by the term. In the first place, I restrict its application to the new arrival, who, having landed with no capital beyond a few pounds, has hitherto failed in obtaining remunerative employment. I do not intend to refer to the new chum of the labouring class, who, if he be energetic and pushing, will very soon find himself outside the category of the unemployed. In short, I confine myself to such new chums as have not been inured to manual toil — members of the middle and upper middle-class at home, bred up to professions, mercantile clerkships, or — more commonly still — to nothing at all. In a word, I treat of the newly-arrived unattached gentleman-immigrant, who, notwithstanding all the warnings of prudence and experience, is constantly being landed — and, I am sorry to say, stranded — upon Australian shores. It is his joys and sorrows, shifts and troubles, economies and imprudences, that I sing. He is a much-trying individual, and his circumstances make him a meek and unobtrusive one. I therefore owe him an apology for dragging him out of his obscurity into the dazzling light of garish day. Let him rest assured that I should not have done so had I not hoped to point a moral as well as

to adorn a tale. After the confinement, the constraint, and the dreary monotony of a long sea voyage, a reaction in this direction of indulgence — not to say over-indulgence — is very apt to set in on the part of immigrants on landing. This is generally so powerful in the case of the class of new chums to which I am referring as to overcome in a moment all those righteous and sober resolutions in which none are more prone to indulge, whilst under the influence of those remorseful self-introspections which are sure to obtrude upon the mental listlessness and inaction of a prolonged passage. The new chum of the fast order settles himself down at an expensive hotel, devotes his days to the billiard table, his nights to the *demi monde*. The crisis of his affairs is soon reached. Rung by rung he descends the ladder. His funds and his borrowing powers, if any, are soon alike exhausted. He “pops” or sells his watch and chain; the same with the rest of his available jewellery. Article by article, his clothes follow, till mine host, seeing how matters stand with him, and distrusting the security of his attenuated wardrobe, gives him a broad hint to quit. This hint, however loath, he is compelled to take, and packs accordingly — not his luggage (that is *non est*) — but himself. Thrown penniless upon the world, he drops at once to a level with the ordinary pauper loafer, who, however, has this great advantage over him, that he thoroughly knows his ground, has had a large experience in the cadging art, and though, like our new chum, he cannot, or will not, dig, unlike the former, to beg is *not* ashamed.

The early colonial career of the new chum of the steady-going type, unless he be gifted with the rare prudence of accommodating himself to his new position, and settling down without delay to cheap quarters and strict economies, though less blameable, is scarcely less felicitous in its practical results than that of his faster *confrère*. He, too, though far too proper to go “upon the burst,” must have a few little indulgences after his long abstinence, must take up his quarters at a comfortable hotel, and enjoy a short spell before, as he elegantly and expressively phrases it, “buckling to.” That word “spell” is a very short word, a very easy word, a very innocent-sounding word, but, as used in Mr. Steady-going's vocabulary, it is also a very comprehensive word, and, *par conséquence*, a very expensive word. It includes all manner of good living, good liquor — without excess, you understand — theatre-going, sight-seeing *ad libitum*, hansoms unlimited, luncheons “quite regardless,” drives into the country, rides into the bush, a run over to Ballarat, visits to the ship, nobblers round, and a host of other things too numerous to mention. The result is that Mr. Steady-going is almost as soon upon his beam-ends (that last remnant of my new chumship, the affectation of nautical phraseology, still clings to me, I see) as his more frolicsome brother, Mr. Fast. He is, however, somewhat wiser in his generation. He clings to his watch, his etceteras, his portmanteau, his boxes, especially that big one

which contains his dress suit, his white ties, his white kids, his patent pumps, his silk waistcoats, his shiny blue surtout, his twenty-five white linen shirts — all marked — to the last. As soon as he considers that the amount of his account is about coincident with the amount of his resources, he calls for his bill, peruses it, pays it, though it exhausts his finances to the last pound, with the *nonchalant* air of a traveller who is passing on to an adjacent and equally luxurious stage, looks out a cheap but respectable lodging, to which he transfers his goods by car, as per special bargain. His landlady, to whose inquiring eyes he presents a dazzling vista of well-cut clothes, white shirt front, gold watch chain, studs, sleeve-links, well brushed bell-topper, speckless boots, irreproachable “Gamp,” and, above all, substantial luggage, thinks, poor, silly woman, she has landed a prize, and does not dream of insulting him by presenting her account for a matter of some weeks. This gives him time, as he classically expresses it, to turn round. He presents his business introductions, if he has any; looks up every unfortunate individual upon whom he has, or imagines he has, any claim; puts the screw on Mr. This, gives the tip to Mr. That — all with a view to obtaining that employment which has now become a matter of absolute and immediate necessity to him. This sort of work employs his mornings. At one he dines — or, as, with a view to some distant suggestion of a late dinner, he will persist in calling it, lunches — at a sixpenny restaurant. Furtively he glides in, and cautiously; with many glances to right and left, he slips out. This satisfactorily accomplished, he repairs to his lodgings, has a rest, a wash, and a brush up, and turns out just in time to take his part in doing the Block* — a duty which he religiously discharges every afternoon. He feels, to be sure, that he is a sort of ghost at the feast, a kind of one too many, an interloper, almost an impostor; for are not his fine feathers tantamount to a false advertisement of a full exchequer? Still, he thinks it best “on principle,” and as a matter of business, “to do the respectable,” and very efficiently he does it. Mark his brisk air, his well-assumed expression of easy satisfaction, his light, jaunty step. See how naturally he “coins his cheeks to smiles,” which are simply the products of will, and have no origin in a heart which could find its only adequate expression in a language of sighs, and you will cease to wonder at that hackneyed Spartan boy who smiled whilst the fox beneath his cloak gnawed his vitals. By six the farce is over, and our friend retires to his threepenny coffee, with bread and butter *ad lib.*, which in his case indicates at least sixpenny-worth of butter, almost a whole loaf of bread, an hour and a-half's free sitting room, and the monopoly for that period of half-a-dozen newspapers. It is now time for him to be again upon the streets, or, perhaps, he turns into the library for a change. His stay there will, however, not be as long, as, with a mind ill at ease, he will in all probability find it impossible to settle down to

steady reading, and to sit and think would be still more intolerable. He will therefore soon return to his old task of pacing Bourke and Collins Streets, varying the dull round with an occasional trip to the arcades, or the Hobson's Bay Railway Station. Not until his walk has degenerated, through sheer fatigue, into a toddle will he turn his steps homeward, and find repose — and he will be lucky if he always find it — in slumber. Such is a sample of his day. If he be thoroughly determined, and, putting aside false delicacy, press his claims, in season and out of season, he will in all probability gain a footing of some sort or another. If he fail, nothing can very long avert the catastrophe of his respectability, or prevent his sinking to the level of the more reckless gentleman whose descent to pauperism I have already depicted. “Fallen, fallen from his high estate.” Little by little his paraphernalia drops away. He is to be seen nightly hovering round the pawnshop, which it costs him I know not what pangs of agonising pride to enter. First go the small things, then he begins to deal in huge newspaper bundles, and you may know the end is near. His embarrassed air in demanding “an advance,” and the expression of mute misery with which he awaits the shopman's decision, are all against him. They tell of the rude presence of absolute necessity, and encourage that experienced functionary to drive a doubly-hard bargain with him. His clothes, he is told, are not of the “colonial cut,” and will be “moth-eaten to pieces” before they are got rid of. Then, after a feint of not taking in his property upon any terms, the poor new chum is offered about a tithe of what he has asked on them. This he is fain to accept, but saves his pride by muttering something about “not caring to carry them back home with him that night,” and “coming to-morrow and taking them out again, as he cannot afford to let them go at that price.” But, as he himself knows, and as the wily broker easily divines, there is very little likelihood that to-morrow — that “rare and luxurious” to-morrow — will ever come. But the poor lie preserves his self-respect, or he thinks it does, which is about the same thing.

Driven from the haunts of respectability by the growing seediness of his attire, the new chum, such as I have described, in not a few instances makes a final rise of a few shillings, and starts on the tramp up-country. Here a proportion turn tutors or book-keepers (these are lucky), obtain work on stations, get into stores, or are otherwise absorbed into the ordinary life of the country. The remainder either have the fatted calf killed for them at home, blossom into “sun-downers,” or worse still, degenerate into confirmed criminals. Of those who remain in town a small modicum obtain employment as waiters, grooms, boots, or even “to be generally useful” about hotels, but they do not, as a rule, settle very well to their unaccustomed billets, and are, most of them, in communication with “home,” with a view to a speedy return to their old haunts. Their life may be described as a perpetual “waiting for the mail.”

Lucky will they be if their friends prove lenient and their expectations of a goodly remittance are realised. More often they get a stone instead of bread, a letter of recrimination and good advice instead of the letter of credit for which they so urgently plead. Nothing is more striking than the invincible repugnance manifested by the new chum, even when in direst need, to the receipt of public charity. He will do anything, dare anything, rather than accept it — go through any amount of private cadging, lie down in the cricket reserve, or pace the streets all night, as he is forced to do all day, rather than accept the “hospitality” of the Immigrants' Home or Benevolent Asylum. Once he has been humiliated by the taint of public charity, his self-respect is destroyed, and there remains very little hope of his ever emerging from the slough of despond into which he has fallen. What becomes of him is best known to the criminal statistician and the philanthropist. I draw a veil over his latter end.

The new chum, whilst doing Melbourne, is, like the country cousin in London, an easily recognisable individual. The very cut of his coat collar betrays him. When his fortunes are on the decline his air of wild misery and undemonstrative desolation are truly pitiable. The one treat of his dreary life is when — it generally happens in the evening — he falls in with some of his old shipmates similarly situated to himself. Nearly every evening you see a knot of these unfortunates collected in front of the theatre or opera-house door, like a group of Peris gathered round the gate of a paradise which they cannot enter. It is the one glimpse of sociability which they get throughout the day, and they make the most of it. Very merry they grow over the burlesque delineation of their mutual miseries, of which, when together, they can only see the comic side. Then, if one of the number have had the luck to make “a rise” during the day, he “shouts” tobacco for the lot, or sometimes — *mirabile dictu* — “nobblers round.” It is the old story of Nero and his fiddle over again. But if the whimsicalities which distinguish these chance-meetings prove even a temporary medicine for sick hearts, dashed hopes, tired limbs, and weary feet, who will cavil at this light-headed thoughtlessness? Sunday, from the absence of life and movement in the streets, is a dreary day for the new chum, if he keep to his Melbourne beat. If the day be fine, however, he will probably extend his walks to Sandridge or Williamstown, where he will find plenty of variety in inspecting the shipping. The sea air is, however, too hunger-inspiring to be economical, and if his exchequer be too low to stand the drains of an increased appetite, he must be content to be unfashionable, and remain in town. Under these circumstances, or if the day be wet, he will, in all probability, if his clothes be sufficiently decent, sit under Canon Handfield or the Rev. Charles Strong, always remembering to “clear out” before the collection, that scourge of the penniless church-goer. I take it for granted that he is a Protestant, as I cannot see how, on a Sunday, the

impecunious new chum can be anything else. Should he, however, be rash enough to think of attending High Mass or Vespers at a Roman Catholic Church, he will find himself confronted at the entrance by a couple of lynx-eyed money-takers, and the chink of the coin as the worshippers drop in will tell him only too plainly that in these boasted churches of the poor there is no place for him. If, therefore, he hanker after the “sensuous worship” of Catholicism, he will have to be content with such harmonies as he can gather from the outside. On a week-day the penniless new chum would be ungrateful were he not something of a Roman Catholic, seeing what glorious shade and shelter the open churches of the creed afford to him from the glaring sun and pelting rain. On a Sunday, however, he must be a Protestant or nothing at all. If inclination, seediness of attire, impecuniosity, or all combined, make him the last, he will have to take refuge in the Fitzroy Gardens, where he will find free “sittings,” “sermons in stones,” and prayers, if he will, in the rustling of wind-shaken plants and trees. The new chum, however poor in pocket, is certain, after a few weeks upon the streets, to become rich in what Disraeli calls “accumulated experience.” He knows every turn of every street in Melbourne; the whole architecture and outline of the city is at his finger ends, for he has inspected it in sunshine and in shower, by night and by day — nay, at all times of the night and day, and from every possible point of view. He is a sort of walking guide-book to its public parks and buildings, a kind of dictionary of “things not generally known” to the mass of its inhabitants. He has thumbed every book in the Public Library, and has become a living encyclopaedia of literary odds and ends. He is something of a theologian, for he has attended in turn all the churches and chapels of Melbourne. He is something of a politician, too, pinning his faith to the Colonial party, which, for the nonce, is most prone to assert the Englishman's “privilege of public meeting,” a right, the vindication of which by the current radicalism has secured him many an evening's shelter in the Town Hall, and others equally well-warmed and lighted. He knows more law than many lawyers, the Supreme Court in term-time being one of his favourite refuges. He must needs be something of a philosopher, having traversed the extreme poles of its phases. Last, but not least, amongst his numerous qualifications, he knows better than anyone how to lay out threepence to the best advantage. All this knowledge makes him a very desirable, or, at any rate, a very amusing companion, and accounts for the fact, which would otherwise be inexplicable, of his seldom being without tobacco, and, at least, one daily “nobbler,” the tobacco and the “nobblers” being, in fact, the price paid for his society by his less gifted but more solvent associates.

I have now lightly depicted some of the habits and manners of one of the great “social facts” of Australia. I have treated the subject from

somewhat of a serio-comic standpoint; but I am not on that account unconscious of the shadow of tragedy which surrounds it. Pitiably as is the position of the unsuccessful new chum who has “come out” of his own accord, that of the emigrant who owes his misfortunes to the cruelty or carelessness of unfeeling friends has still greater claims to sympathy. It seems to be no uncommon thing for persons at home, who wish to be relieved of the surplus incumbrances, in the shape of sons, nephews, etc., to ship them off to the colonies, with funds utterly insufficient to give them a fair start on landing, and without affording them any fair opportunity of gauging their prospects in emigrating prior to starting. In this way, not only are the victims themselves reduced to the shifts and makeshifts I have described, but the useless, and, I am sorry to say, criminal, population of the colonies is most wantonly and unnecessarily swelled. Parents and guardians, who dare not expose their *protégés* to destitution on the streets at home, think nothing of what is practically the same thing when a long voyage intervenes, and they are divided by thousands of miles from the miseries of which they are the cause, and the public obloquy which should be their meed. If the persons thus sent out are thoroughly able-bodied, they may, after a time, overlive their troubles, but their chance of doing so is small indeed when, as is often the case, they are physically delicate, or even mentally deficient. The victims of this kind of “happy despatch” are not, unfortunately, confined to the sterner sex. A young girl at home commits a *faux pas*, and in order to avoid scandal, perhaps on the very eve of her confinement, when she most of all needs tender treatment, is put on board ship without any companion or attendant, except the ship doctor, who is not invariably the most skilful of his class. If she survive the sufferings of the voyage, and escape utter demoralisation on the passage, how can she hope, when landed in one of the great Australian ports, without friends, money, or character, to provide sustenance for herself and infant after an honest fashion? Ten to one she will be driven to find a living on the streets, and (*pace*, ye moralists) who is most to blame? The poor girl, or those who sent her out to certain destitution? It is not for me, the mere “idle singer of an empty day,” to point the moral of the facts to which I have adverted; but should they be taken up and ventilated by others, I shall not have “made a note” of them in vain.

* That is, taking part in the fashionable promenade in Collins Street — the Regent Street of Melbourne — in the afternoon, from about four to six.

Mr. Barcoo at Kensington Gore.

Sebastian Oldmixon

“A great deal of London flesh is Australian grass.” — *Sir Archibald Michie*.

THERE was no little commotion in Phillips-land when it became known that Mr. Tobias Barcoo, the well-known, wealthy, and widely-respected Squatter, intended to remove his household gods from the shores of Hobson's Bay to the more murky but more fashionable atmosphere of Kensington Gore. The announcement had appeared in the *Port Phillip Plutocrat*, so there could be no doubt about it. The Editor further observed that “Phillipian Society was about to lose one of its most cultured and characteristic Ornaments.” But the *Delphic Devastator*, that great organ of the masses, after quoting its aristocratic rival's eulogistic “par,” printed beneath it a ribald verse, barely, if at all, intelligible to the non-Phillipian reader. These lines, however, appeared to afford huge delight to the *oi polloi* of Fawkner's-Town, who revelled in the coarse allusions to the great Mr. Barcoo's early Colonial career. Under the heading,

AUSTRALIAN GRASS AND LONDON FLESH,

the democratic journalist made some cutting remarks on “Wealthy absentees” and “Land monopolists,” and on those whom it denounced as “having no nobler ambition than to flaunt their Plutocratic pride in Rotten Row” — a somewhat tame description, it must be allowed, of Colonial arrogance in the Mother-land. But the “pith,” as little Mr. Ruby Wren, the comic versifier of the local *Punch*, put it, was in the *Devastator's* verse, and which, therefore, he was thought to have inspired: —

“O! deary me,
What different blokes we be
To when we ‘punched’ the bullocks
On the plains of Wer-ri-bee.”

This, Mr. Wren declared, was enough to “pulverise Barcoo;” and, coming after the *Plutocrat's* allusions to the departing Colonist's ornamental culture, the verse certainly produced the effect of an anti-climax.

Perhaps, after all, it only hastened Mr. Barcoo's departure for Europe. For almost immediately, and amidst such neutralising doses of gibe and laudation, the great Phillipian Squatter steamed away, out between the narrow Heads, through which five-and-thirty years before he had sailed, a poor and eager fortune-seeker, from the Old World to the New. Now he was returning, literally a millionaire, to that far-off, famous, foggy little isle, which had borne his departure, and his long desertion, with a fortitude amounting to callousness. His busy brain was full of bright visions of the kind of life he intended to live when, with his Australian sovereigns at call, he found himself once more in the Centre of the British Empire. For Mr. Barcoo, as the friendly Editor of the *Port Phillip Plutocrat* had indicated, was a man of some social and intellectual ambition, as well as the happy possessor of princely wealth. What a glorious field would London present! What real good he might be able to effect, Macaenas-like, among the needy wits and men of genius of the great Metropolis! What enjoyment he would reap in the speculations of the Scientist, the apothegms of the Sage, the warblings of the Bard!

So silently soliloquised Mr. Barcoo, as he paced the spacious deck of the magnificent s.s. *Yackandandah*.

Alas for poor humanity, its cup of bliss is ever tintured with the inevitable gall! The gallant Austral liner which now bore the Phillipian Caesar and his fortunes, carried also a small, dwarfish person of the name of Timothy Tadpole, whom Mr. Barcoo vaguely remembered at the “Home Station” some years ago, vainly trying to vend some rabbit-destroying nostrum. The millionaire Squatter would not have remembered so trivial an incident and so humble a personage, but for a variety of circumstances which had tended to keep this Tadpole in the public mind. Quite a little stir had been lately caused even in the serene and lordly Octopus Club of Fawkner's-Town, by a rumour that a “distinguished New Hollander” had been elected to the British House of Palaver as the representative of Craigenputtoch, that world-renowned Scottish village, to which all who pay their votive offerings at the shrine of true genius repair even from the uttermost parts of the earth. That a New Hollander should have succeeded in getting into the Imperial House of Palaver was a remarkable circumstance; that he should represent Craigenputtoch was little short of a miracle; but that he should be Timothy Tadpole actually thinned the roll of the Octopus — two old but decidedly apoplectic members falling lifeless on hearing the intelligence in the card-room. It was these circumstances which had kept the erstwhile agent of the Patent Rabbit Exterminator fresh in the mind of

Mr. Barcoo. Still, he might well have had some difficulty in recognising the cerie little elfin who flitted about the deck of the *Yackandandah*, dressed or undressed in kilts, and wearing the historic tartan of the Clan MacGillicuddy. The strangely metamorphosed New Hollander was determined to attract the great Squatter's attention, and Mr. Barcoo, who had the keen eye of the pioneer Colonist, was not long in doubt as to the identity of his fellow-voyager.

“Ah,” mused the Squatter, as he watched the antics of the dwarfish Highlander, “I begin to see how he did the trick at Craigenputtoch. *It's the garb of old Gaul!*”

So pleased was Mr. Barcoo with his discovery that he straightway retired to the saloon, and indited an epistle to his *protégé*, the Editor of the *Plutocrat*, though he somewhat spoilt the effect of his happy phrase by spelling it “Gall.”

When he again appeared on deck, the redoubtable little Member for Craigenputtoch boldly approached him, and, without further parley or preamble, exclaimed, in a voice of thunder —

“It's a richt braw day, the day, Mr. Barcoo. Do ye no ken me? Eh! mon, gie us your hond —

“ ‘A King can mak' a belted knight,
A Marquis, Dook, and a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Gude faith, he mauna fa' that!' ”

It was an unexpected and, by no means, felicitous outburst, but, as Mr. Barcoo afterwards discovered, it was Tadpole's inevitable peroration, whether in the House of Palaver, or, as he phrased it, on the “Heathery wilds of Craigenputtoch.”

With an inspiration of true genius, Mr. Barcoo saw there was only one way out of the social difficulty, and, being a man not devoid of moral courage, he at once adopted it.

“I don't know you, sir,” he said to the quivering Highlander, “and I may add that I don't wish to know a person who, I suppose, is engaged as the ‘advance agent’ of a Scotch Circus.”

These were the last words that ever passed between these two equally remarkable, equally ambitious, but utterly different types of the *genus* New Hollander. Each retired after this shock of arms to his own cabin, but Mr. Tadpole's superior elasticity was shown by his rapid rebound. He was soon on deck again, the centre of an admiring throng, as blithe and busy as a bird in spring. So he continued, day after day, until the Austral liner *Yackandandah* entered Plymouth Sound.

Mr. Barcoo, on the other hand, seemed strangely depressed, and not even the sight of the magnificent Hoe, and the subsequent exhilarating

spectacle of the Duke of Westfolk, assisted by two Servite Fathers, unveiling a gigantic statue to Queen Elizabeth, with the Pope's full and hearty blessing, could arouse the great Phillipian from his moody reveries.

"It's a strange world," he said; "and shall I," he sadly mused, as he saw the neo-Highlander Tadpole trip jauntily up to the Duke and slap him familiarly on the shoulder, "shall I be any happier here than in dear old Fawkner's-Town, where little Snooks — dear little Snooks of the *Plutocrat* — would drop in at the Octopus, and afterwards record my brightest sayings, and describe my late wife's dresses from Worth, with a beautiful fulness of language that, considering his small frame and his frequent whiskies, was highly creditable — highly so?"

Musing thus sadly, Mr. Barcoo, a stranger on a strange railway platform, entered a Great Western first-class carriage alone. As his keen eye swept the Plymouth Station, he beheld the preposterous Tadpole arm-in-arm with the Servite Fathers, preceding the Duke to a special compartment, which they all merrily entered.

In a few brief hours the mighty but miserable millionaire was at the Paddington Terminus, his long journey from Fawkner's-Town to Cockayne completed.

"Really," he remarked, as he emerged on the crowded platform, "our Hobson's Bay Station is in every way superior."

It was a simple remark, but it showed how deeply the iron had entered his soul.

As he stood, bewildered, amidst the noise and confusion, the crash of luggage, and the swaying forms of porters in velveteens, the brooding Barcoo caught a last glimpse of the bustling Tadpole, who was taking leave of the Duke and the Servite Fathers with his favourite but, in this instance, decidedly offensive quotation from the poet Burns.

* * * * *

"Some years," as Miss Braddon, like a goddess of High Olympus, would exclaim, "had rolled on." Mr. Barcoo now resided in a superb mansion at Kensington Gore. The intermediate interval indicated by the foregoing "Stars" may not have brought the Phillipian the "philosophic mind," but Mr. Barcoo was a very different man to the lonely, disappointed voyager whom we sadly tracked from Plymouth Sound to Paddington Station. He was now one of the recognised leaders of Artistic Society in the great Metropolis, and his rooms in the season were the resort of the most famous people. One wise and determined resolve Mr. Barcoo had from the first decided on — to admit very few itinerant New Hollanders within the princely portals of Kensington Gore. I do not say that Mr. Barcoo might not have relaxed his iron rule if little Snooks of

the *Plutocrat* had ever carried out his cherished intention of paying a visit to Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey and the tomb of Shakespeare at Stratford-on-Avon. But Snooks was daily growing older, and as yet no chance had wafted him from Fawkner's-Town after his patron; and he grew moody and bitter, and even joined the ribald Wren in a stave to the ridicule of both Tadpole and Barcoo. Of this the great man was happily in ignorance, and Snooks, had he ever come to London, would have been dazzled with a glimpse of the glories of Kensington Gore. But, save in his case, and in that of one or two of the oldest and wealthiest *Octopi*, the motto over the Barcoo portals might well have been — “No New Hollander need apply.”

It was a sagacious resolve. Above all, it kept away the kilted Tadpole, whose existence Mr. Barcoo strove to eliminate from his consciousness.

Alas! this was not altogether possible. One evening Mr. Barcoo found himself in the Speaker's Gallery of the House of Palaver, and the spectacle of the little half-nude dwarf, hopping over the Ministerial benches, like some newly discovered Marsupial as yet uncatalogued by Modern Science, all but alienated his reason. Ever afterwards, when he drove past the great river-side Palace, the memory of that evening would revive, and he would shiver so that the windows of the carriage rattled again.

Yes, Tadpole was the Mordecai of this modern Haman from Phillip's-land, causing him constant misery, filling his soul with envy, and his heart with bitterness. On the memorable evening that Mr. Barcoo went to the House, the Member for Craigenputtoch made his great speech (of two lines and a-half, not including the peroration, “a King can mak,” etc.) on the “Introduction of the Thistle into New Guinea as a means of exterminating Bismarck's intrusive Countrymen.” Mr. Barcoo, fortunately, had retired before the honourable member had caught the Speaker's eye — or the effects might have been serious. Next morning, at breakfast, he opened the *Thunderer*, and found Tadpole's speech reported verbatim. Putting his cup down, he quickly left the room, as though suffering a sudden and hardly-to-be-borne agony.

Mr. Barcoo sought sweet solace for this, and all other sublunary ills, in what he was pleased to call the Society of Men of Mind. He was no aesthete, yet he favoured that strange cult, feeling sure that no true disciple could tolerate a dwarf in kilts. He, in fact, was much pleased with a flickering poetess of this school, who declared that “her Muse would feel the presence of Tadpole in an adjacent street — would resent it,” she mildly intoned, “and would fold her gossamer wings and fly away, and I should be henceforth dumb, and know not why.” This gifted lady (authoress of “Dewdrops of the Divine One”) was ever afterwards a welcome guest at Kensington Gore.

But to do Mr. Barcoo justice, he entertained much more widely-known

celebrities in the world of Literature, Science, and Art.

“No game,” said little Breezer of Fawkner's-Town, who had once been invited to the superb town mansion during his visit to England — “no game is too high for him to shoot at.”

“But does he *hit* them, sir?” queried Snooks, of the *Port Phillip Plutocrat*, whose fidelity had sadly waned.

“*Hit* them!” ejaculated Breezer. “Why, sir, if I was once at Toby Barcoo's beautiful place, I was there a hundred times. ‘Breezer,’ said he, ‘come and stay with me as long as you're in the Old Country.’ In fact, no Reception at Kensington Gore was complete without me. Poets, painters, sculptors, and all such fellows, in strings, sir, like beads. I often had a yarn with old Matthew Browning and Swinburne — capital fellow Swinburne, but rather bigoted, I fancy — rather bigoted, sir.”

Mr. Snooks, who had a poetic soul, which had wilted under the sirocco of daily journalism in Fawkner's-Town, was much impressed.

“On two occasions,” continued Breezer, “the Poet Laureate sat next me at dinner. But I found him silent, sir — no flow of ideas — none whatever. Don't think he knows a ewe from a wether.”

Such were the stories that reached the Octopus Club concerning the distinguished social career in London of their old millionaire member, Mr. Barcoo.

As usual, there was a slender basis of fact, and an alarming superstructure of fable.

Of all Mr. Barcoo's new-found intellectual friends, none were more frequent or more honoured at Kensington Gore than Mr. Florizel Prune, the distinguished Historian, author of the *Marital Bond of Philip and Mary*. The reader is, of course, acquainted with that pair of vivid historical portraits.

It was in Mr. Florizel Prune's *Philip and Mary* that the remarkable letter of the Princess Elizabeth, afterwards Queen of England, first appeared in print — the letter which entirely shattered the dastardly theories of Dr. Theophilus Bogg as to the theology of the Tudors. (“*Though Arius be a bitte of a wind-bagge,*” wrote the Princess, “*by my halidame, I prefer him to his Arch-enemie*” — meaning pointed out Mr. Prune, with rare discernment, *Athanasius*).

Mr. Florizel Prune was a constant visitor at Kensington Gore. He had a really charming manner, a kind of affectation removed from all vulgarity, and, in its way, as artistic as his literary style. Instead of talking History and the Record Office to the Phillipian Squatter, Mr. Prune preferred to listen while his host expatiated on his pioneering experiences in the Australian bush. On this subject the Historian declared that Mr. Barcoo was “quite Homeric.” And in so saying he was more than half in earnest.

“You must,” he would softly remark, “if you wish to find out what a man is like, test him on the subjects by which he has conquered in the

ceaseless Warfare of Life. Judged by such rational standards, our New Hollander is one of the most intellectual men of my acquaintance — and quite the most *entertaining*.”

No wonder the Phillipian Squatter reciprocated the good-will of the English historian. Often after a *tête-à-tête*, he declared that Mr. Prune was “the best talker in all England,” when that astute gentleman had all the time been playing the much more difficult *rôle* of the attentive and interested listener.

“So I hear,” observed Mr. Prune, in his low, purring, pleasant tones, “that you are going to have quite a Bardic Reception — all the Sweet Singers are coming to-morrow evening.”

“Yes,” said the Squatter; “there will be a few poets, but I hope you will be able to come also.”

“No; you must excuse me. I detest the pen-and-ink fraternity — even my fellow-craftsmen. But poets are appalling. As Carlyle, in his pleasant way, used to tell them, Why can't the brutes *say* what they have to say, not *sing* it.”

“I'm rather afraid of a *scene*,” said the Phillipian. “I never before had so many poets in one evening, and they may not mix well.”

“Oh! they are sure to quarrel or be very moody. But I really can't undergo such an ordeal; — my brother, now, would be delighted.”

“Do you mean the Clergyman?” asked Mr. Barcoo, who was always interested in the Prune family.

“The ex-Clergyman you mean,” said Mr. Prune. “Yes! he would be just the thing; but he's not available. Poor Horatio! he was so afraid of being made a Bishop that he wandered off one morning, and joined the Monks of Mount Athos, and as I never hear from him, I presume he occupies his time in the ceaseless contemplation of his navel, — ‘thereby inducing Visions of ineffable Bliss’ — *vide* Gibbon.”

Mr. Barcoo was fast getting out of his depth. The only person of that name he had ever known was one William Gibbon, a diabolical radical, a member of the Croajingalong Road Board, who sent scandalous letters constantly to the *Delphic Devastator*. Mr. Barcoo could only hope that “*Vidy*” was not of the same hateful tribe. But he quickly dismissed the crude fancy — no Gibbon even remotely related to William would waste his time in the way referred to, while there was anyone in the neighbourhood of Mount Athos with more land or money than himself.

“Yes,” continued Mr. Prune, “I greatly miss Horatio. A Jaques-like fellow, of a most melancholy yet delectable wit. He even had more genuine humour than my younger brother Lorenzo, the low comedian, whom I was thinking of as a social solvent for to-morrow evening.”

Mr. Barcoo was again non-plussed. He was constantly made to feel how difficult it was for a Phillipian to live up to the social altitudes attained in the Centre of the British Empire. His old fellow-members of

the Octopus would as soon think of referring to their brother, the “sun-downer,” as to their brother, the low comedian; even a monk in the family would hardly be deemed respectable in Phillips-land.

“I didn't,” he stammered “know that you had — that the stage had — I mean, that your brother was a play-actor.”

To do Mr. Barcoo justice, he instinctively disliked Thespians, and recognised no difference between a fashionable tragedian and the clown at a Richardson's show, and he never listened to that futile gossip of the *coulisses*, which has vulgarised our drawing-rooms, and slopped over into the light ephemeral literature of the day. Only thus can it be accounted for, that he did not know that Mr. Larry Figg, of the Popinjay, was really Mr. Lorenzo Prune, younger brother of his friend, the eminent English historian.

“Yes,” fluted on Mr. Florizel Prune, “I christened him ‘Figg,’ and the ladies of the theatre, merry little minxes, dubbed him ‘Larry.’ He made his first appearance in the Greek monk's cast-off Anglican garments, as a comic High-church Curate, and was decidedly amusing — once in a way. But like all professional jesters, he is very depressing as a constant companion. Whereas the wit and humour of Horatio are perennial. But Lorenzo might really be turned to use to-morrow evening.”

Mr. Barcoo pressed the Historian to bring his brother by all means, but Mr. Prune left the house without making a definite promise.

* * * * *

The great Bardic Reception at Mr. Barcoo's mansion in Kensington Gore was described in all the fashionable prints of the day; but the strange sequel was somehow omitted, which proved to me, at least, that the prevailing opinion, that these “society” sketches are done by the footmen, is a mistake.

It was after that appalling scene between the Yellow-haired Bard and his great Raven-locked rival, and the company, which had become somewhat demoralised, were singing in chorus the former's paean of jubilation: —

“Though the mirror may murmur at midnight,
And the waves wash the welkin on high,
I feel in my soul that I did right,
To smite Alfred T. in the eye.

His songs are a pallid putrescence;
He maunders with mimic and moan;
His fame is a Social Excrescence;
O! doubt not, Dolores, my own.

He sings, and he sighs, and he sickens
His readers, who reel and retrace.
No maiden's young blood ever quickens
As she marks with her pencil the place.

But I, when I sing, make them flutter;
They fume on the threshold and swoon;
They crave not for bread then, nor butter,
But moan for the Man in the Moon.

Tenny's verse is not clever, but cloying;
Yet lovers who leer in the lane,
Fond lovers, while foolishly toying,
Quote him over and over again.

And the Publisher pays him with pleasure,
And tenders him Drink on the cheap;
While I, with my Musical Measure,
Am left here to whimper and weep."

Taking up the preposterous refrain, "Though the mirror may murmur at midnight," the Lady Augusta Highflyer seized Mr. Barcoo, and began waltzing him round the room. But in the middle of this wild performance a strange figure suddenly entered the room, which transfixed the genial host, who gazed with a look of terrified horror. It was a dwarfish clansman in full regalia.

"Your hond, Barcoo," he exclaimed, rushing into the centre of the exquisite apartment —

" 'A man's a man for a' that,
For a' that, and a' that.' "

With one wild leap Mr. Barcoo hurled himself upon the intruder, and most certainly the results might have been fatal, but at that moment there interposed the calm, well-bred, imperturbable Mr. Florizel Prune.

"Pardon me," he said to the palpitating Phillipian; "but why eliminate from this interesting universe my brother Lorenzo, the low comedian?"

"Your brother?" gasped Mr. Barcoo. "But whence this hideous and barbaric costume?"

"Permit me," said Mr. Larry Figg (for it was he), in a voice like, and yet unlike, that of his distinguished brother, "a little dress Rehearsal for my new character, the title *rôle* in the forthcoming farcical comedy, 'The Member for Craigenputtoch.' "

"The Member for Craigenputtoch?" hissed Mr. Barcoo. "How came you by his ridiculous garments? Explain, sir, I demand."

"By purchase, sir, from Sir Timothy Tadpole, K.C.M.G., the newly-

appointed Governor of British New Guinea.”

The last blow was too much. The agitated Mr. Barcoo fairly swooned away in the capacious lap of the Duchess of Creamshire.
