WAEN THE MOPOKE

FALLS

WILLIAM S. WALKER.

"COO-EE"
WHEN THE MOPOKE CALLS
'Midnight.' — Frontispiece.
When the Mopoke Calls

By

William S. Walker
('Coo-ee')

'Mixt with the sights and the sounds of the wildwood.'—Kendall.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY SIMON H. VEDDER
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John Long
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TO
MY DEAR WIFE
FROM
W. S. W.
PROEM

The cattle had been troublesome. Some fifty head had broken away from camp during the night; the utmost efforts of the night watchmen having failed to stop their furious rush.

Picking up their tracks on the outskirts of the 'main-mob' next morning very shortly after sunrise, and accompanied by a favourite cattle dog, I followed on till noon, when I found them all camped by the side of a long and deep creek waterhole.

This pool was fringed on either bank with the scented rush of the Paroo; and at its farther end stood a mighty copper-leaved gum tree, of such dimensions that it threw a welcome shade for a considerable distance round.

Dismounting, and hobbling 'Heiress,' I proceeded to light a small fire, and boil some water in my 'jackshay' (quart pot with pannikin attached) with a view to tea, as an accompaniment to the piece of salt beef and damper I had brought with me.

Lighting my pipe after my meal, I sat reclined against the smooth base of the giant tree, giving my fancy free rein, with that healthy contentment brought about by constant hard exercise in the open air, and an unimpaired digestion.

The cattle were quiet enough now and seemed to be enjoying their noontide siesta, lying down all together
on the farther side of the water, where they were fairly emmowered in long kangaroo-grass. I was evidently in quite new country, at a considerable distance back from the river, where we were travelling.

The creek appeared to be a fine one, and would probably stretch far back to the ranges, showing waterhole after waterhole, deep, broad and long, before it ran out on the higher ground, each surrounded by good virgin country, as yet untrodden by stock and, for aught I knew, as yet unexplored by man. As I mused, a puff of wind sighed and sang through the branches, overhead, whilst a shower of leaves span downwards, flickering like coppery gold in the sunshine. A voice seemed to dwell in the leaves and branches of that tree, and I found myself framing words for the whispered sounds. Looking towards the forest glades beside me, I was not a little surprised to see a man standing on a newly begun clearing, wielding an American axe. 'Who are you?' I queried inwardly.

'A pioneer, one of Australia's first-born,' murmured the wind in the leaves. 'Look forward!'

The man had disappeared, but on the spot where he had been standing was a grass-grown grave with a rude fence around it, and at the head, a rough cross, fashioned by some friendly hand to mark the woodman's memory. 'Look not yet back!' wailed the leaves. 'The best and bravest are gone; many of those who toiled and set their energies to conquer the far-away places are gone to their eternal rest, but their purpose still remains—What see you now?'

I looked again. I saw men, bearded, and sun-tanned, driving cattle and sheep in countless herds.

I saw that Time, and Progress had made many changes in that wild interior.

'Look yet again!' said the voices.
I saw great chimneys pouring forth volumes of smoke. I heard the whistle of trains, and the roar of the ponderous stamper batteries as they pounded and crushed the great blocks of gold-bearing quartz, dragged out of the very bowels of the earth by the powerful engines of the mines. I could hear the hum and busy turmoil of a dense population, and a city was built upon the spot!

‘Look seawards!’ whispered the voices.

I stood upon a rocky promontory stretching far out into the Pacific, and near by me, a huge lighthouse. Steamers, like a swarm of bees, were passing and repassing, and their smoking funnels left a blackness against the sky. Of all nations were they. Commerce and enterprise were enriching the land.

Again the voices whispered, ‘Look!’

It was midnight in a great city. Though sleep brooded over it, I detected a working light, never to be extinguished, in some of the byways and thoroughfares; the light of the Press, where the busy toilers were engaged in transcribing the Present and preserving the Past.

‘So far the record has been safely kept,’ said the voices. ‘Now look back!’

I stood again upon the promontory; but there was no sign of the great lighthouse. Not a habitation was visible. All was wild nature. Becalmed off the coast was a ship of a fashion whereof I knew not. Men moved about her decks dressed in antique garments, wondering at and talking about the new land. Apart stood one of noble mien, and writ upon his brow was the legend—‘Endeavour and Discovery.’ He was the premier pioneer of all, who had been the instrument under Divine Providence to discover and found this great nation, to affiliate it to the mother country, where to this day it
stands, with kindly ties of blood-relationship, loyalty, friendship and love.

The vision passed.

I gathered the cattle together, heading them back for the main river, and at sunset regained my party, but my day-dream resulted in my fashioning from the experience of a chequered life the following stories, descriptive of the period of my younger days, and of the districts in Australia in which my lot was cast. It was a wild and unsettled region then, but civilisation has worked out there now after the fashion of my vision.

I now regather some of these experiences with my best thanks to those editors of colonial newspapers and magazines who have published them, happy indeed, if I can interest and amuse. Several of these tales are quite true, whilst all are founded on facts which have come under my own observation and hearsay.
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'Round the world lang syne.' — Page 1.
WHEN THE MOPOKE CALLS

ROUND THE WORLD LANG SYNE

Cras ingens iterabimus æquor.—HORACE.

Twenty knots and more in an hour! Who would have thought it? What would the ghost of old Mr Green, the great Indian and Australian shipowner say to that nowadays? What would he say or think about the Cunarder or Inman liner, those ‘greyhounds of the sea,’ tearing along at this collisionable pace; fitted up too with all the modern improvements of steam-steering gear, electricity, and so forth? What would he say to the enormous increase of steamers in our mercantile marine since his own time? Ah well, the old times were the pleasanter for all that, and the risk of collision infinitely less.

I may be pardoned for thinking that the ocean itself was brighter and sunnier in those old far-off days; the tropical sunsets lovelier (you certainly saw more of them during a voyage), the trade winds balmier, the chats and walks on deck pleasanter, and the whole company jollier altogether. Nowadays it is all hurry, fuss, and crowding.

You get over your journey to Australia or New Zealand in from six to seven weeks. The big steamer rushes
along day and night at an equal rate, always progressing except when engaged in the exigencies of coaling, loading, unloading, embarking or landing passengers.

There is quarantine to be gone through sometimes, and that was not of very frequent occurrence long ago. One was not overcrowded in the old days. You had not to wait for the matutinal bath, with six or seven other men, in an atmosphere heated to about 120° Fahrenheit, and very moist at that; emerging from which at the close of your toilet, you hardly feel refreshed at any time from Port Said until far south of Cape Guardafui. No, you got it quietly on deck, with the aid of sailors, the hose, or buckets of salt water—and had your bath in freshness and comfort.

It was not necessary to make an appointment at a stated time with the barber. An old salt tonsorially skilled, would wait upon you by appointment in your own cabin.

And there was no coaling. 'Between decks' was not converted into a stifling inferno, during this very repulsive process, where you couldn't breathe freely. You might have your port open at any time unless the sea was too rough. I agree with the poet who said: 'The things of the past are the best.' Speaking metaphorically; take my hand, and follow me round the world, at a period varying between twenty-five or thirty years ago. We as young fellows have heard of a land, an Eldorado, where we may become independent. Some of us fondly imagine that we have only got to go there to pick up the golden bucketsful.

It is far off over a waste of waters, but we care little for that. We are young and full of spirits, and we know that we can get there on board ship. We but
obey a natural law of migration, and because we are either overcrowded or dissatisfied with our home beehive, we emigrate somewhere else. We want a ship. There are many, but steam is in its infancy; hardly able to toddle as yet. We need an outfit. Easily procurable for ready money. Let us pay S. W. Silver’s in Cornhill a visit. Here you can get anything suitable for a voyage, from a ‘needle to an anchor’ as the saying goes, from a comb and brush to a deck chair. But we as old travellers, presumably, are not over-tempted by the articles, however luxurious, in the travellers’ and explorers’ room, and soon select a modest kit, leaving instructions with the firm to send one of their carpenters down to the ship to fit up our cabin with the necessary bunk and shelves, or what not.

We then take the first train from Fenchurch Street to Blackwall and enter the docks. Here are the flyers of the ocean, tea-ships; and there are the passenger vessels, famous old ‘barkies’ of the class of the Swiftsure, High Flyer, Cutty Sark, Kent, Thermopylae, Thomas Stevens, the old Windsor Castle, Hesperus, Duntrune, and Mermerus.

We think as we stand there, gazing at the lofty spars, of the endless trackless miles of liquid ocean, those flying jib booms (run in now) have sped over when the waves rose like mountains, when the wind howled and whistled and tore through the cordage.

As we are going to Australia, we pass the New Zealand ships, where they are lying in the great basin, enumerating the Merope, Waitangi, Waikato, Crusader, and William Davie, not forgetting the Piako, one of the prettiest ships afloat. What are all these ships? Where are they all now when the big steamers are running
so constantly to both Australia and New Zealand. Merely sailing tramps, cargo boats, and powder ships, many of them on their old direction.

After an inspection of the Australian vessels, we finally select the Kent, bound for Melbourne. In a few days' time we are gliding down the Thames on board that ship in charge of a powerful steam-tug, leaving old Blackwall, passing Rosherville, 'the place to spend a happy day' largely advertised as such in those times.

At Gravesend, we anchor to await our captain and to take in the last supply of fresh meat, sheep, pigs, and poultry. We go ashore for the last time, warned not to stop long. On returning, all the passengers seem out of place. The ship is all in confusion. The sailors are working double tides (those that are sober enough, at least), and our chief mate has his hands full.

Next morning the crew are getting up the anchor, and as our skipper, who has been delayed overnight in London, steps on board, the capstan revolves to the chorus of manly voices, singing the old refrain:—

`Heave with a will, my jolly boys,
Heave a-round.
We're off from England, jolly boys,
Outward bound.'

To this song, the anchor is slowly forced out of the mud and ooze of old Father Thames.

It has been 'awash,' 'apeak,' 'fished,' 'catted,' and made snug, as our stout-hearted little steam tug has had charge of us, down the river. Out past the Nore light she leaves us, and we feel the first heave of the 'briny,' as our gallant vessel bows to it like a stately swan. Out beyond the land, the sails are set awol and aloft, and with
a 'flowing sheet, and a wind that follows fast,' we reel
down channel at last. Here comes a large vessel beating
up!'

'What ship is that, pilot?'
'The Samuel Plimsoll, sir, a "White Star" liner from
Sydney.'

And as the great ship passes with gold, merchandise,
and human souls on board, we give them a cheer when
close to us. It is heartily responded to, so let us hope
they have been successful out yonder.

We go on our way, leaving friends, hearths, homes,
unaware if we shall ever see them again. We run by
the Downs, and at length sight Falmouth, where our
Channel pilot, the last connecting link with the shore,
leaves us. We stand away from the chalk cliffs of old
Albion, and they disappear gradually astern. Off Ushant
we get a glimpse of the French Fleet manoeuvring, and
afterwards encounter a heavy gale in the Bay of Biscay,
remaining hove-to for four days and nights, when our
luck changes, and we have a good run to the Line, where
we are again detained by the equatorial belt of calms,
when the ship rolls uneasily, groaning and creaking in
all her joints, when the sails flap and bang, the tar
bubbles out of the seams of the deck, and all is ennui
and lassitude.

At last, just when we are all heartily tired of the ship,
and one another, a faint, light cat's-paw comes flickering
up over the glassy surface of the ocean, getting fresher
and fresher until we realise that we have picked up our
N.E. trade, and begin to be cheerful again.

Now onward ever speeds the good ship, and the great
wandering albatross follows in our wake with lordly
pinion. Past the Cape of Good Hope, we have strong
N.W. to W.N.W. gales with a high following sea. How pleasant to walk up and down the rolling decks, with the friend of your heart, as the strong crisp wind flushes your face, and stings by your ears with its cold salt vigour, to watch the great indigo-coloured, foam-crested seas go thundering past, whilst the ship races along three hundred and more miles a day.

We get good winds to the Leeuwin or Land of Lyons, (as the quaint old Dutch navigators called it), the S.S.W. extremity of the continent of Australia, so christened, I think, by that old sea-dog Tasman, and we get enough of the 'quality' of this stormy cape to nearly blow the hair off our heads!

At length we make Bass's Straits near Port Philip and pick up our pilot, who conducts us in safety through the 'Rip,' the dangerous rapid tideway at the entrance of the huge bay. Once inside, we are boarded by the health officer, who passes us, and we sail onward down the harbour.

The *Somersetshire* (auxiliary screw) belonging to Messrs Money, Wigram & Co., and one of the first direct steamers to Australia in those early days is coming out, homeward bound, crowded with passengers. Landing at Sandridge, we take the train to Melbourne, and are soon in comfort at the Port Philip Club Hotel.

We find Melbourne to be a largish town with a decidedly American and business-like air about it.

Time is fleeting, so, after a brief three days' sojourn, we start for Sydney by the A.S.N. Co.'s famous steamer *City of Melbourne*, by this time of day a condemned old hulk, and laid in the mud in one of the city of Sydney's numerous bays. Rough weather outside makes us rather uncomfortable in spite of our former long acquaintance
with old ocean, the motion of the steamer being so very different to that of our fine old ship. However, thanks to the said steam-power, we soon pass Cape Schank, Wilson’s Promontory, the ninety-mile beach, Jervis Bay, Botany Bay, finally arriving at Sydney Heads early one summer morning. All along the coast, even during the rough weather, our way has been enlivened by occasional glimpses of white sandy beaches and rocky promontories environed with greenery, the waves of the Southern Pacific lashing in fury upon them. Why do they call this mighty ocean the Pacific? It certainly has its calm, but can be ferocious enough apparently at the smallest trifle, figuratively speaking, and in a very sudden and dangerous manner also. The small red-legged shore-gulls, peculiar to this part of the world, have daily circled round us and flapped in our wake. We have watched headland, island, rock and shore, all the way up, each one a new object of interest. As our weather moderated, and the scent-laden breeze came off the shore, we have felt the wondrous glamour of the Australian wilds, in the balsamic breath of the bush—appreciated and understood, I am afraid, only by an Australian bred and born. Small birds from the wonderful land so new to some of us have perched on the steamer’s rigging. We have seen a whale spout. Altogether we have enjoyed ourselves bon gre, mal gre, in spite of the monotony of a voyage amongst strangers, and without the society of the rest of our friends in the dear old ship.

As we pass up Sydney harbour in the early morning, we see lovely sheltered nooks, white sandy beaches, sandstone rocks of quaintest shape. The shores which are low are wooded with feathery eucalypti and scrubby
undergrowth almost down to the water's edge. A mist, but a transparent mist, soon to be dispelled by the rising sun, hangs with a silver film between us and our goal. Then this gauzy curtain rises right in front of us as we are steaming slowly before a north-east wind (our pilot on board, picked up outside in a whale-boat from the old fore-and-aft pilot schooner, Captain Cook), and lo, there is Sydney itself, seen in glimpses, for though we see part of the town ahead, we open bay after bay, with luxurious private dwellings nestling therein, embowered in tropical foliage of bananas, bamboos, and Norfolk Island pines, with here and there a large Moreton Bay fig tree, to say nothing of the universal eucalypts. At last we come to anchor at the Circular Quay, and our outward voyage is completed.

During our stay in Sydney we get some capital fishing. We are asked out to water-picnics and evening parties, and we live in clover. But we must pass over a period of a few months, during which time we have found our first nugget, ridden a buck-jumper, hunted emu and kangaroo, camped out on the 'roads' with cattle, and experienced a night's 'moonlighting' when your horse jumps at every shadow cast by the trees to make sure of not being foiled by a real fallen log. We have interviewed a 'Mallee' bull, fiercest of wild cattle, and have sung over our camp fire Rolf Boldrewood's famous stockman's song, one verse of which runs:—

'Oh for a quiet milking mob,
I hear some crawler cry.
But give to me the Mallee bull
With the glare in his tameless eye.

And the quart pots have been emptied, the pipes smoked,
and the day's battles 'fought o'er again.' How Whiffins the 'new chum' came off his horse when it 'propped' after that roan 2.S. heifer. How Sandy Mc'Culloch, more generally known as 'Long Sandy,' had been 'duffing' calves. How those Shield and Diamond D cattle had turned the heads of all the others on the station. How old 'Sundowner' had put his foreleg in a crab hole, and upset Dick Risky, who was always 'blowing' about his horsemanship. And far overhead the Southern Cross glitters, till at length the merry voices are hushed in slumber. Then the silence of the night, broken only by the howl of some thieving 'warrigal' (wild dog), or the cry of the 'morepork' gives way slowly to the 'God of Day,' and with the first beams of the ruddy rising sun, the feathered tribes break forth into that glad, glorious Australian melody, once heard, ever to be remembered. But the stay for one or two of us must be brief, and again we find ourselves on board the good ship Duntrune, homeward bound.

Southward, past Cape Horn, we see our first iceberg, a mass of glittering crystal, reflecting azure and opal tints, with a gleam of beautiful transparent green as a permanency. Northwards now rolls the good ship, past the Falklands. We drop in for a 'Pampero' off the Rio de la Plata, at one time a hurricane and then a calm, which leaves us at the mercy of a heavy rolling sea. In time we get our S.E. trade again, working well over into the Gulf Stream, where we fish for, and bottle, seaweed. Very pretty it is, and teeming with small crabs, molluscs, pipe-fish, sea-horses, etc. Then we pick up our N.E. trade, and make a fair wind of it.

At night, in these tropical latitudes the sea is luminous, huge fireballs looming up in our wake.
One fine morning on turning in our bunk, we see out of the port the white chalk cliffs of old Albion once more, and speed up channel before a fresh south-wester, finally being signalled by P.H. No. 3 pilot boat, which puts one of her pilots on board the ship.

As she is going back into Plymouth we ship on board, and go ashore to the 'Royal,' 'spatchcock' and 'Devonshire cream.'

The express that night, London in the sleepy, foggy morning, and our cruise is ended.
THAT JACKEROO

'We could have better spared a better man.'—SHAKESPEARE.

We were a number of young fellows going out to Australia, all of us imbued with that lack of experience common to such a party. And yet some of them have made their mark out there, I have no doubt. But where are they all now? Who can tell? I only came across one old friend of that party after the lapse of long years. And then, he and I didn't hit it. We met on shipboard, and amongst us was one to whom this description of his early days is devoted. I know not whether he is alive now, but if he is, and should happen to glance across these pages, I should like to see his face as he reads my most truthful description.

To begin with, when I first knew him, I often thought that his parents must have devoutly thanked heaven that he had not a twin brother. The double blessing would have been too strong, and would have wrecked any house whether 'founded upon a rock' or otherwise. On board ship his very name carried a certain amount of weight with it, disarming rebuke and criticism. Never was a crash heard, or somebody fell downstairs, but those reading, writing diaries, or playing cards in the snug 'cuddy,' looked smilingly at one another, and murmured
reassuringly, 'It’s only Jemmy.' Had the ship struck on a rock, I am certain that the first comforting reflection would have been, that it was ‘only Jemmy.’ From cabin-boy to captain, we all had the most perfect confidence in him. We knew that he would not break or kill himself. The numerous experiments he had made in that line, though pantomimic and very hazardous, had been eminently satisfactory. He always descended the stairs head foremost, owing to his recklessness of disposition, and a desire to supply the current news of the day at once. But we got used to this method of procedure, for he always arose cheerfully and uncomplainingly. When ‘Neptune’ boarded us, Jemmy, of course, had the temerity to go through the whole performance, was bolussed by the marine doctor with indescribable pills, bedaubed and shaved by his majesty’s barber, with a formidable razor, made out of a rusty iron hoop, with a handle about two feet long, and finally engaged in a terrific battle with two stalwart A.B.’s dressed up as Polar bears, in the triced-up sail full of water into which he was tilted. He was invulnerable. His body bore the mark of many a bruise, but his spirit rose undaunted.

When the goose was let go in the saloon at the dead of night, necessitating the ship’s doctor and medical comforts for three or four nervous old ladies, it was vaguely hinted that Jemmy was at the bottom of it all. But he remained undetected, and despite the grim inuendoes passed by the captain at breakfast next morning, betrayed no emotion beyond innocence, mixed with intense curiosity.

When the steward’s pantry was broken into, and a round dozen of wine and beer abstracted, it was proved
beyond a doubt that Jemmy had retired to bed through indisposition that night at eight o’clock. True, it was discovered that he was possessed of a headache, and evinced a partiality for soda and bitters, with an occasional whisky towards noontide next day.

‘But,’ argued the doctor, ‘that was but a natural concomitant of his malady.’

Having been articled as a clerk in an ironmongery establishment somewhere in Scotland, he had brought out, as stock-in-trade, several worthless old muskets, and one of these forlorn relics happening to possess a rifled barrel, he paraded it off to his friends as the most wonderful piece in Christendom. He nearly secured watery graves for us all by presenting it capped and loaded at a huge solitary bull-whale which had been cruising near the ship for some time one morning. Luckily he was promptly disarmed by the captain; as bull-whales are apt to be aggressive and vindictive when hurt, even to the starting of a plate in a ship’s side. On our arrival in Melbourne, Jemmy partook of too much supper (the liquid element predominating), and being remonstrated with afterwards in the public ways, by an active and intelligent officer of the police force, addressed him as ‘Robert’ and was instantly run in to government lodgings. We had great difficulty in bailing him out, which we only accomplished by one of our party happening to be a friend of the superintendent. Next day, having paid his fine of five shillings, he behaved fairly well until dinner-time, when he again broke out, insisting upon taking large quantities of cream with his ‘Julienne’ soup. I rejoice to say that this unheard-of feat settled him for that afternoon.

When we embarked upon our first mining venture Jemmy shone forth with a regular halo of glory round
his head, in the shape of the most outrageous and extravagant 'pugarree' procurable. He was visible for miles, and frightened every kangaroo on the ranges into fits of a marsupial character, the diagnosis of which was excessive jumping.

Jemmy's turn came in due course to act as cook for a week. That week was the most disastrous we had ever experienced. He boiled the horn handles off all the knives and forks, chipped the best axe, cut and burnt himself like an Indian fanatic: finishing up by setting fire to the hut and ruining a valuable 'possum' rug by his attempts to put it out. He caught fire too, but we extinguished him with a couple of buckets of cold water. He had been in hot water too often.

About this time, his inordinate vanity led him to believe that he was a past master in the science of horse-dealing, and he returned one day in triumph from a neighbouring gully, leading two foals (large ones, it is true) having given £9 sterling for the pair, under the impression that they were full grown and trained horses. Nothing daunted by our roars of laughter, Jemmy in his spare moments (when he was not spoiling something) could always be seen in the act of re-mounting one of these animals, but as he took the precaution of tying his fiery steeds to large trees in the sandy drift of the creek, a few falls, though slightly monotonous, didn't matter.

Besides, he always landed on his head, and there Jemmy was invulnerable. On Sundays he used to go out shooting. Being cautioned about native bears, he used to double charge his gun, and the reports from his vicinity were terrific in consequence. None of us dared to go within half a mile of him.
One afternoon he returned to the hut looking flurried and anxious, saying nervously that he had got a bear up a tree, had expended all his shot upon it, had then fired wooden plugs at the animal without effect. When being afraid that it would descend and tear him limb from limb, he had come back for more ammunition.

Well knowing the peaceful and friendly nature of the Australian monkey bear or tree-sloth, we simulated a terror we did not feel, and accompanied Jemmy to the scene of action. Sure enough the unfortunate creature had been peppered to death at the first fire, and riddled like a sluice-box with subsequent discharges; but as Jemmy was unaware of the tenacity with which they cling to a limb on occasions, even when dead, the woods had rung with volleys of musketry. The dare-devil courage which had led to the assassination of the poor beast was a theme of discussion of Jemmy's for months afterwards. He developed a mania for trafficking in precious stones, and hearing that diamonds had been found at Mudgee, purchased, at extravagant prices, every piece of crystal, quartz and glass foisted upon him by needy and unscrupulous diggers.

It was decided by a quorum of us one night, to examine Jemmy's pockets when he was fast asleep, after getting lost in the bush, and found by a search-party. The following catalogue was taken of their contents:—

_Item_ 1.—A piece of rag—oily.
_Item_ 2.—Three half-pence.
_Item_ 3.—A snake skin.
_Item_ 4.—A 'possum's' skull.
_Item_ 5.—Various zircons and crystals which he believed to be diamonds of the purest water, and worth thousands of pounds sterling wrapped up in a home letter.
Item 6.—A hawk's egg—squashed and addled.

Item 7.—A soldier ant in a high state of irritability and excitement. (It instantly stung me.)

Item 8.—A knife with about forty-three blades or handles. We couldn't decide which.

Item 9.—A pocket-book with a pencil drawing in it of his battle with the bear (bear magnified to forty times life size). He confessed afterwards that he intended to impose upon his parents with a view to a future remittance.

Item 10.—The seven of clubs, with pins, needles, and thread stuck and twisted thereon; and last, though by no means the least of this formidable catalogue:—

Item 11.—A frightful six-barrelled apparatus of the species known as 'pepper-box,' and of which we were all in mortal terror. Jemmy always used to speak of this lethal mitrailleuse as 'my revolver.'

I only knew that we all stood in danger of a sudden and melancholy end whenever that weapon was produced which eventuated every half-hour or so during the day. The weapon was irregular and untrustworthy in its habits. Hence the danger. It would go off three barrels at once. One bullet would hunt for a victim either straight ahead, straight behind, or round a corner. Danger lurked even in the topmost boughs of a gum-tree when that weapon exploded. The second barrel would roll its bullet gently out upon the ground, whilst the third, though hoisting and heaving like a smothered earthquake, would keep its explosion carefully treasured up for next time. The explosions generally took place whilst Jemmy was re-capping, or re-loading, but as he generally kept the barrels turned away from himself, it was awkward
for his friends. Personally, I always put a tree between him and myself for safety’s sake.

Jemmy shot himself in the heel of his boot one day, and we had to amputate half a leg of his trousers to get him over the shock. The shortening of those garments didn’t matter much. Jemmy would have disposed of them himself very shortly. They were generally half-way up his legs, and any trousers, even in pristine freshness of form and colour had always been vanquished by Jemmy from the very first moment he got his legs through them, and slid half-way up, or sideways, and ripped, and cracked, and strained for holes, thereby plainly showing how weak they were, and how strong and erratic were the legs of Jemmy. Cast-iron trousers would have saved money for Jemmy.

After the ‘digging-racket,’ as he unfeelingly termed our losing hazard at gold-seeking, we tried station life. At the end of the first fortnight the following conversation took place early one morning between the overseer and the head-stockman.

**Overseer.**—Sam, take ‘Canter,’ and bring in a beast for killing.

**Sam.**—I can’t, sir, his back is too sore.

**Overseer.**—Then take ‘Bluey,’

**Sam.**—Sore back too, sir.

**Overseer.**—Confound it all! Then take ‘Bluerock,’ ‘Tiger,’ ‘Dizzy,’ ‘Steamer,’ any of them.

**Sam.**—They’ve all got sore backs, sir.

**Overseer.**—What in the (native phraseology) has happened to them?

**Sam.**—Please, sir, I think it’s that confounded ‘Jackeroo’ as come with them others a short time back; and there he goes again, sir, on ‘Captain’ (the
overseer’s pet hack), as Jemmy swept by on a big raking bay horse, bumping like a sack in the saddle.

_Overseer._—Here! Hi! dash it all! Come back, sir! Hi, you villain, what the devil! he roared fiercely. He’s got ‘Captain,’ blankety blank him, and _he_ will get a sore back.

So he had, on return, as big as ‘eighteenpence,’ as Jemmy modestly remarked when the overseer, perceiving that the gall would develop into a ‘set-fast,’ taunted him with his abilities to take pieces out of a horse’s back as big as a ‘crown-piece.’

After this equestrian display Jemmy was compelled to ride a horse called ‘Bones,’ with a hide like a rhinoceros and a gallop like a dromedary. And whilst Jemmy with all his loose seat could make no impression on that horny cuticle, old ‘Bones,’ at least, avenged his species by causing excruciating misery to Jemmy.

Even the buckskin breeches, lately purchased, did not save him, and he used to sit down to meals with a pained expression, and much deliberation for a considerable time after their first acquaintance.

The only thing I ever knew Jemmy to do well and thoroughly, was to play the piano.

In that he was a master. After the riding he essayed driving, being always ready to go headlong into anything that turned up. Being started out for his first trial with the station-waggon and two quiet old horses, he returned in about three hours, on foot, and sat thoughtfully down in the overseer’s best arm-chair, whilst the latter was writing up the station-diary.

‘Well, Jemmy,’ said that worthy, ‘where’s the waggon?’
'He was butted into the water-hole at the washing-yard' —Page 19.
‘This is all I can find of it, sir,’ replied Jemmy, holding up a broken wheel-spoke.

The wreck of that waggon strewed the plains for a mile and a half towards the township.

Jim the mailman used afterwards to calculate his distance from that benighted spot in the following fashion:—

‘Mile and a half spoke!’ ‘Three quarters of a mile bit!’ ‘Half mile framework!’ ‘Quarter mile swingle-tree, etc.!’

Jemmy of course had been to the township for a ‘nobbler’ of ‘Three Star.’ Some wild dogs suffered badly from colic and indigestion, caused by eating the broken harness, and that was the commencement of Jemmy’s driving. He afterwards confided to me that ‘Roany’ was slow, and in order to make him keep pace with ‘Cocky’ he had shortened the traces until his hocks touched the swingle-trees! After that—oblivion! He finally recovered, and subsequently reached the head station not a whit the worse for the runaway. He was a perfect Jonah in a trap. Even if he didn’t drive himself, one was sure to be run away with, or capsized, if he was aboard!

On a previous occasion when we were all out with the overseer, he was whirled after a runaway pair for about 300 yards, having got hung up on the vehicle by his buckskins, after we had all got out, or fallen out. The rending of the buckskins released us from grave anxiety. He alighted upon a soldier ants’ nest, and they made things lively for him. Rushing to his friends for protection, several of the warriors who had attacked him, bit and stung us. They are not particular in their likes and dislikes, and would sting the Pope, with as much vigour and
enjoyment, as they would sting a common person. Each of them fights for a free hand, and against all creation living or dead.

The only time I ever went out driving with Jemmy as charioteer is likely to remain the only time. I had stipulated to do the driving myself as 'Bob' and 'Dargan' were touchy; but on Jemmy representing himself as the prince of drivers, I gave way. All went well that day until we were back at the last paddock gate, about 300 yards from home. Jemmy, alas! had got six 'possums' in a bag, and they got out by gnawing. (They had gnawed my leg through the bag previously.) Two jumped on to 'Bob's' back, four on to 'Dargan's,' \textit{vi et armis} (claws and all), in their transit to the ground and trees. We ended in the river, having nearly knocked down the men's hut in our passage.

Jemmy's first essay with a stock-whip was painfully instructive to us all. At the first effort, he curled the lash round his own neck, the cracker finishing on his left eye, and causing him to shed tears. He then lassoed the overseer, unspectacled the senior partner, caused 'Jerry' the aboriginal to utter a war whoop, and thirst for his scalp. The erratic lash then upset a beehive, thus placing every living soul in the station, including 'Stumpy' the cat, under tribute to the astonished and enraged insects. Jemmy sought refuge in a drain tenanted by 'Fly' and her pups, and the yowling which arose after his entrance was awful.

With the shears he used to bare 'back block' sections of wool on the unhappy sheep, but the skin and flesh was generally included. He was butted into the water-hole at the washing-yard by half the old merino rams on the station, and was known to have cut out a skinny old
working bullock on the cattle camp, as a 'fat' beast. When it became known, that he had mixed (inadvertently of course), strychnine with the shepherd's 'rations,' had put powder to dry in his boots by the parlour fire, melted lead in the tea-kettle, given every 'sundowner' (loafing swagman) half a sheep, and a 'billy' full of flour, instead of a few chops and the orthodox 'pint of dust,' and introduced to the overseer's own table, a damper of his own construction studded with No. 1 shot, which had dropped out of his pockets, it is not to be wondered at that 'all hands' were pretty well 'full up' of Jemmy, and he left to try his hand at some other vocation, hinting that shoe-blackening in front of the Upper House of Parliament in Melbourne might pay. He had an idea that his appearance and the genius of his manipulation over corns, might induce some minister to offer him a secretaryship. That once accomplished, he would marry the youngest daughter. The last time but one that I ever saw Jemmy was in this wise:

During my 'spell' in town I had passed one evening at Smitherini's Circus, being much attracted thereto by a steam-piano of mighty power. The pianist was—Jemmy!

We shook hands with mutual congratulations, supping together after the performance.

Over our oysters and stout, Jemmy confided to me, that he was getting on splendidly. The employers were liberal, and he got six guineas a week, but the personal risk was very great. 'There's a fearful head of steam on always,' he added. 'They hang a weight on the safety valve, and the stoker has blown up three other fellows!'

We eventually parted, and a day afterwards whilst
reading the Argus, at breakfast, my eyes chanced upon the following advertisement.

'WANTED—a Musician well acquainted with oratorio, topical, and dance music. Digital strength required, also great determination of character. No nervous man need apply. A single man preferred. Apply, Smitherini's Circus.'

Jemmy had also been blown up! He was in the hospital for a month. The proprietors, with their usual liberality, sent him a handsome bonus, besides paying all his expenses. Jemmy stated to me from between his bandages and lint, when I went to see him, that he intended to go to England, as soon as he could grow sufficient skin to cover his scalds.

May good luck go with him. The tune he was blown up to was—'Far, far upon the sea.'
A LEGEND OF HAUNTED GULLY

Holy ground for ever, stranger;
All the quiet silver lights
Dropping from the starry heavens
Through the soft and silver nights;
Dropping on those lone grave grasses,
Come serene, unbroken, clear,
Like the love of God in Heaven
Falling, falling, year by year. KENDALL.

'HAUNTED GULLY' was haunted no longer. The two original proprietors, or rather 'prospectors,' who had made their home there had been forgotten and swallowed up in the stream of diggers now located on the place, whose new log huts, numerous claims, and constantly agitated windlasses bespoke the eviction of the *genius loci* who was popularly supposed to have at one time brooded over the buried gold of this deep and densely wooded ravine.

'French Billy' had explained to me the early-existing legend attached to the gully, and I confess that the erstwhile secluded spot instantly lost its charm for me as he did so.

'You see,' he said, with much excitement and gesticulation, 'those two fellows work like niggers after they strike the gold, work two, tree week, one month, then they go to the township and drink *cognac*, plenty, too much;
then they come back in the night here, fall, roll down the gully, and lose their "swags" and "tucker."

'Then they say the place is haunted, part to account for the loss of their things, part to keep the others away?'

'Sacre! they get drunk, that is all.'

Considering that 'Billy' on his first pilotage of myself to the gully had pointed out a parcel of groceries reposing against a tree in the densest scrub half-way down one side of this great rift in the earth, where it had apparently been brought up suddenly in its downward course, and reflecting also that we discovered that same afternoon a new tin 'billy,' a pick-handle, and a small bag of flour at various points on the hillside, and that when, after infinite trouble, we carried them and our own tools half-way up the other side of the ravine to the 'prospector's' hut, and had been received with smiles and unlimited offers of 'Hennessey's Battle-Axe' brandy, I came to the conclusion that 'Billy' was right with regard to these two.

_They_ didn't care much now anyway. They had bottomed on good gold, and were earning more than good wages, with the probability of a fortune before them. No doubt they had spread the story of ghostly intruders in order to frighten others away until they had proved their claim. But their persistent sticking to the same gully was against them. They were secretly watched, and the new 'rush,' headed by ourselves, began. It was not long before our party of five had a substantial log hut built, where we lived in clover, retiring to our bunks at night completely worn out, to dream constantly recurring dreams of unearthing the largest nugget ever heard of.

With one exception, and that the uncertainty of
foretelling the next move to be made by our 'new chum' partner 'Jemmy,' our lives had indeed chanced upon pleasant places, and when our 'puddling' machine (the only one upon the ground) was finished, we considered that we should make plenty of money from the other diggers by washing their 'stuff' for them at so much a load, even if our shaft turned out to be a 'duffer.'

It was no sinecure, this 'looking after Jemmy.' It was impossible to get him to work for more than five or ten consecutive minutes. Either of these periods of time being finished, he would fling down his pick or long-handled shovel, and rush off like a maniac to wash a 'prospect.' He had twice set fire to our hut, on one occasion destroying a valuable 'possum rug' in his attempts to put it out. He had boiled all the horn handles off our knives and forks, as elsewhere narrated, and had got 'bushed' nine times, when 'all hands' had to turn out with 'bottle' lanterns to find him.

Our Sundays about this period were generally quiet and restful, but sometimes varied by a long walk with an experienced digger, who would read 'gold-sign' in the rain-runlets like a book, and beguile the way with divers yarns of digging life. The evening generally saw our party seated round the fire in our hut, sometimes reading, smoking, or mending old clothes, but invariably ready to rush into the all-absorbing topic of gold-finding on the slightest hint from any of the company present.

On other occasions our sanctum would be invaded by some of the neighbouring diggers, who brought specimens to be exhibited, gathered from far and near.

There would be small nuggets of gold, lumps of crystallised quartz, garnets or zircons, etc. Once, indeed I remember to have seen two small sapphires, which
had been taken from the gravelly deposit left by
'cradling,' and these came from an adjacent district. Of
course all of us would gather round and minutely
examine these treasures, whilst many a story would be
told of old days, 'Bendigo' old days, until our souls
would be refreshed and satisfied.

Sometimes our weekly day of rest would be vacant,
until 'Sauerkraut' dropped in.

By 'Sauerkraut,' I do not mean the German originality,
but a German personality. Of course it was not the
man's real name.

Few 'owned up' to a real name on the diggings in
those days amongst the older hands. 'Jack the Painter,'
'Jem the Butcher,' and 'Swanhill Bob' were good
enough; and the owners answered to these sobriquets
with equanimity and even urbanity.

Hans Hauptmann was the name given by his sponsors
to the individual in question. Once, when under the
influence of Martell's brandy, 'Billy' had rechristened
him 'Sauerkraut,' and the name had stuck to him like
sticking-plaster. With all his quaint, foreign ways,
'Sauerkraut' was much liked in 'Haunted Gully.' No
one could look upon his friendly, honest face, 'bearded
like the pard,' without feeling a thrill of interest in the
man himself. He had only one fault—as many other
really good fellows have—he had a mania for 'deep-
sinking.'

I don't allude to the 'deep-sinking' so often a necessity
to diggers from the nature of the ground they are work-
ing at. He had experienced a plethora of that, but I
mean that he was given to potations, deep and long, and
was very prone to sudden and spasmodic outbursts of that
complaint. 'It won't madder, poys,' he would say, when
remonstrated with. 'It ton't madder; I haf none left in de vide vorldt now to care for me; and mine leedel fraulein, she is teet, and der crass crow creen abof her crave in der Neiderwald. I see mine vauldt as vell as any of you, but it ton't madder.'

'Sauerkraut' worked his solitary claim with varying success, always living alone, or 'hatting,' as the diggers call it. He had, when thus alone, two friends which were all in all to him, though one was inanimate, and the other dumb; yet from the former he would invoke such sweet and solemn strains, that many a miner passing his rude cabin on the hillside after nightfall, would pause and listen thoughtfully, and perhaps remarking sotto voce that 'Sauerkraut' was on the piccolo again, stroll on in meditative mood.

The other friend was a rough but sympathetic dog, named Schneider. Good luck, and the washing of an extra ounce or so of gold dust, would always bring on a carouse, and 'Sauerkraut' would emerge from one of these orgies like a man come back from the dead.

As we turned away one evening after resuscitating him from the effects of an outburst, the strains of the little flute stole softly on our ears, whilst the air, that sweet American plantation melody—

'Way down upon de Swanee riber,
Happy was I.'

seemed to incorporate with the rustling of the leaves in the old red and white gum trees, to moralise with the chirp of the tree crickets, and to harmonise with the twinkling stars and the perfumed summer night, until it really made one feel as if a blessing was added to our camp.
We had left him a bottle of 'Three Star' Hennessey to taper off on, without apprehension, for he was not an irreclaimable 'toper,' and when fully recovered, would not touch the fatal beverage for months together. When able to wield pick and shovel again, he would work hard, and he often visited our log-hut on Sundays, when his eye would be bright, and his skin clear.

Even Schneider was a different dog on these occasions, dictating and writing out whole volumes of genuine canine affection with his tail, on the floor, as he squatted, panting eagerly with his red tongue out.

The only apprehension which seemed to exist in Schneider's knowledge was quickly produced by the sight of a bottle with spirits in it.

Then he shrunk up visibly, and became more like a doormat than a dog; whilst his tail remained motionless, as a gleam of pity crept into his eyes.

But Sauerkraut never touched a dram at our place, even if proffered, and we, after an effort or two of hospitality forebore to tempt him.

He was very grateful to us for standing by him, and by general desire, would take out his piccolo, and while away the time to some purpose. From time to time, as the weeks and months rolled on, he would drop in casually, leaving behind him a present of wild honey, fresh in the comb, a wallaby, or a brace of wild duck shot by himself.

About three months after the events recorded here, he suddenly disappeared, and it was conjectured that his wandering habits had compelled him to leave the camp, and to 'prospect' in some remote locality. Conjecture gave place to certainty after a visit to his hut: for there it was discovered that he had taken his gun,
'Inside lay "Sauerkraut" dead.'—Page 28.
pick and shovel, leaving a notice pinned to the door, containing the following information in his well-known German hand-writing: 'Boys, I have gone to prospect the Cleveland Ranges, and don't reckon to be back before three weeks.'

The only way to these ranges lay through almost impenetrable 'tea-tree' scrub, so thick that a track must be cut with a bill hook or tomahawk, to give one even enough room to crawl on all fours through it.

The traveller did not strike on to this peculiar country, until half a day's journey from 'Haunted Gully.'

One evening, a fortnight or so after this, we were sitting in cheery confabulation over our fire, for the winter was approaching, and even in the summer, the nights are cool in Australia, enough to sit there and smoke, when we were startled by the sudden entrance of Schneider.

Never before, or since, was seen such an apparition of a dog. He was worn to skin and bone. He was wet, half blind, draggled, torn and bleeding.

Finding that 'Sauerkraut' did not turn up with him, we became alarmed, the more so because the animal appeared strangely excited. He would give a low moaning whine and then short quick barks, which said as plain as could be: 'Something has happened to my master!'

We fed him, and he devoured what we gave him ravenously; then he drank eagerly, but kept rushing to the door, and finally conducted himself so outrageously that we got out our bottle-lanterns with two or three extra candles apiece, and started in pursuit of him, after opening the door. He darted out and went straight to his master's cabin. Once there, with more than canine sagacity, he barked hoarsely, and rushed forward on the
track leading away from the camp. Then dashing back and barking, he plainly showed us that he wished to be followed.

We emerged from the gullies, pitfalls, and watercourses, of the long dark hours of that night on to a small plain.

Before us, now kissed by the morning sun, lay the Cleveland Ranges, some ten miles off. At the end of the plain, and right ahead of us, the tea-tree scrub rose like a solid wall, stretching away on both sides, as far as we could see. The mist was rolling away in phantasmal columns, and we knew that the work before us was no child’s play.

Schneider went straight to the tea-tree, where we found a freshly cut track. We had to crawl on our hands and knees for long distances, the hard, solid stems of the tea-tree scrub growing so closely together, that progress was impossible off the track, and the felled ones had fallen in some places so curiously that one had to crawl under, over, and through them.

When at length we got through, stiff, cramped, and utterly exhausted, we found ourselves on the watershed of a beautifully clear creek, fringed with white eucalypti.

The dog took us down the stream for half-a-mile, and then stopped at a rude bark ‘gunyah’ (hut). Inside lay ‘Sauerkraut,’ dead—a gun-shot wound in his breast. In the stiffened fingers of his right hand was his pocket-book opened, where these lines were pencilled:—

‘I haf accident mit my gon; I fall, she shoot me. In the stream look: it is ruby tin; there is thousands—’

Here the writing broke off. Death had claimed his victim. And within twenty yards of the corpse the
gleaming waters wantoned over one of the richest stream tin fields yet discovered.

What 'Sauerkraut' had found, and perished in the finding, proved to be a mine of wealth to many a lucky digger and speculator. And on the place where he died a granite column, enclosed by an iron railing, bears this inscription:—

HANS HAUPTMANN

Premier Pioneer, and Founder of Cleveland Town

It is needless to say that Schneider was well taken care of by ourselves, but he became a changed dog, and a settled melancholy seemed to pervade his being. He never got over his master's death, and one morning, going out of the hut, I found him pulseless, cold and stiff, in the early sun rays. He had been faithful unto death.
NUGGETY BEND

‘Arcades ambo—blackguards both.’—Marcus Clarke.

‘Tim was always a little queer like, and so was his “missus.” In the matter of that,’ continued Joe Burdock, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, ‘the old woman was the queerer of the two.

‘It was in the year of the big find. You remember all about the “Scott” nugget, mates, I daresay, when them two played it down so low on our camp.

‘I’d been mining myself all over the country; I’d had a spell at nearly every new “rush” that broke out; done well in some places, and didn’t make my “tucker” in others, but I happened to be in the Nuggety district before the “Scott” came above ground, and because of what we’d heard on the quiet from Tim himself one night when we had been down at the “pub,” and the old man came to our camp and got a bit “breezy” over a bottle of “Three Star,” me and my mate, Jem Murphy, lost no time in “pegging-out” on the “Bend,” putting up a good log shanty, and sinking for the “bed-rock” like good uns. Nuggety Bend couldn’t get no call to be mapped out as a township in those early days. No, sir. There was only one store stuck right up the top of the ridge, and Benson, the man that kept it, sold us
"tucker" and grog on the sly, in return for money or the "colour" (gold dust), and though you mightn't think it, he was doing a big trade, even though there were not many men on the field.

'We were all working like steam engines, all on payable gold, and all waiting for the big rush that was sure to come sooner or later.

'When the "Scott" turned its yellow side up, free from the "mullock," there was a proper change, I tell you. The diggers came hustling in like flies to a funeral, and didn't they alter the old place, with their new rules and fixins, houses, hotels, billiard-rooms, and even a theayter. It was a caution, I tell you. Why, I remember that six months after the "Scott" turned up, the Waratah Saloon, which was run by Benson, sprung up on the very spot where there used to be an old lightning-blasted red gum tree, close by where Tim and the old woman lived in the early days of the field.

'I've stood on that spot many a time, yarning with the old man about the bush birds and beasts, for he was rare and entertaining on the subject, and knew enough to write a book about them. You'd have wondered where he picked it all up, but he was a clever old chap.

'The old diggings was about the wildest and prettiest spot you ever see. When you left the little coaching "pub" on the main up-country road, where the river went winding in and out among the golden "wattles," you took the bush track, and seemed to shoot out of the open on to the rising ridges, with forest gum, and stringy bark all over the place.

'As you mounted the first ridge, the magpies and cockatoos would keep you alive with their screechin' and whistlin'. Hundreds of them used to live in them
"And there was them two fellows again pretty well drenched."—Page 34.
trees, and maybe you'd get a glimpse of a big red "old man" kangaroo bounding off for higher ground.

'And the wild flowers! They were a sight; yellows, whites, reds, pinks, and purples, all sorts! And of a moonlight night, when the bandicoots would be scuttlin' off on all sides, with that queer, frightened, "be-quick-about-it" squeak of theirs, maybe you'd be goin' along that trail with a light heart, and a "nip" or two in ye, and ye'd catch the scent of them flowers mixed up with the smoke of the burnin' "grass tree," and when you'd got to the turn of the hillside, you'd see the old camp before ye, with its lights and fires a-glimmerin' like a lot of will-o'-the-wisps, and maybe— But them were "bully" days, mates.

'Nuggety Bend (that's Wilberforce now), was situated right at the junction of the two heads of the "Nuggety," and there's gold in both them heads, far and near.

'The river used to come down lively after the rains, and the big waterfall at the northern source kept going even when the weather was driest, so that if there was any "cradlin'" or "sluicin'" to be done, there was always plenty of means to do it with.

'Well, old Tim and his wife had been one of the very first "prospectors" on the "Bend." The old woman could wash her dish of "stuff" as well as a born digger; in fact, she had a more delicate touch and could show up more fine grains to the dish than e'er a one of us.

'Nobody knew exactly what the old couple had been or where they originally came from. They had camped on the spot in an old "humpy" (bark hut) Tim had put up, where he had a ten acre allotment of ground 'took up' (leased from Government) long
before the news got about that there was gold in the district.

'The old man found it first. He used to do a good bit of bird-hawkin' in them days, and would go miles into the bush to catch the young parrots and cockatoos' and then he would take them to Melbourne for sale in the rummiest old covered cart, with an "outrigger" for another horse besides the shafter.

'All the ship's stewards in the "Bay" knew Tim and the old woman, and what with them and the market people, they made a tidy living. On the "Bend," we always used to call the old folks "Daddy" and "Mammy." Two or three of us chaps would call in at their shanty on Sundays, and the old woman always set out a home-made cake and a cup of tea for us.

'If a fellow got sick she would sit up at nights with him and nurse him, and give him simples. She was as good as any doctor, and was kind to every one alike.

'The proper names of the old folks were Timothy and Elizabeth Donovan, and I think the old woman had a dash of gipsy blood in her.

'Once they got a letter which one of the diggers (a gipsy himself) brought, and I think there must have been some bad news in it, for the old woman had a sort of fit after reading it. It was written in a woman's hand too.

'Now I daresay you think I'm talking a lot of these two Donovans, but they were all fair and square, though they didn't warn us—but there, I don't think even they could tell what was going to happen, and it's not them after all who made the rumpus in this story, but—well, you'll hear soon enough. Of course some time before the "Scott" came up, fellows would make our camp "on the wallaby" (travelling), and most often remained.
'It wasn't to our interest to let 'em go, and blab about us working there.

'We wanted it kept quiet as long as possible for our own sakes, and we managed to stop them talking by telling 'em to peg out and dig, and very well satisfied they was too, most on 'em. So they became one of our crowd like before the rush came.

'Me and my mate done well. We had about three hundred pounds worth of good shotty gold and nuggets between us, when one evening two men came along, and I couldn't for the life of me make them chaps out. They said they was runaway sailors from a ship in the "Bay," but I didn't believe that lot.

'Well, they didn't seem to know much about gold-digging at any rate, and I bethought me they was probably two swells out of luck, who had been carrying on high jinks in Melbourne, until they was jolly well cleaned out—but sailors, no, not much. There's a bluff, honest ring about a real sailor, and he can turn his hand to anything, digging or otherwise. Well, I didn't care much about them two coves.

'We gave them a feed, of course, but we didn't let on about our luck.

'It's a different thing altogether when a digger comes and shepherds you.

'Bluff's no good with them fellers, for they know as much as you do. So, of course, you have to tell them to keep them quiet, and prevent them springing a "rush" on you right away, by making them think of their own interests.

'Well, after a good meal, them fellers told us, quite natural like, that they would be glad of a day's work, and not carin' to have them with us, I told 'em I would
show 'em the way to Benson's, meanin' to see if he would give 'em a job. So we went up, but he wasn't "on," as you may suppose.

'They'd got swags and a valise, which I didn't see 'em undo, but one of 'em used it that night for a pillow down at our place, for I couldn't get out of askin' 'em to stop, hospitable like.

'You never saw anything like the way Murphy went on when I brought them chaps back.

He'd been down the shaft when they first came, and hadn't seen them before.

'He'd whistle low to himself, and look at them; but he didn't speak. One of the fellows seemed to attract him uncommon, and I could have sworn I'd seen a sign pass between them as if they were acquainted. I thought it strange. I'd known Murphy a long time; he'd done some queer things in his time, but I'd have trusted him with my life, so I asked no questions. The next day those chaps went off, and I felt relieved, I hardly knew why.

'Towards dark I went up to Benson's store for a new bucket, and heavy rain coming on, I had to stay there for the night. By-and-bye there was a knock at the door, and there was them two fellows again, pretty well drenched. They'd lost their way, they said, and saw the light.

'Well, Benson couldn't do no less than bring them in and 'doss' them down on the floor, giving them a stiff 'nobbler' of brandy a piece, and letting them dry their clothes by the fire. One of 'em was a dark handsome man, and reminded me of some one—I couldn't call to mind exactly who—and the other fellow was a quick, supple, restless man, with a face like stone—until he laughed, and then—why, the devil seemed to break out all over his face.
‘I got quite nervous the first time I seen him laugh! It was soon over, but I felt as if I had been looking Satan himself in the face for a few seconds!

‘We sat up yarning until about three o’clock in the morning, and Benson being sociable like, was liberal with the grog.

‘At last we dropped off to sleep, I don’t know how long it was, but it didn’t seem many minutes before I was woke up, and found a revolver pressed against my head, whilst a quick, quiet voice said: “Don’t move or sing out, or you’ll die this minute.”

‘Well, I soon had a gag in my mouth. Benson was insensible, and I could smell chloroform strong.

‘Those two fellows were professionals, and high up at that. The way they went through Benson’s safe was a sight to see! They took a lot of gold, provisions and a rifle, and cleared before daylight.

‘“Good-bye, mate,” says the little one, the cruel smile stealing all over his face, “Your gold is safe! We never rob a pal. “Old stores” meaning Benson, “will make it up by-and-bye.

‘“You’ll have to be left till some kind friend comes along to your rescue.”

‘Off they goes, and I heard a whistle, and horse’s hoof strokes. The very first person to come along was old “Mammy,” and she was thunderstruck, as you may suppose.

‘She released me, for I was bound, but it took some time before Benson got his wits back.

‘“Mammy,” asked us all sorts of questions, and was very keen to know what the men were like.

‘When I told her I had seen a scar like a burn on the
little one's hand as he shifted his revolver into its leather case, she turned white as death.

"It's nothing," says she, as I went to help her, for I thought she would have fallen; "only a heart spasm. I'm subject to 'em."

Then she sent me down for the old man, and I made him go up, and went to my own camp, and told Murphy all about it.

He just whistled in his queer way, and said: "Hold your jaw, Jem, you won't do any good by talking about it. Do you know who them two coves were?"

"Two damned scoundrels," says I, "to play it down that way on to us."

"Ah, well," says he, "it's best you didn't say that in their hearing. The lissom quick chap is 'Fly-by-Night,' the bushranger; the other's 'Phantom Jack,' the forger. I thought they had been 'copped' for good, but they've broke out of gaol and there'll be 'Old Nick' to play directly."

So there was, too!

Them fellers scared the whole country. They stuck up the mail next time, cut the telegraph wires, and got off to Queensland, "sticking up," every here and there where they were least expected.

In Queensland they and the "gang" who had joined them had a fight with the police, and a constable was killed. Then they disappeared altogether. Benson took me aside next day after our affair, and says he, "I don't mean to let on about that little tea-party of ours up at the store, Jem, no more would I if I was you."

"Mum's the word," says I.

Well, you wouldn't believe it hardly, but that there Benson owned the biggest hotel in Wilberforce, after the
Waratah, and the goodwill of that turned him in a lot of money, and he made a big pile, what with lucky speculations and good customers.

'Old Tom got the thousand pounds from Government for being the first to discover a good paying gold-field, and his section, which was bought land then, brought him in more a foot, many times over, than he'd paid for the lot, being made part of the town.

'Ah, well, it's years ago since it all happened, and I was only a young chap then. Benson's in England, doing the grand. Murphy got killed in a tunnel accident, and "Mammy" and "Daddy" went to Frisco along with two friends of theirs, so there's only myself out here now that knows the ins and outs of that secret.'

'What secret?'

'Why, you must have been softies not to guess it all the time. "Phantom Jack" was the old people's son! He was a wild one, and had got in tow with "Fly-by-Night," and well the old people knew it. "Mammy" squared Benson right off, and his keeping quiet brought him in more money in many ways than he knew what to do with; and he wasn't over particular.

'When the police were after them fellows all over the country, Benson had two quiet chaps stopping at his hotel who used to play cards and billiards a good deal.

'You wouldn't have thought their names were "Fly-by-Night," and "Phantom Jack," would you?

'No more didn't Benson. At least he didn't say so, and I found it better to hold my tongue about it, although it seemed a mighty queer thing to think that I was tied up, and Benson robbed, by them two very same fellows.'
DICK’S CHRISTMAS BOX

And their eyes will dim,
As they think of him,
Five thousand leagues away.—UNKNOWN.

It was early on the afternoon of an Australian December day, when a man reached the base of a large ironbark tree, which stood at the side of the main road close to a deserted mining township.

Euralla was once a populous goldfield, but proved in the long run to be but a ‘patchy’ find.

Some said that the ‘lead’ would some day be discovered again, others averred not. A few did very well, but a large majority got nothing at all, and departed elsewhere in search of better luck, until it came to pass that only seven individuals out of the many hundreds who formerly sojourner there, occupied the ground. They were mates and owners of the Deadwood Gully Claim, which was located a bit back from the township. They had done very well in the old days of the goldfield, and at one time were the talk of the place, but they had lost the vein of the gold like the others, and their future prosperity now depended solely on their successful ‘fossicking’ for the ancient and buried river, which held the ‘lead’ or ‘vein’ aforesaid. Hitherto it had escaped them as it had escaped the others, chiefly through the
unnatural formation of the country in the vicinity, where the distorted strata and fallen rocks pointed to some vast prehistoric upheaval of Nature's forces, and though discontented with their present lot, they were loathe to leave the scene of their former successes, and so had kept plodding on in a stolid and stubborn fashion. The man aforesaid, after coming to a halt beneath the shady branches of the 'ironbark,' sat himself down upon a granite boulder, which had apparently been hurled off an adjacent ridge, and after mopping his face with a large red cotton handkerchief, kept perfectly still. His elbows rested upon his knees, and his chin was supported upon the knuckles of his clenched hands as he stared steadfastly in one direction. His shirt and moleskin trousers were patched in many places, whilst a digger's sash and broad slouched hat completed his costume. For your benefit, my reader, his name is Jim Deloyt, one of the partners in the 'Deadwood' Claim, and he is waiting for the coach, which twice a week passes through the deserted township. Overhead, the parrots flashed and chattered, whilst ever and anon from the distant woodland came the soft soothing 'coo' of the bronze-wing pigeons and the 'Rockhampton doves.' Around him, and about the 'township' itself, the old 'claims' were scattered in all directions until one might imagine that gigantic moles had been burrowing on the flat and hillsides in search of colossal worms, and it seemed as if they had done their work thoroughly, for there was hardly room to walk between the pits and mounds of earth. Ancient and fast decaying windlasses were to be seen at the top of some of the holes, but for the most part the shaft sides had gone, carrying the superstructures with them.
'Dick's Christmas Box.' — Page 44.
The mouldering houses of the deserted town, with some attempt at the formation of squares and streets presented a lugubrious aspect, with fallen rotting shingles or roof, or door, lying scattered through the empty streets, whilst here and there, stuck straight on end, the four corner posts of a dismantled dwelling exposed their bare limbs in bitter mockery of 'the time that was.'

A few crows, and the ubiquitous carrion hawks were securely perched in conclave, on selected spots, or were wheeling over the tree tops in slow and solemn gyrations.

A startled 'kangaroo rat' dashed wildly from some remote fastness into an open space, and from that sought shelter again beneath a large sign-board which, propped against a tree stump, asseverated in startling capitals that it had once done duty for the 'Euralla Town Hall.' Soaring high overhead in the incomparably blue ether, was a solitary eagle, *aquila fucosa*, and the small marsupial pantèd and trembled with apprehension as it made out the shadow of its hereditary foe cast upon the sward.

Round-topped, sparsely-wooded ridges, cropped up on all sides in the immediate vicinity, and in the distance a blue mountain range seemed to woo the heavens. Pick and shovel, mattock and wedge, saw and axe, had been to work in hearty earnest about the spot where the traveller sat, and that fervid human energy so remarkable and so exhaustless when turned from the beaten track of everyday life into the romantic and all sacrificing 'lust for gold' would seem to have given the men who wielded these tools the strength of giants, and they had left the record of that strength behind them.
Trees, if judged by the acres of stumps, had fallen like winter rain. They had been sawn, split, cut into lengths, rolled, carried and dragged. Part of them had formed the township, and part lay where they had fallen. The sun rose and set; the seasons came and went, embellishing the old stumps with living shooting branches of thick green foliage, until with the exception of the solitary coach track, the whole place was a garden of flowers, with a wealth of grassy slopes and verdant glades.

Winter had sent the water in a yellow turbid whirl through all the tributary creeks until they joined the ‘Euralla’ itself and thundered on in unison with that river, through the mountain gorges, until fair summer in the present year spoke out of Nature’s progress, and of the sleep and decay of forces employed by man.

After the lapse of a few minutes from the time Jim Deloyt had first paused to rest under the ‘iron bark,’ the kangaroo rat dashed wildly into space again, disappearing like a red streak of light into the undergrowth, as a rattle of wheels approaching was heard. A flash of red and yellow body, black tilted top, five fast trotting horses, a glimpse of a packet flung by the driver, caught by the waiting man, and the coach disappears round the ridge, the rattling growing fainter and fainter with its rapid progression.

There is a sound of cheery words too in the startled air, as if they too had been flung and caught with the packet, and had taken root, as the man had apparently done, as he stared after the receding mail, and watched the column of dust unwinding from its track like a long, grey snake.

‘Merry Christmas, Jim!’
These were the words referred to, but Jim gave his shoulders an impatient deprecatory shake, as he muttered:

‘Merry Christmas, eh? Ah, merry enough for them as hasn’t got to work as we do, day in, day out. Not a ha’porth of luck, and a dying mate to nuss. Cuss the luck, I say. And with a rapid movement, a quick turn, and long, impatient strides, he followed a well-worn bridle-path which led away from the deserted town, and wound half-way up the ridges until after a sharp walk of over a mile, he reached the side of a ‘gully’ where his road zig-zagged down into its cool and fragrant depths. A tinkling waterfall cascaded over some giant boulders and ledges. Crossing at the top of one of these latter he followed the stream down to a level clearing, where under a tall red gum was a log hut.

Two men, almost the exact counterparts of himself as far as dress went, motioned him forward, and one of them, placing his hand on his shoulder, whispered something. The three men entered the hut quietly where three others, still of the same external stamp, were bending over a rude couch, whereon lay another so wasted and fever-stricken that it seemed as if a breath might blow him away.

‘Got the medicine, Jim?’ said the sick man’s most immediate attendant. ‘I fear it won’t be much good. He’s going fast. Don’t seem sensible.’ After forcing some of the mixture between the patient’s clenched teeth, the six sat silently until sunset, when the dying man made a motion as if to be assisted to sit up.

Two of his comrades raised him tenderly, whilst the others stood anxious and expectant. With a groan and a feeble gesture of his attenuated hand, he pointed...
through the open door, where the long shadows of the
tree stems lay upon the sward like accentuated bars, and
looking eagerly upon first one and then the other of the
faces around him, he murmured:

'Up there—mates—by the—"wattles." They're all in
bloom now—golden bloom, lads. Lay me 'neath the old
tree, lads—where we—all camped the first night—we
came—here. Like enough—it's only—me—that'll rest—
there now, but I'll—stay by—the old—spot—when
you're—all—away. It'll—keep—you—in mind of—me—
maybe—to think—I'm waiting—there—to join—you—
once—again. Lay me—down—now—lads.'

As they complied with his wish the ashen grey hue
which heralds death spread over his features, and very
shortly afterwards, with a shuddering tremor, he passed
away from this world into the next.

'He's gone,' said Jim Deloyt. 'Six short weeks ago he
was as healthy and hearty, as e'er a one of us. And now
he knows the great secret! Poor Dick, he was a kindly
hearted fellow, and a good mate.'

Jim's words, uttered almost unconsciously, seemed to
find an echo in the hearts of his hearers; and a tear or
two, or even suspicious sniffs and clearings of the throat,
bore token that even in those rough and iron-framed
diggers, good feeling and attachment were not want-
ing.

'To-day is the 23rd December,' said Jim, still follow-
ing out the train of his own thoughts. 'We'll bury him
on Christmas Eve. Like enough there'll be spry fixin's
for him up there on Christmas Day. He'll likely think
of us on Christmas Eve.'

And the staunch fellow busied himself with perform-
ing the last sad offices for the dead, straightening the
limbs and finally placing the coverlet over the still white face. At daylight the next morning, Jim Deloyt fashioned a rude cross. The others made a coffin from some planks, and an inscription was deftly cut upon a board to go at the foot of the cross, which read:

**DICK HARTREE**

*Of Deadwood Claim,*

*Buried here on Christmas Eve, 1864, by his mates,*


The Christmas Eve came. Two hours or so before sunset four of the diggers carried their dead friend in the coffin, shoulder high, to the clump of wattles he had mentioned, lowering the shell down gently to the ground to await interment. The wattle blossoms shed their faint, grateful perfume all around; and Jim Deloyt was throwing the last few spadefuls out of the grave, ‘bottoming Dick’s Claim,’ as he called it.

Suddenly, uttering a sharp exclamation, he climbed out of the grave with a shovelful of dirt:

‘Boys!’ said he, ‘Dick was the kindest and truest of men when he was alive, and now that he is dead, mind you, out of his very grave he offers us all a fortune! Look at that, you, Jardine, Bart, all of you! Isn’t that the same stuff that we struck in the lost “vein,” and have been hunting for all the time!’

It was true. The ‘prospect’ was hastily panned off, and gave such a show of coarse and bulley gold, that after one look they shook hands silently and sincerely.

Reverently they lowered the body into the grave.
They were not sordid enough to disturb that sacred ground, but they struck the 'vein' at some distance from Dick's resting-place, and after a trying and exciting time, trying because they had worked so long without reward, and were almost afraid of their wonderful luck, they left the field a year later, enriched and independent for life. And they carried with them hearts and minds which would never lose the memory of poor Dick, and the Christmas present he left them from his very grave.
FIGHTING THE FLOOD

Even while the strong, swift currents
From the rainy ridges come.—KENDAL.

We sold the old station, lock, stock and barrel. My brother and I went home to England, yet within eighteen months afterwards I found myself jogging back towards the old place on horseback, *en route* to a station above it, on the ‘creek’ as we always had called it, though that creek was bigger than what we used to consider the main river. A friend of mine lived there, and as I wished to see him once more. I had come out of my way to do so.

The old station home was still tenantless, though, as I knew, the present owners were now travelling to it with stock, and expected to be there in about a fortnight. I had passed them on the road. Out of curiosity partly, and because I was tired with daily travel, I dismounted and turned out ‘Acrobat’ and ‘Dandy,’ cutting some ‘mulga’ boughs for them, for it was a hot, dry season, and little else to eat but coarse, withered roots of grass and dry sticks.

Half the bark was off the roof, and one of the doors off its hinges. I noticed this at once, as I entered the old dwelling-house which had afforded my partners and
myself a comfortable shelter during so many happy hard-working days.

The fireplace showed only signs of some wandering tramp, in the embers and half burnt logs of the last fire. The bunks, originally made of strong mulga uprights and cross pieces, were still standing, and it was with a curious, eerie, and very lonely feeling that I kindled a fresh fire on the hearth, and placed my ‘jack-shay’ in readiness to boil some water for tea.

I then walked down to the old kitchen garden, once so well and carefully tended, with all its intricacies of winch for hauling water, and many wooden and bark runnels to fill the tanks, of which there were several to facilitate the process of watering. This garden had once been the cherished object of my own particular supervision. From the entrance gate of it we had once fired a salute of four barrels in honour of a gigantic pumpkin grown there, which weighed nearly one hundred pounds, and had to be carted away in a wheelbarrow. Several others of 90 lbs, 80 lbs and 60 lbs were taken from that same vine. The seed from which this prolific plant sprang, had been deposited by accident, well down in the wet ground behind the lining of a water tank, and the wondrous fertility of the soil, if only moist, had developed it into a mammoth.

But it was also an accident carefully fostered and protected by Providence, the all-bounteous giver; and the abundance of pumpkins produced by this single seed came to hand at a time when, I well remember, we were destitute of all our choicest supplies, and I was enabled to give plenty of this excellent vegetable to the shepherds, and all hands were kept in health, and free from scurvy. Now, alas, as I looked I found the garden all ruin, weeds,
and desolation. The fence was down; travelling stock
and wild animals had passed through, and the fruit trees,
lemons and oranges were dead. The other huts, the
store near by where the ghost had disappeared (herein-
after mentioned), were in good order as far as roofs and
general appearance went; but the doors were smashed
in, and it was easy to see that 'swagmen' (travellers) had
had access to all.

On the table inside the old dwelling-house, which was
a fixture, the legs being firmly imbedded in an ant-bed
floor, were still to be seen the initials of my brother,
and a friend of his cut the night before our departure,
and the labels still were affixed to the pigeon-hole boxes
in the office at the end of the verandah. I had put a
bell on 'Acrobat's' neck, and I could hear it tinkle as he
munched the 'mulga' boughs.

If I shut my eyes I could easily fancy that my trip to
England had been but a myth, and that I was, and had
been all the time, still in Australia.

The old sounds, the old scents, were all around me. I
could hear the Queensland doves cooing softly outside
the hut, the quack of the wild ducks from the river, the
clank of the hobbles, and the ring of the horsebell.

If I opened my eyes again, I realised that I, the last
one of our partnership, had come back to look upon
demolished and undefended property, and that forty
miles on one side of the river, forty-five miles on the
other, ten miles on each side of Seechal Creek, with the
option of the use of all the back country right back to
the ranges, had been ours once. The water boiled. I
made my tea, and ate my frugal meal of 'damper' and
corned beef, musing the while upon the past. What joy-
ful faces and sturdy forms had met of old in this same room.
From that very beam overhead, I remembered two of our boon companions hanging by the legs, head downward, and assisting the others with a chorus on the occasion of a Christmas jollification. On that bunk opposite I had lain disabled for days by a bad accident with an axe, which had nearly divided my foot into sections. It was from thence that I had shouted for the Chinaman cook's assistance (being unable to move), at a time when our senior partner's valuable little bull-terrier was dancing and growling valorously under the table round a vicious and deadly brown snake, a touch from whose fangs would have ended his valour for ever.

It was on this very bunk where I was now sitting that the senior partner aforesaid extended his giant form, as with an occasional flourish of his intensely coloured 'cutty,' he gave me particulars as to how he had, two days before, captured, single-handed, an armed and desperate bushranger!

It was over by that door, where that tall 'warrigal' (wild blackfellow) had suddenly entered, taking up a gun loaded with ball, which was leaning against the slabs close by, when I had compelled him to put it down by presenting a revolver at his head, at the very moment, when I had caught sight of six pairs of legs belonging to his mates outside: through a crack in the slabs of the building.

What a day of anxiety that was! How I had frightened them off, and how they had dodged about all day waiting for an opportunity to circumvent and slay me. And how I had to circumvent them. How they had again tried to stick up and set fire to the station next day, during my absence, and were again foiled by my sudden return. How I had let loose all the bull-terriers and kangaroo dogs, and
frightened my persecutors off at last with a Terry rifle. Ah, if these old walls could speak, thought I, what tales they could tell, of work and endeavour; of wine and wassail; of greetings and partings; of plans and schemes; of frustration of hopes, of danger and peril; of final abandonment! Where was 'Charlie' at this moment? The idea was unpleasant, very. 'Charlie' was a huge and muscular blackfellow, formerly employed by us at shepherding, and for whom I had always entertained a nervous dread. If we were both unarmed I could have probably mastered him, by superior science, but if he once got hold of me I felt my time would be up.

He was a murderer, had been, and would be till the end of the chapter if he got the chance. You could read it in his eye, for the spirit dwelt there. He made a good shepherd whilst with us, as he knew if he left our employ the black police would shoot him.

'I wonder if he is lurking about? Can he have heard of my arrival?' thought I. He might even then be watching me from the top of Mount Borré over the creek there, in the very spot where Mayboy, one of the Queensland black trackers, had once pointed out to me several 'warrigals' (wild blacks) invisible to all but a trained eye like his, but I could see them plainly enough through a good pair of field-glasses.

They were watching the troopers on their first visit to the station.

The idea of Charlie being about proved too much for my nerves, so I looked to my revolver, shook the tea-leaves out of my 'jack-shay,' replaced the pannikin, caught and saddled my horses, not feeling thoroughly easy until I felt Acrobat's swinging untiring stride beneath me again.
I had twenty-five miles more to ride up Seechal Creek (having come forty that morning), and therefore was not sorry when I emerged at last from the scrubby creek road into more open country, and again crossing the bed of the stream, saw the buildings and cattle yards of Seechal before me, aglow with the rays of the setting sun.

My friend was at home looking well and happy despite the dry season. He had stuck to his run through it all, not even allowing himself a spell in town. I also found a stranger there, who turned out to be his cousin Herbert Mayfair, a very companionable young fellow, so I was soon all at home.

After dinner, the talk over our pipes naturally enough reverted to old times and reminiscences of the fun and sport we used to have. I created much amusement by describing my journey up, and my scared and lonely feeling at the old station, when the recollection of 'Charlie' caused me to clear out.

'By the way,' broke in George, 'Herbert killed two big diamond snakes on the roof of the old house at "Auburn" the last time he passed it. He saw the yellow and black coils of one protruding from two sheets of bark, climbed up, examined the place, and killed them both with a tomahawk.'

'Auburn was always a wonderful place for snakes,' replied I; 'I have two or three lively recollections of them there.'

'I can show you a couple of warriors as we go down to bathe to-morrow,' responded George; 'brown snakes. They are generally out sunning themselves, but are so quick getting back to their holes that the only way is to shoot them, which I mean to do some day.'
'The billabong had become a sea a quarter of a mile wide.'—Page 57.
Hullo, here comes Scotty. Well, Scotty, how are the cattle?

"Awfu' pur. If we don't have rain soon, they'll just dee," quoth that worthy.

"It seems a judgment upon me," said George, "for consenting to act as a sort of clerk of the weather for this part of the world. When I was in Brisbane last, Mills, the government meteorologist, wished me to undertake a daily weather report, and provided me with a barometer, sympiesometers, thermometers, wind and rain gauges, etc., etc. In consequence of which, I verily believe, we have not had a drop of rain for a whole year! At times it has looked rainy enough, but the clouds have disappeared again, and I have had nothing to record but drought. I am afraid that I shall lose a lot of stock when the rain does come, as the cattle are so weak, especially the last "stores," that they are sure to get bogged."

"But you were saying, were you not," I interposed, "that you had not had any rain for a whole year? We never had a season like that in our time."

"Well, you would have if you had waited," replied he. "Though the black fellows have been foretelling a big flood for some time past, not a drop of rain has fallen as yet."

George's diary, indeed, bore record after record of a lengthened period of heat and dry weather.

Food was pretty well all eaten on the frontage by the stock, though there were patches of good grass 'outback,' also mulga-downs, where the animals used to plod to, returning to the river for water.

There was plenty of that commodity in the river, for the deep, long holes of Seechal would last out a longer drought than this, being thickly timbered along the
edges, and covered on the surface with the leaves of a large water-lily, which in a great measure prevented evaporation, but the stream itself had not run continuously for a long time, being, in fact, a typical Australian river, one that became a succession of waterholes in a dry season, with dry ground and shingle bed between them. The house at Seechal was built on a high bank, which sloped gradually towards the river, which here was confined to a deep channel.

On the other side of the house, between it and the rising mulga ridges was a depression, which ran right up to the cattle yards, and down to the river again beyond them. This depression was evidently an outlet of the river in time of very high flood. I had seen water lying in it after heavy rains, but it soon dried up, and none but the oldest blacks had ever seen it running. Behind the house in an up-river direction the ground rose a little. I asked George where the depression or ancient water-course joined the river.

‘Six miles above,’ he replied. ‘It is still a depression there at the top of a very steep bank, and shortly afterwards spreads out over box flats and clay pans in all directions, but I have traced its course here to the very house. When it runs it must flood miles of back country, and all the plains on the other side will be deep under water, and must back up again to rise high enough to put water into that depression, for the bank of the river is much lower opposite to where the hollow comes on to the Seechal. Old man Jerry remembers it full once, when he was a “piccaninni” (child). “All about plenty kangaroo sit down, plenty emu, blackfellow catch him. Baal burrabari (couldn’t go fast),” said he, referring
to that time. When I asked for further explanation he said they were either bogged or drowned.'

'By Jove, it must have been a big flood,' exclaimed I, 'and one that we are not likely to see. If that channel filled again, and ran from river water, we should be completely cut off from the high ridges on this side. The other side of the river is as flat as a bowling green for five miles back to the ranges, and by the time the depression ran, would be a huge and deep inland sea. We could get away this side over the channel as things are now, but there would be little chance if it was filled with flood water. It would spread to the base of the ridge very soon, and, I daresay, there would be a good current. It would then be half a mile wide, and we have no boat. Seechal would be an island.'

'Ah, but I don't think the old billabong will run in our time,' said George, 'whatever it may have done long ago.'

Some days after the above conversation, after a steady fall of the barometer had set in, we were out in front of the house, watching an enormous black wall of cloud moving up towards us from the south, illumined by constant and vivid flashes of lightning while the crashes of heaven's artillery reverberated in our ears almost to deafening. The blacks, with the exception of three, had moved to the mulga ridges on the station side of the river the night before 'old man Jerry,' giving his opinion that, 'Big feller muckara (rain) tumble down, mine think it pull away alonga ridge; what for you "weja" (wait)? All about gunyah (houses) yan (go) alonga river.' With that he marched off.

'At last!' quoth George, 'we are going to have enough and to spare.'
It rained in torrents for that whole night and all the next day, the grateful earth sending forth breaths of cool freshness from her trees, and parched surface, from any trees but the gidyahs, which are not pleasant after rain. The river rose considerably from local sources. Then the rain abated, and we went out to drive all the cattle we could find on to the stony ridges. There was water everywhere in brimming quantities, every pool and waterhole back from the river filled. Several of the weaker beasts had got bogged in the red soil, and as there was practically no foothold near them, they had to be left to their fate.

It happened that just at this time we were unusually strong-handed in at the head station. There was a party of six stalwart bushmen, whom George had hired on a fencing contract, and there were also the three blacks mentioned, who were able-bodied, together with ourselves, including Scotty, and George’s rough-rider, making a total of fourteen. We didn’t count the cook.

Showers, and some heavy ones, kept falling daily, but the sun came out between them, and the show of greenery was now a sight to see. The river ran three quarters high, and every tributary creek was a ‘banker.’ Then the weather began to gloom over again, especially to the north.

Herbert and Scotty came in late one day, reporting that they had been to the far northern boundary, putting back the cattle from the frontage. ‘But,’ remarked Herbert, ‘I shouldn’t wonder if there was another rise in the river soon. It is awfully black to the north, and seems to be raining heavily far away.’

‘How high is the river where the billabong meets it?’ I asked.
‘Not up to it,’ replied he. ‘The bank on that side is high, and it would be a big flood to enter it, as, the other side of the river bank being so much lower, the flood water would have to brim up the big Coolberunna flat, until it backed up from the ranges again, before it rose high enough in the channel to fill that billabong.’

Our mails came in next day, and we read accounts of wild, wet weather all over the colony. Off the coast of Brisbane the weather had been especially bad. The city had been flooded and was half under water.

Though Brisbane was a thousand miles distant, we had little doubt that the weather would penetrate to our remote interior, even if in a minor degree.

In two days more, heavy soaking rain set in, and the river, already abnormally swollen, began to overflow the other bank; then a cessation for a few hours, during which the sandflies acted the part of one of the plagues of Egypt.

When we were outside they settled on any available skin, literally ‘going for’ blood. No matter what portion of our bodies they settled upon they were supremely happy. Not so the person attacked.

No one except those who have had actual experience of these tiny pests can realise the terribly irritant effect of the sting or probe. A white swelling first appears which itches most unpleasantly. You can just manage to stand it with great effort on the third day, which finds you hardly in possession of your senses, and in a fever, after having gone through increasing torture from the first day you were bitten or stung. But on the fourth day, though very conscious of sore places from constant scratching, the itching is gone, unless you have been attacked in the interim by other blood-thirsty warriors.
when you have to go through the same process with the new places.

But comparatively minor troubles, such as sandflies, the loss of weak cattle, the delay of fencing, vanished like early mist one morning as we sat at breakfast.

It had rained all night and was raining heavily then.

I had just remarked to George that I could hear the horses coming up, when my eyes rested on a sight through the open door which made my pulse beat high.

There was a broad, yellow, foam-flecked sheet of rushing, tumbling water running through the depression. *The billabong was in flood!* and what I had thought to be horses galloping on heavy ground, was its own (as the Scotch would say) coming down its own channel, bearing branches of trees and all sorts of debris on its flood-water.

As a matter of fact the horses hadn't been run up for a week, the blacks having orders merely to keep their eyes upon them where they were grazing back from the river on the higher ground; but I had forgotten this, and as the station horses were generally run up at breakfast time, I had let the custom overpower my observation. We went down to the billabong and erected flood-marks, sticks about four feet high.

The first and one higher up the bank were under water by dinner time. The river itself had now overflowed the east bank opposite the station, and formed a great sea right out to the ranges. When that backed up again the river would rise on our side, on the west side. And the backing up wouldn't be long in being accomplished, as the high ground came right into the river again a mile below the station, and the ranges towards
which the river was overflowing from the east bank were only a mile or so distant.

We held a council of war, and decided to call 'all hands' to wall us in by making a dam, somewhat in the shape of a canoe, to completely surround the three houses, one side about parallel with the river, the other with the billabong, the bows of the formation pointing up-stream.

Picks, spades, and long-handled shovels were soon at work on the trench, the earth from which was thrown outwards. Two separate parties worked the line digging the second 'spit' inwards, and throwing the earth over, until the line of earth outside began to grow in strength and solidity.

We worked hard until dark, every one of us, even the cook putting in his mite, and then rushing off to see how his supper was progressing.

At dark we had a hurried meal, turning out again soon to our work at the entrenchment.

Rain was falling steadily, and lanterns were placed under cover in various places, giving a fitful and ghastly sort of light.

'There must have been an awful lot of rain about the source of the Seechal,' said George, 'in the ranges, I think, to bring the river down in this fashion. And we must remember that it is pretty general too, for every tributary creek is over its banks.'

The river had reached its limits on the plain on the other side, and was backing up, slowly and surely, and creeping up the steep bank towards the houses. Then from the billabong, the water was also rising, and long ago we had been cut off from safety, and the higher mulga ridges.
We had before this, by George's directions, got ready four great wood piles of dry station wood, which had been previously kept under cover in a big shed. These had been saturated with boiled oil and kerosene, and were ready for instant use, when the tarpaulins which covered them were removed.

At a word, one of these tarpaulins was removed, a light applied, and a flame, which at once shot up, soon kindled the huge pile into a beacon which illuminated the waste of water around, burning on brighter and brighter in spite of the rain.

We worked hard all night, and when the morning dawned there was a goodly bank of earth all round the houses, at least four feet six inches high, with a broad and increasing base. The rain came steadily down all the next day, and the river began to show signs of resistless force.

Gradually rising, it carried away the bottom and sides of the kitchen garden fence, which were on the slope of the first terrace, and every now and then a tree would be undermined and whirled away. The billabong had become a sea a quarter of a mile wide right out to the base of the first mulga ridge. We could see the smoke of the blacks' fires, high up on the red loamy ground, far back among the gidyahs, where they were well secure.

I thought at the time that if it came to the blacks being flooded out, all record of ourselves would be lost, as the water would then be over the tops of the river timber. Every now and then came the rushing sound of an undermined tree, and the fall of some tons of earth into the mad water. Well was it for us that we were so high up on the bank, and that we had heavy forest to protect us from flood carried trees.
And all that day too we worked steadily at our dam, with the water slowly but surely creeping up either slope.

Towards nightfall, old 'Scotty' flung down his long handled shovel, and skulked into the house, in the big room of which he had his bunk.

'Let him be,' whispered George, who favoured the old chap a good deal. 'He is frightened, and can't swim a stroke, though if we could all swim like seals, God help us.'

'I think we shall be victorious yet,' said I, 'but it is lucky that the top end of our canoe, even if the water was right up to the dam, is on a rise, making the water shallow there, and we are, moreover, protected by strong gidyah forest, preventing uprooted trees from being hurled against us. The river current either sweeps them away or strands them.'

'Yes, but we may have continuous freshes during the night,' responded George.

'Even though the rain has stopped here now it is very black to the north.'

'Couldn't we contrive to make a boat out of the American waggon—the bottom of it?' suggested I. 'If you have canvas or strong calico saturated with varnish and boiled oil, then tacked over the waggon carrying frame, it would make a flat punt to hold three or four people on a pinch. We might contrive to reach somewhere or something on it.'

'A good idea for those who can't swim, but those who can must take their chance,' replied my friend. 'However, the idea might put life into old “Scotty” who evidently has made up his mind to be drowned *nolens volens*.'
The idea was at once carried out. Weunscrewed the wooden frame of the waggon from the wheels, springs, and under part. Then with a couple of sheets of strong calico, each big enough to cover the oblong wooden structure of the waggon and thoroughly soaked in the mixture, we tacked it all over, bottom and sides, bringing a flap inside well over the edges, thus becoming possessed of a canvas and wood punt, water-tight and light when dry.

This we put away in the wood-house to accomplish the latter part, and to await contingencies, providing a couple of long light poles to propel it with.

On the news being communicated to 'Scotty' he visibly brightened up, and was soon using pick and shovel again. Like most bushmen, he was used to the frail bark canoes of the aboriginals. Though they did not obtain in our remote interior, we had sometimes even made them ourselves in moments of emergency, the procedure being simple enough. Having found a box tree or a gum tree long enough and with the proper bend, a tomahawk and a few stick wedges of young wood did the rest.

Our black fellows and fencers worked well; but some of us, I speak for myself also, had hands blistered and bleeding from the unaccustomed and incessant toil.

Towards midnight it was a common thing for a man to drop his spade, throw himself down in the woodshed or on the kitchen floor, and snatch what sleep he could.

The dam had been completed all round the two houses, but as the flood was now up to the base of it, there were continuous alarms, and rushes to stop leaks, which were reported at once in a loud shout by the various watchers.
'You just walk in there, my friend.'—Page 67.
Then every one would rush to the spot to pile on more earth until the leak was stopped.

At about two o'clock P.M., in the night, George created a pleasant diversion for us poor, tired, and sleepy mortals, by suddenly appearing from the kitchen with an enormous tin teapot, and accompanied by the cook bearing a lot of pannikins.

This teapot had never been used for anything within the memory of our generation, but it was always to be seen occupying a place of honour in the store, and had given rise to a good deal of 'chaff' in its time. Speculations were rife as to its usefulness when George became possessed of a numerous family, etc., etc.

But as it was now filled with a strong hot brew of brandy punch, made, secundum artem, by my host, it was very welcome, very well thought of, and put extra life and vigour into us all. At three o'clock that night or rather morning, as I well remember, I was standing with George and Herbert at the bow end of our dam, at the back of the store.

There were upwards of £500 worth of goods in that unpretentious-looking dwelling, which we naturally wished to preserve, to say nothing of our own lives, and the lives of the others, who were assembled with us on the small spot of ground which was preserved from the raging waters.

All at once a roaring noise was heard from up the river.

'Good God!' ejaculated George, 'another fresh—All hands light the fires and stand by.'

And in a minute or so, three huge beacons illuminated the scene in a manner wild and weird, lighting up the tree-tops, and making the rushing flood luminous and
appalling. We could see that the kitchen garden had entirely gone.

The whole of the big-stake fence had been swept away; the waters were a quarter of the way up the dam all round. ‘Would the coming fresh destroy it?’ Such was the anxious thought which harassed us, bringing, however, the counter reflection that even so, the house and store would hold for a bit and we could get on to the roofs.

The big house for choice. It was strongly built, the walls being of red antbed, with thousands of ‘mulga’ blocks built in like bricks, only across, and flush with each side. They had been all sawn to the length of three feet, and antbed hardens like cement in the sun. So it would hold for some time anyway.

But after working like demons all round the dam, in two hours time the flood-marks we had placed in prominent spots, and which had shown a rise of two feet, proved the water stationary, and at daylight we had the extreme satisfaction of seeing the flood slowly but surely decreasing. By the afternoon the waters had subsided a little down along the slopes of both river and billabong, whilst the water over the flat plain on the other side began to empty again into the river channel.

And now began a week or two of varied experience to us.

To begin with, we tested our boat or punt, and by using long saplings as propellers, working them like canoe paddles in deep water, and pushing in the shallows, we got along all right. Three of us sitting very still, with crossed legs, at the bottom of it, managed to make a voyage over the submerged flats, away from the river, and over the billabong. We got three crested grebes,
with the gun. Nobody had seen these birds before in this part of the country. They must have been forced to come so far inland by pure stress of weather. We had observed them hovering about, and swimming and diving on the calmer waters. The skins were carefully cured afterwards as George was going to get a muff made for a certain young lady.

Finally we navigated our craft right over to the red mulga ridge, where we found the blacks highly exhilarated. Owing to the extremely soft and boggy state of the ground, caused by the heavy rain, especially on the red loamy ridges, they had managed to slay a lot of kangaroo, aided by their mongrel dogs. Also two or three emu, which could not travel when sinking into the ground at every stride.

Such a quantity of 'tucker' they hadn't possessed all at once for years. So they were gorged to repletion, dogs and all, and were very jolly.

Having regard to our prowess in crossing the flooded water in our quaint boat, the like of which they had never seen before, they presented us with a fine 'flying doe,' which we took back with us in triumph.

Next morning again whilst sitting at breakfast with the bright sunlight streaming through the windows and doors, we were much astonished at hearing fierce deep-toned growls proceeding apparently from the roof of the house near the chimney. Going out to see what it was, we discovered the most ferocious wild Tom cat, of great size, gaunt and lean with famine. The poor brute had evidently been cut off from the high land, and must have lived up trees until he took to the water, and got washed on to our island from goodness knows where.

On my showing it a mutton chop, it actually crawled
down and took it out of my hands, retreating and growling fiercely. After two days of feeding, however, the animal suddenly appeared in the house, evidently wishing to make friends, to the intense alarm of George’s two pet cats which instantly vanished in violent bounds out of opposite windows with hugely distended tails.

The wild cat remained with us afterwards for some considerable time, the other two never putting in an appearance while it was about.

Occasionally it would disappear, returning at intervals when it would never fail to bring something with it such as a wild duck, a pigeon, or even a flying squirrel. This was apparently done out of friendship.

One night it came in with a ‘morepork’ which it had caught, another with a hawk, also a night bird probably seized after a swoop to earth upon a lizard or bush rat.

After the flood receded again to the river banks, snakes began to drop from the debris, in the forks of the trees, snakes of all sorts, short, long, thin, fat, round, flat, deadly and non-poisonous.

The first intimation I had about these unpleasant visitors was in this wise.

I was lazily regarding George going into the store one morning, as I reposed in the depths of a hammock chair in the verandah.

He emerged in a great hurry, and cut a long thin sapling, which went to work inside the door.

Calling Herbert and myself, we also provided ourselves with sticks. Then we moved some flour bags, and despatched seven in a very short time, three whipsnakes, two black, a brown, and a grey, all of the deadliest kind.

The grey, or grey blue, is a snake I never saw in any
other part of the world, but in the particular part of Queensland we then occupied. The blacks are awfully frightened of them. They are quick movers and will dash out from under a cotton bush, or salt bush, at your horse’s legs, or yourself, should you happen to pass close. They also are not the least afraid of the water, and are rapid swimmers.

I never knew a case, however, of anybody being bitten by them, though I have seen a valuable horse die in terrible agonies, under symptoms attributed to the poisonous bite of this particular snake. And during mustering I have known a case or two of bullocks succumbing to a supposed bite, but they gave different symptoms to the horse, poor ‘Poteen,’ being lethargic, whereas the horse was mad, and galloped wildly about, finally killing himself when he fell, and couldn’t rise, by beating his head madly on the ground.

After this ‘all hands,’ went about armed with saplings, and it was only necessary to watch any individual to see his stick go to work like a flail, in a very short time. A diligently carried out search was made twice a day, beds were carefully made and carefully examined before turning in, and many a marauder killed, who might have turned the tables upon us.

One day, a couple of the men crossed the much diminished river with bridles to catch two horses, which had managed to get on an island in a flooded ‘bend.’

Then came the news that the representative or overseer of Messrs Major & Co., at Auburn had been forced to spend two most extremely unpleasant days and nights on the roof of the home-station house, in company with the stockman, a black lubra, three ‘piccaninnies,’ a black fellow, two dogs, a cat, and three pet lambs.
They possessed a 'pannikin,' which they lowered for water with a string. They also had a store of 'damper' and beef, but were mortally afraid the house would go.

But the old framework, formed as it was in our day of strong 'mulga' uprights deeply implanted in the ground, stood well. Everything about that house was big and strong. Our senior partner stood six feet seven inches in his bare feet, and he had insisted upon proportion in the buildings. Consequently, our sitting-room mantelpiece was seven feet high. I could never see what was on it as it was too tall to come into *my* line of vision.

The doors were nine feet high and proportionately broad. The beds were nine feet long.

At O'Hooligan's down the river, our senior had to stoop at the doorways, to be lengthened as to his bunk with two chairs, and the annoyance he suffered there had influenced him when he built the dwelling-house at Auburn.

Proportion 'ruled the roost.' O'Hooligan was a small man.

To revert to Seechal. As time went on, all traces of the flood except the water-marks on the trees, disappeared. The stock grew rolling fat, and there was a supply of grass, herbage, and water, such as had not been known for years.

There had been a considerable percentage of loss among the new 'stores,' cattle more or less weakened by long travel, but the majority of the herd had taken to the higher ground when affairs were critical, and had been quite safe.

We counted the bodies of twenty 'crawlers' stuck in
the lower branches of trees, here and there, where eventually they dried in the sun until their skeletons, hides, and horns alone remained as mementos of the great flood of 1867.
HOW MILES HELPED TO CATCH
THE BUSHRANGER

Not native, nor to the manner born.—Transposed quotation.

But I must tell you the story as Miles told it himself.

You must know that Miles had come up to the station
for the express purpose of travelling 6000 of our fat
wethers down to the Adelaide market. He was ad-
mittedly one of the best bushmen in Australia, a fearless
rider, had a first-class knowledge of stock, and proved to
be a cheery companion.

Said he: 'You must know that about a fortnight ago,
I was jogging up the Darling on my way out to you
fellows, when I struck Jones' Brothers station at
Wandabooka.

'You know, they are much alike, and rather crotchety
about doing half the work of the station personally, instead
of allowing more experienced people to do so.

'I know that Ted Jones cuts up all the meat, and it is
needless to say that he has hardly a butcher's knowledge.

'However, as I was saying, I made Wandabooka at
about six o'clock in the evening.

'I was pretty well tired, having come over forty miles,
and had been in the saddle daily for several hours, during
a three weeks' trip.'
'When I got to the cattle yards, there were the two Joneses, a new chum, two black fellows, the bullock driver, stockman, and even the cook, intent upon hauling a fat bullock up on the gallows, having killed it for station use.

'They were so busy that Jones senior hardly had time to say, "How do you do?" on recognising me, but in reply to my question as to where I should put my horses, he pointed to the mountain, where the north ridge trends downwards, telling me to cross the creek, take the bridle track to the two-mile hut, and turn them out close to the lagoon.

'So I rode off, halting at the house to put my riding saddle, pack saddle, and other belongings on the verandah, taking the two bridles on the horses, and two pairs of hobblets with me.

'I crossed the ford at the home station, hit the bridle track, and in about a mile I came to the place, which was out of sight of the home station.

'There was excellent feed all about the lagoon, at a little distance from the hut, and I hobbled my steeds, feeling sure that they would get their bellies full that night.

'Clontarf was a horse I had given a pot of money for quite lately at Mount Murchison. He was slightly a better horse than Theodore, though both were as good animals as ever I owned.

'Well, after seeing them comfortably settled, I turned and walked to the hut, the idea striking me that my pipe wanted filling, for I saw a small wreath of blue smoke coming out of the chimney, and a red ember is the best pipe-light out, boys.

'My hand was on the door-latch, when the door was
"From a feeling of loneliness ... he made these puppets." — Page 76.
flung open, and a powerful, determined-looking fellow pointed a revolver straight at my defenceless head, saying quietly:

"You just walk in there, my friend, and sit down on that box," pointing to an old red J.D.K.Z. case, up-ended in a corner of the hut. "I want to have a bit of a talk with you. My name's 'Thunderbolt!'"

'I did so, as you may imagine, being too utterly surprised to do anything else, and then I was subjected to as pretty a piece of cross-questioning as ever I experienced.

'Who was in at the station? Had I met any of the police or black trackers on the road? and a round dozen of all sorts of questions.

'I gave Mr Thunderbolt all the information he required, as you may well imagine to the best of my ability, but as we sat talking, and the uncomfortableness of the situation wore off a little, I noticed several things.

'First, that "Thunderbolt" was a man of about five feet ten inches high, of fair complexion, sinewy and active-looking, without an ounce of superfluous flesh upon him, and looked more like a gentleman than a bushranger. He had a valuable sapphire ring upon his left hand. And last, but not least, as he stood there with his back to the fire, toying with his revolver, the barrels of which were still in my direction, I noticed that it had been fired off, that one barrel of the cylinder had no cartridge in it.

'Was I man enough to make a dash at him when that chamber came round again opposite the barrel? I felt very much inclined to do so, but discretion formed the better part of valour. It is not a very nice thing to assault an armed man. I might take him off his guard. Should I try?
Whether he read my secret in my eye or not, I know not, but he dropped his careless attitude, deliberately moved the chamber, and placed the hammer at full-cock opposite a loaded barrel, and pointing it straight at me, said coolly, “And now, Mr Miles, I'll trouble you to walk back to Wandabooka with me. Pass out of that door, go down to your horses and take the hobbles off them and put on the bridles. I have a fancy for those two horses, as my own are knocked up round the base of the mountain yonder.”

“Pleasant, wasn't it?

“Here were my two valuable nags to go, and I had no chance.

“When I had finished, Thunderbolt jumped on to Theodore's bare back, whilst the horse did a little bucking on his own account, but finding that of no avail, as the fellow was a past master in the art of riding, he went quietly enough, and I now handed him Clontarf's reins.

““Now,” said he, “walk in front of me on the track to the station.”

“When we got there, to my disgust all hands were still at the yards looking at some horses which had just come up.

“Thunderbolt having now put on my saddle from the verandah, told me to go ahead to the yard. When we got there he made all the men sit on top of the rails like a lot of crows, ordering me up also.

““Put your hands above your heads all of you,” shouted he. “If you drop them again, any of you, I'll put daylight through the first who does so!”

“Mr Jones,” said he, “I have been obliged through hunger to bail up your station, and because my own
Horses have been knocked up I have been also compelled to appropriate the two belonging to Mr Miles there."

'How the dickens the beggar had got hold of my name I don't know.' (Miles was modest. He hardly knew that his fame and his description were all over Australia.)

'However, beyond taking these, and that Terry rifle reposing against the fence there' (the one they had used for killing the bullock with), "when my hunger is assuaged, I shall be off without troubling you further."

'Young gentleman,' added he to the "new chum," whom, I suppose, he picked out as being the most harmless man in the company, "you can come down off that fence. Hand me that rifle! Ah, thanks! Now, go down to the house, and get me a good feed of bread and cold meat. Something to wash it down with; and as many Terry cartridges as you can lay hands on."

'The "jackeroo" went down to the house, soon returning with half a loaf, a piece of corned meat, a bottle of Three Star Hennessey (half full) and six cartridges, which he declared were all that the station possessed, in which statement he was backed up by both the brothers Jones. "Now, young man," said the bushranger, "you can hitch this horse," pointing to "Clontarf," "up to the rails. One will be enough for me just now."

'And he ate the provender ravenously, being very sparing with the brandy, for which water was brought by the "jackeroo" in a "pannikin."

'Just when he had about finished, I noticed a movement from one of the black fellows which was quickly followed by his sable companion (remember we all had our arms over our heads, and the movement was very slight).
The bushranger saw it too; and half wheeling his horse, he followed the direction of their eyes.

Far down the road on the open plain past Wandabooka, were three rolling clouds of dust—horses at a gallop!

"Troopers, by all the powers!" said he, and with one command to us all to stop where we were, he started "Theodore" and was soon across the river, heading for the base of Wandabooka mountain past the two mile hut.

Just as he was going out of sight, round the spur, "Theodore" went head over heels, having put his fore-feet into a "crab-hole"; and being thrown clear, Mr Thunderbolt was off, and running hot-foot for the mountain, disappearing in the scrub, just as Sergeant Hiley, a constable, and a black trooper pulled up at the stock-yard with blown and sweating horses.

By this time, of course, we were all down off the rails, and the news was quickly given to them.

"Theodore" at this juncture came galloping back to his mate, not much the worse for his fall, but the saddle was broken.

A hurried consultation was held, the sergeant telling us all to come on to the mountain as soon as possible; and the police then rode off to intercept the bushranger.

Just at this time too, the thunderstorm, which had been brewing all day, burst upon us with fury, the thunder roaring and the lightning flashing. The rain which fell in torrents would have the effect of washing out all tracks. I had now got both my horses, thank goodness, and let them go in hobbles close to the station, where we armed ourselves with whatever came to hand.

'I got a pistol,' resumed Miles, 'which might have been dangerous to let off, a double barrelled affair, old and antiquated enough for Noah's ark, which I managed to
load with powder and ball, and I found one more bullet, after diligent search, in the box in which I had discovered the pistol.

' The cook brought a damper, and a wedge of salt beef.

' Jones never had a decent feed in the house, at the last minute, before they killed a bullock, as you well know, and he and his brother, and any casual stranger, would have had to make their evening meal on the skirtings of the animal, assisted by some Johnny cakes. In fact, the skirtings were the first full meal which fell to my lot after a long journey. Tea? Well, there was always lots of that—of a sort, you know, only one hadn't time to stay for it; so, cramming what I could get into my pocket, the others doing the same, we set off, planting ourselves in various positions round the mountain, as the sergeant had hurriedly told us to do before leaving.

' The storm had passed off as quickly as these storms do, but as I said before, the rain had fallen in sufficient quantity to obscure the tracks.

' I happened on my way to the mountain to go across the very place where "Theodore" fell, throwing the bushranger. There were a lot of crab-holes on some rough ground.

' There lay the "Terry," no use at all, as it was not even loaded; the Joneses had killed the beast with the last cartridge, and the others were in the bushranger's pocket. In his hurry he had not had time to charge it.

' I chose the shelter of a huge rock which abutted upon the base of the mountain, and well do I remember my vigil. Through the long waiting hours it was anything but pleasant, and I fully expected to see Thunderbolt peeping round one side or other of my shelter.
'Well, the morning broke at last. The sergeant had ridden back along our line, having posted his two men in different places. We now got on to the flat top of Wandabooka. Almost at once we heard a shot, followed by another.

'Ve hastened in the direction of the reports, the sergeant, of course, distancing us.

'When we got up, the *finale* was struck. There was Thunderbolt manacled, and we made a move with the prisoner toward the home-station.

'The constable afterwards told me that the black trooper could not get the tracks at first, but after hunting about a bit he held up his hand. He was then on the very edge of the cliff at the top of the mountain. The constable said,

'I was leading my horse, looking for footmarks at the time, but I was soon in the saddle to join the trooper. As I rode up those shots went off, the nigger jumping on one side. Where the deuce they came from, I couldn't think, but the nigger pointed downwards. Just then up comes the sergeant, hot-foot, and looked down to where the black trooper pointed.

'Says he to me: "Bryant, go down and put the handcuffs upon him." Where to go I didn't know at first, but I got the "darbies," and the nigger held the horses.

'The sergeant beckoned me to him, and pointing to a crack in a big rock just in front of him, strode forward and pointed the barrel of his revolver right down it, shouting out, "Thunderbolt," surrender in the Queen's name. I have got you covered, and if you move I will fire!'

'I could see the man through the crack quite plain. The ground hollowed under the rock. It was a sort of
overhang big enough to hold two or three men, and a
first-rate hiding-place.

"Go down and handcuff him," says the sergeant. Well, I let myself over the side, got some sort of foothold
on a big boulder, and there in this nook was my man. I
collared him, and a pretty smart struggle we had, but I got
him, and he daren't well make a dash out and down the
steep side, as he knew both the sergeant and the trooper
would nail him if he attempted to bolt out of cover.

'Poor beggar, he hadn't another shot left. He had fired
those two at the black fellow, and had but four at first
altogether, as he told me, but in recharging his pistol at
night, had lost two. He couldn't find them, being too
dazed with his fall, and uneasy by our presence. Poor
beggar, he was game enough, but the odds were against
him!'

'Such was the constable's story,' said Miles.

'Thunderbolt was eventually taken to Fort Bourke,
thence to Sydney, and finally lodged in Darlinghurst
Gaol.

'He'll get some term of penal servitude, but how much
I don't know, for "robbery under arms." He had had
several "sticking-up" cases, but as far as I am informed
had never shot any one. He wasn't Thunderbolt after
all. That gentleman was shortly afterwards shot in a
scuffle with a publican at a small bush wayside inn.

'Our man was one of those wild harum-scarum English
importations we sometimes get. He had come to utter
grief in the old country, had got into debt and trouble in
the new, and had taken to the roads to replenish his
purse. But as to being a real desperate ruffian like
Morgan, or a fiend like young Dunn, why, he wasn't in it.

'And now I'll fill my pipe!'
THE EVIL OF YELCOMORN CREEK

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.—SHAKESPEARE.

‘I’m right glad to see you, sir,’ said old Baines. ‘I’m out of tobacco, and I don’t think I ever felt the time go so slow.

‘Generally got something to do so, sir, always making or scheming something, but I can’t get on without my “bacca.”

‘Seems to put a “considering cap” on a fellow’s head.

‘But the sun’s gone, our Australian twilight don’t last long, like the twilight in the old country.

‘The “more’s the pity,” say I.

‘There’s more poetry in the gloaming, the real old English gloaming, with its changing light and shade, some folks would say, but even here it’s right pleasant and cool after the long hot day.

‘Ay, and it’s pleasant to sit and think, your duty done, and the sheep looked to, and yarded for the night, just the time when the crickets and tree frogs are chirping, and the cool breeze comes murmuring up, whilst the evening star twinkles brightly, as if making believe it was night.

‘And there’s lots of strange sounds of birds and beast
all around you. One takes to it wonderfully after a bit. I don’t think I’d swop it for the English twilight, after all, unless I’d made my “pile,” and I’m almost too old for that now, sir.

‘Now I’ll take your horses up there in the “hop” ridge nigh to the tank, and fill the water-trough for them. There’s plenty of grass there, sir. I never let the sheep go within coo-ee of that ridge, and “Bally” and “Jessie” wouldn’t even let them look that way if they saw ’em. Why, that’s my garden, sir, and it grows more for me than most people thinks.’

Old Baines was the queerest old customer on the river, and I never felt more comfortable than when my duty as ration-carrier certified my sojourn for the night at his hut.

Full of anecdote on the spur of the moment, he was nevertheless a little whimsical, and his dancing dolls and niggers—his ‘merry people’ as he called them—were the talk of the district.

From a feeling of loneliness, I suppose, in his ‘back block’ shepherd’s hut, he made these puppets from some light cork-like scrub wood, and on whistling a jig tune and pulling some invisible strings, they would all set to dancing like fun.

Queer as the old fellow was—and there were not wanting some who said he was ‘touched’—he liked his comforts, and was particularly fond of reading, so I generally contrived to bring him as much literary matter as possible.

‘Have a drop of beer, sir? Likely enough you’re thirsty after your long ride,’ queried this enigma when he returned.

And the draught was delicious, made as it was from
one of his recipes, from the wild hop-bush—not from the vine.

'What's that book you've got for me, sir?'

'Never too Late to Mend.' Just what my poor dad used to say to me when I was a whelp after a good 'lambastin.' Charles Reade? Ah, he's an author, he is.

'I've wanted to come across that very book. There's a lot of convict history in it, I think. Ah, well, it'll keep. Have you seen my 'Columbine' and 'Harlequin,' sir?'

And from a box filled with all sorts of carvings he produced the two representatives of pantomime loosely jointed in some peculiarly clever way.

After a capital supper, cooked by the old fellow, and enjoyed by us both, he occupied himself with his books and his pipe, dipping into the former rather than reading them.

'That's a queer scene on the diggings, sir,' he said at length, 'where Robinson the ex-thief (as Judge Lynch) making his speech in defence of the prisoner, says to the excited crowd: "When I was in California,"—my word, mustn't he have been startled when he heard that whisper in his ear: "I guess I was thyar!"—and him a thief, too! My word, those digger fellows seem to get everywhere.

'I've seen a lot of them in my time. I've been on Lambing Flat in the old days, ay, and on Bendigo and Ballarat too, but the worst time I ever had was in Queensland prospecting for opals.

'You've heard tell, I dare say, sir, that the Queensland opal is the true 'noble' opal, the same as the Hungarian. It's rather rough knocking about on the mulga ridges in
the blazing sun, but I've seen the opals as big as bantams' eggs, and bigger, with all the colours of the rainbow in them. If you get a piece only as big as a pin's head in the hard brown matrix, it'll blaze out like fire when the sun catches it.

'And the real "fire opals," you'll see them now in plenty in most of the best jewellers' shops in Sydney, on little trays one above the other, worked by mechanism to revolve slowly so as to show off the stones.

'But I reckon I was the first discoverer of both the blue opal deposit and perhaps a later one of the opal itself.

'Well, about six years ago, before I came to this district, I had been shepherding on the Nardoo in Queensland.

'I had the finest flock of wethers on the station, and open country. One of the plains might have been an old lake once, from the look of it, and that was the end of my tether.

'I'd get to about the middle of it if I made an early start, and let my sheep go their "own way." They was fond of that plain. From the middle of it back home would take me till sundown.

'Wild dogs? Well, there was a sight of them, but my little bitch, "Fly," she never let one come near the place, and my brave old "Rover," he was a match for the biggest of them, and they were more like wolves up there than dingoes.

'Well, one day I says to myself: My beat hedges on to some queer country, I'll see if I can do a bit of exploring.

'The station waggon wasn't due for a week, so I took four days' "tucker" and started.
'The first night I got to the end of the big plain, up to a range that had been tantalising me every day, for being a born "fossicker," I wanted to see what was in it, but the sheep had always been like hobbles to me, and I couldn't leave them.

'A nice camp it was that night. The scent of the sandal-wood bushes was sweet, and it was nice and cool near the ridge.

'I had the sheep camped on a rise near the end of a small water hole, and, thinks I, there's summat in those ranges far or near.

'They trend to the south as far as the eye can reach, and to-morrow we shall see what we shall see.

'Well, next morning we got through a fine gully on to one of the queerest plains you ever see.

'There were three conical hills on it—one right in the centre of the plain, the others one on each side of it; and they looked so striking that I steered my sheep to the nearest, and went "fossicking."

'I had seen something on the sides of them glitter in the sun. It was native talc, plenty of it; where it had been laid bare on the sides by the rain; and I found some stuff like layers of blue enamel on some stones, and lots of things for all the world like stone jars, or more properly speaking, like halved cocoanuts, but some were longer. I thought the natives must have had a pottery there one time or another, but I soon reasoned it out as only a natural formation of hardened sandstone, balled, and worked into layers by water action, probably by rolling before it. They had broken across in drying.

'Then I filled a bag with specimens of all kinds, and turned back for my first camp, reaching my own yard next day.
'Now, the blue stuff like china I found on the stones was the first blue opal deposit found in Queensland, and it's my first and last try for those precious stones that I am going to tell you about.

'Ah, and that same blue deposit cost my mate's life too, being the direct cause of our setting out to hunt for the stones.

'I found out all that about the deposit from a scientific chap, who came along with two horses and stopped a night at my hut. Says he:—

"Somewhere about the district where you got that blue deposit, Baines, you will find the opal itself.

"It mightn't be just where you found the stones, because they have come on flood water long ago. When you strike a hill or a big reef of that hard chocolate-coloured stone you peg in for opals, break up the rock and look for the opal in the stone itself.'"

'I minded those words, sir, and gave him some specimens to take down to Sydney, where he was bound for.

'Not long after he was gone, a young "jackeroo," who used to come out with rations, brought me a letter from Mr Clark the overseer, with word in it that my sheep, 2000 fine fat wethers, were to be on the roads for the Adelaide market in a week.

'There were 8000 sheep going altogether, and the gentleman who was to take charge of them, Mr Miles, was waiting at the home-station until they were delivered over to him.

'The overseer complimented me on my sheep, saying that they were the best on the run, and that he could always depend upon me, etc. etc. He wanted to know if I would go down with them, as they would be all
mixed together at night, "boxed" for camping, or split into two mobs of about 4000 each. I should have to shepherd about the same number I had.

'I liked being "on the roads." There is nothing much to do, except to let your sheep feed leisurely forward, and this year it would be still easier, as it had been a fine season, and there would be plenty of grass.

'Adelaide was 1000 miles away; so there was a six months' job—wages extra, of course, and a cook to cook your grub. Nothing to do but head your sheep in the right direction, and let 'em feed quiet.

'Well, I didn't know which way to look at it at first.

'I'd saved over a hundred pounds, and it was safe in the bank. The trip would put another forty into my pocket.

'But I'd got those opals in my head, and though I knew Mr Clark would be disappointed, I meant to beg him to put another man into my place.

'I'd got attached to them sheep too, sir. I'd seen them grow from two-tooth to prime wethers, seen 'em shorn as the seasons came round, and all that, and I knew my marked sheep as well as I knew "Fly" and "Rover."

'You see, sir, if one of those marked sheep (I had eighteen altogether scattered through the flock) went a-missing, I might calculate to have lost 100 to 150. You'd hardly tell that number out of 2000 without counting the whole flock, and their bellies all full too!

'The marked sheep were nearly all black or brown ones, but one fellow had only a black patch on his rump including the tail; as round as a target, you could see him anywhere, unless he was facing you, and I called
him "the Bull" partly for bull's-eye, and partly for being a bit of an Irishman and trying to be black, when he was supposed to be white.

'When the "jackeroo" went away, I sent no word, only "that I would think it over."

'I lit my pipe, and sat me down on the old log outside my hut door that had served me as a seat for twelve months in that place and was wore pretty smooth. Then I thought the matter over as I puffed the bacca.

'Here was I, then.

'The sheep and myself belonged to each other, so to speak. Say, I goes. Well, there's one hundred and forty odd pounds for me in Adelaide, new clothes, new boots, new fixin's, and hotel dinners, with the barmaids wheedlin' money out of you at every turn.

'Perhaps I gets drunk, and runs through that money in a fortnight; well, that ain't much. I done the same thing pretty often.

'I'm safe to get back with Mr Clark if I go back with the waggon-driver. Mr Clark wants me to go. There's no one can look after sheep on the roads like me. I'd like to see those fellows top the market, says I out loud, and I'm blest if the "Bull" didn't turn right round (he was near the gate), and look me straight in the face, as much as if to say, "Don't leave us, old man. We can't forget you, you know. You're too ugly."

'Well, I argued it that way. Then I says:—

'Now, Baines, you know you're a thundering fool in a big town, and you can't keep your money, but up here in the bush, there's few fellows can pull along as well as you do.

'You're in good health, probably you've got a good time to live if you take care of yourself.
‘Why don’t you make a big “pile,” and give up shepherding? *Those opals, sonny!* Now, what do you think of it?

‘Well, there you were. I was in a quandary, “between the horns of a dilemma,” as the scientific chap would have called it. I never see a dilemma. If there had been any at Yandilla, our head-stockman would have had ’em in the yard, and branded ’em quick.

‘Well, I brought out my old silver watch, and puts it on the stump beside me, and I says: There’s fourteen bronze-wing pigeons gone down to water past the old copper-leaved gum tree at the end of the water-hole.

‘If there’s five more pass before you get once round the “second” dial, old ticker, I’ll give up the sheep and go prospecting. There was six: so it was opals.

‘Mr Clarke laughed when I told him after I had taken my sheep into the head-station, and says; “There’s a strong ‘Eepai’ tribe out there somewhere. Take care you don’t get ‘boomalled’ or speared by the “warrigal” blacks, Baines.”

‘I told him I was sorry to leave the sheep, but he knew as well as I did that I shouldn’t have a farthing of my money left if I went to Adelaide.

‘I got a first-class rig-out from the Yandilla store—so some of my money benefitted the station anyway—picks, shovels, three horses, and a rare lot of “tucker.” Who was my mate? Only a black fellow, but a rare good one. He did not belong to that part of the country, but had been brought down from the Roper River in the far north, and it was a favour of Mr Clark to let me have him, for he was Bobbie, Mr Clark’s own boy, but he wanted a spell hunting, so the overseer let him go.
‘Well, the sheep started, and I sold my dogs. It was a lovely summer, and after three days’ travelling, Bobbie and me was in as pretty a bit of country as you ever see, but it ran out against awful ranges and thick scrub. Mortal man couldn’t get over them ranges, let alone a pack horse, and the range on the other side of it was the Boree range, the one I wanted to go to. The Boree range was a “oner” also, and none of the Boree fellows wanted to climb that; but I wanted to get to the bottom of it on the Yandilla side. Now, the geography of this part of the country is so peculiar, that I took a bit of a map of it.

‘Here you see is Yandilla to the north. That’s the Tarcoo River. Right; two days down that, Bobbie and me camps there. It was a big water-hole.

‘Next day we left the river, and steers due east. We come to the range, and the range beyond it I knew was in a direct line with my old camp, back up the Tarcoo River beyond Yandilla. You see it here, sir, on the paper. I’m after the chocolate-coloured matrix of the opal!

‘You remember the sheer range I told you of, sir, which the Boree fellows didn’t care to climb. That’s all chocolate-coloured stone, and there’s enough opals in it, sir, to make your hair stand on end.

‘But you won’t care to carry any away when you get there!

‘Why? I’ll tell you why, sir.

‘Bobbie and me strikes this country there, the bottom all rough scrub and boulders, the sides inaccessible. It’s forty miles from the main river, at the head of a creek called the “Yelcomorn.”

‘In our days up there in Queensland, the main river,
THE EVIL OF YELCOMORN CREEK

wherever it was, was the road, the highway of civilisation.

'No fear of any traveller being forty miles back from it, unless he was exploring, or prospecting like me, especially when he knows the dividing range between the Tarcoo and the Boree is called the "Never Never" Mountains. Ah, the sort of country the "Barrier" was before they found the silver there, pretty well unknown, except to a few stockmen, and a shepherd or two. Sheer precipices on one side, and alarming steep, and uninteresting on the other.

'And the scrub—that's enough to settle any one. The Boree sweeps the base of the big range on the other side of these "Never Never" Mountains, and the traveller, when he's left that long, brown, wearisome, ungovernable pile of hills far behind him, is truly thankful.

'But inside, down them steep cliffs, ah! it is lovely!

'The creek we had followed up—the Yelcomorn—I knew something about, only five miles up though, no further, and it was the knowledge of a certain outcrop of chocolate-coloured stone that brought me there.

'It took us a day and a half hard dragging with the pack-horse and the others to get to the extreme end of the creek, and where we ought to have gone on through a deep, straight up and down ravine where the creek branched, we were brought up all standing by a wall of rock which seemed to have been built by giants.

'You couldn't get horses or anything else up the hills around us. They were like the sides of houses, and the wall of rock was just a whole hill-top slid into the hollow.

'Well, I thought we were beat, and should have to go
back and try some other route. Bobbie climbs up some fifteen feet on the ledge of one of the great rocks which were strewn about like paving stones. There was hundreds more on top. Presently he beckons me. I joined him. Would you believe it? there was a tunnel about four feet high, by the same breadth. In we goes!

'It was dug between the boulders, in the rubble which lay between the great blocks, zig-zag, black as pitch. After about one hundred yards, I wanted to go back. Thinks I: We may be in a python's lair, and it won't be at all pleasant if his majesty is at home.

'But we lights matches, and on we goes, winding round and on again, in and out. At length we sees a glimmer of light.

'"By the Lord! we're through!"' shouts I, mad with delight. "Come from nowhere to Paradise, one hundred yards or more in a straight line. Treble that, if you count the turns and twists." As I stood on the ledge of the last rock inward and saw what I saw, "Bobbie," I says, "I've seen some queer sights in my time, but this and that together (meaning the hole) beats all I ever did see."

"'Mine think it,'" says Bobbie coolly. "Where 'yarramen?'" (horses).

'You might have knocked me down with a blow, and I wouldn't have opened my lips. Horses indeed! Our horses were the other side of an obstruction to anything larger than a man, impregnable, unalterable, unfathomable. And the millions of tons of convulsed nature had turned the real source of the old half-dried creek on the other side into the New Yelcomorn, where we were, running through a valley like the garden of Eden.

'As far as I could estimate from where I was, there was
'There was Captain Garforth tied up to a tree.'—Page 97.
a seven-mile block, that is, seven miles square of virgin country; the finest I had ever clapped my eyes on, and the timber was the finest I had ever dreamed of.

'There was enough "bloodwood," and "beefwood" on the ridges to have shingled a township, and the kangaroos and emus, shell parrots and cockatoos, white, and black! oh my, it was a fairy spot.

'But I have a queer name for it, sir. I call it the "Ghost's Glen"!

'There was no entrance to it in or out (unless you had a balloon) but by the tunnel. And that tunnel had been made by black fellows before I was born! whichever way I looked at it. And another thing, none of them had used it for half a century or more. There was no tracks, no half-burnt firesticks—nothing.

""Bobbie," says I, "we'll camp in this here Paradise to-night, and do a bit of exploring on the morrow" (I could see the big Boree range, the one I wanted, sticking up high above the far trees). "You think it, we get pick and shovel along a hole.

"Mine think it," said he, "'fetch 'im 'illy,' blanket, 'picketul" (pistol)

"Well, my boy, we'll go back, and hobble the horses; we'll have to take 'em back half a mile to water, clear of the scrub." And we did it, and crawled back through the tunnel again, as the sun was shedding a golden light upon the "gidyahs" and "yapunyahs" of this unknown (to us) and marvellous region.

'It was too late to "prospect" that day, and "Bobbie's" tomahawk soon went to work upon the white gum trees by the creek, where we were rigging up a "gunyah" to camp in, made with sheets of bark so obtained, at the side of those lovely sedge rimmed sheets of water. As
the first ringing stroke of the flashing blade fell upon the nearest tree.

"Coo-oo-ee," very faint and far away came, to my ears, and there was a trembling cadence in the cry—a sort of quivering despair that wrung my heart, and almost made it stop beating. It seemed to float nearer and nearer till it mingled with the whispering of the leaves in the tree tops. Ah, the despair of that cry, the misery of it! It was a death cry if ever there was one yet!

"That's not black fellows," thinks I; "they're demons. We're in a land of spirits!"

Bobbie went chopping on, he hadn't heard 'em. I cocked my revolver and strolled across one end of the water-hole.

Kangaroo grass and wild oats grew over your head.

The bright green of the sedge-rimmed banks of the long sheet of water contrasted vividly with the wonderful blue of it, and every white-waisted gum tree shot its shadow straight down until it looked as if there was a whole army of ghosts watching that pool.

Overhead, on the long, streaming branches, the Nankeen cranes, parrots, cormorants and wood-duck, sat as quiet as if they had never seen a human being before in their lives.

I passed on quick. Oh, Lord, what's this? A native grave! And another! Great heavens, here's a skull and thighbones dragged up out of the ground. Under the "mulgas" more graves, hundreds of 'em.

Spears, "heilamans" (shields of hard wood), stone tomahawks and boomerangs lying all about, strewing the ground, mildewed and rotting with many seasons of exposure.
I fancied I traced an old stain of blood on one ironwood "heilaman."

On I went, the same thing meeting my eyes everywhere.

More graves, more loose bones and skulls. Very old marks of the stone tomahawks could be seen on the trees. (The blacks had all steel tomahawks in my time), and the fallen poles of ancient "gunyahs" (bark or grass huts), were here and there.

I stooped to pick up a boomerang. Ah, that dreadful cry, "Coo-oo-ee" moaning and writhing away through the air.

I crossed over to where the "yapunyahs" stood in dusky groves, and beneath them also were the same mournful relics. Did my foot brush a grave:—"Coo-oo-ee."

Did I sweep aside a bough to gaze into the shady vistas:—"Coo-oo-ee" in the same low, mysterious and frightful manner. I got back to camp. Bobbie's tomahawk was sticking in a tree, and he was lying at the foot of it, dead!

His limbs were all drawn up, and his fingers crooked, as if he had died in agony or fright.

He'd gone; his soul had gone out of his body to them "Coo-oo-ees."

It was pretty bad to scare one, but worse was to come.

When I had covered Bobbie with a rug, after moving him to the head of the waterhole, where it was all sand and easier dug, I kept watch in that dreadful place alone.

"Coo-oo-ee."

Ah, the weeping of it. Ah, the sorrow of it. Shivering away, away, away.
'The moon rose, sir, on a queer sight, and looked down upon that ghostly waterhole with its white sentinels. At the head of it lay dead Bobbie with his mate senseless beside him: whilst flitting in the 'corroboree' dance close by amongst the tall, "yapunyahs" went the skeleton-painted wraiths, tall and weird, of those warriors who fought and fell in the dim long ago, between the two dividing ranges. "No man's land," I call it.

'As the battalions of twenty, spear in hand "heilaman" on left shoulder, foot to foot, shoulder to shoulder, trooped forth, their eyes blazing with the light of battle, they'd stop and bow their heads by Bobbie and cast phantom ashes of the sacred "wambiloa" upon him.

'And I reckon that made him a ghost like themselves.

'How did I know if I was senseless? I saw them do it, sir, and my nerve held good until I fired a revolver slap through a fellow who was standing about six yards off, with a spear up, to throw at me. He was a king, I think, for I never saw such a feather mat as he had on him. It was like bronze-gold.

'When I saw him still there, just the same after the shots, I fainted, or anyhow became senseless.

'At daylight I came to myself and buried poor "Bobbie," with my revolver close handy. Not that it was much use in that place, but it was company like.

'It was time too that poor "Bobbie" was buried. The flies told me that. I struck a blow with my pick on some chocolate-coloured rock, on which I could see blue deposit, and a lot of different sized opals; when that ghostly awful cry came pealing out again directly.

'"So," I says, "if it's meddling with things beyond my knowledge, I am, I'm off," and I got back with my traps through the tunnel, blocked up the other end, so that
a mouse couldn’t get through, got my horses and went clean out of the country.

'I never stopped till I got down here, 700 miles from the spirit-land.

'How do I know them opals are there, sir? Why, bless you, I saw them then, and I've seen 'em often since in my dreams, for I've been there many times a-hunting with poor Bobbie.'
‘MIDNIGHT’

When drovers camp with a wild mob there,
    They shiver with affright,
And quake with dread, if they hear his tread,
    In the gloom of the ebon night.—IRONBARK.

‘What? did you never hear the yarn about “Midnight?”’ queried the Inspector, as he drew his chair nearer to the fire. ‘Well, I’ll tell you.

‘Twenty years or more have gone by, and that’s a lifetime for some of us, but about that time, Lord, it was pretty well all “Midnight” and his doings.

‘Ben Hall and his gang had been broken up. Some had been shot red-handed, and the others had paid the penalty of their crimes in various ways.

‘There had been a cessation of “sticking-up” mail-coaches, robbing banks, and scaring station owners and bank managers out of their wits; when, all of a sudden this desperado took up the running.

‘You never could tell for certain where he would turn up—one day the mail-coach would be stuck up in New South Wales. At the end perhaps of a week, an equally audacious case would be reported from Queensland, and the telegraph wires would be cut.

‘Anon, the Victorian papers would be teeming with sensational paragraphs. He was a proper cunning
scoundrel, and nobody seemed to be able to swear to him. Sometimes he would be described as mounted; sometimes not. But he was generally described as a tall, dark man, some people said black, always completely masked, and well armed.

'At that time I was serving in the New South Wales mounted police. I was fond of active service, possessed a little influence at headquarters, and was always ready for a little more than mere duty, with a view to ultimate promotion.

'I was quartered at "Morabinda," a somewhat dreary little "township" on the border.

'The place was only kept alive by the traffic of woolwaggons and bullock drays to and from Collinsville and the neighbouring stations.

'Of course the shearers and station-hands at the latter used to come in and knock down their cheques, but there wasn't much "running-in" in those days, so they got "boozed" as much as they liked. In fact, it was a point of honour with most of them to get as well "boozed" as possible, and they did little damage except to themselves. Also there would be an outbreak of festivity during the local races, but nine days out of ten during the year were monotonous and dull.

'I had got my sergeant's stripes, and worked under orders from Inspector Lysaght at Collinsville, and our biggest town on that far-away border of New South Wales.

'The Queensland black troopers kept their inside district on the "Warrigal" and "Narrabine" clear from any trouble arising from the blacks, and occasionally arrested a white man for horse-stealing, or petty larceny, and Captain Garforth, the Inspector, was a great favourite with the squatters.
"Two of our black boys, grinning with delight, were perched on 'Caffyn' and 'Midge.'—Page 104.
"Now, if "Midnight" had an enemy, a relentless, uncompromising enemy, Captain Garforth was the man.

"Morn, noon, and night had he sworn to take him, alive or dead, the more especially as "Midnight" had outwitted him on two or three occasions, and the Captain was of opinion that these unsuccessful quests told seriously against him with the Queensland Government.

"Never was there a more painstaking man than he had proved himself to be, and never a greater victim to bad luck.

"He generally was quickly enough on the spot if one of "Midnight's" depredations occurred in his district, but he had never as yet even managed to catch a sight of him.

"It was not long after his accession to the post of sub-inspector at the Browar Barracks, that "Midnight" commenced his little games, and the inspector felt intensely annoyed at not being able to put a sudden stop to them. "Midnight's" last exploit in Garforth's district had been the robbery of a public-house and store, in a little bit of a township on the Warrigal, and since then nothing had been heard of the vagabond. People began to say that he had cleared out with his ill-gotten gains.

"Now Captain Garforth was especially tender about the last escapade. He and his troopers had come best pace down the river, only missing him by a couple of hours, but though they levied taxes on all the squatters for fresh horses, and followed him right on to New South Wales, they lost all trace of him!

"It was rumoured too that it would be well nigh
impossible to catch “Midnight,” because he had so many friends. “Sly-shanty” keepers, shepherds, “old hands”—even blacks, all seemed to act as ‘bush-telegraphs’ for him. Leastways once he had started, and the policemen after him, he didn’t seem like a common bushranger. Some people said he was the devil. One thing struck me at the time as being rather curious. “Midnight” never seemed to steal a horse, but was generally reported as being mounted on a very powerful coal-black animal. All three Governments, New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria now outlawed him, and set a price upon his head, and the sum total represented a prize worth winning.

I had given a great deal of thought to the case. Many and many a night had it kept me from sleeping and I was not the only anxious man in the force either.

There were two things which no doubt added greatly to “Midnight’s” popularity with the rough bush element. He never robbed a poor man, and had never attempted to kill anyone, but it was generally understood that it would be terribly dangerous to meddle with or provoke him. Those few who had been let off lightly, especially some who had actually been presented with money by the bushranger, poor swagmen, were never tired of saying that he was a very powerful, athletic man.

I believe it was partly the knowledge of this which piqued Garforth so much, as he himself had the reputation of being the best shot, rider, and boxer in Queensland, and was also very powerful and muscular.

One of “Midnight’s” indiosyncrasies, if remonstrated with or resisted in the slightest degree, was the tying of his victim to a tree, leaving him there to be found by the first passer-by. Well, eight months had passed in
positive tranquillity, when like a thunderbolt, came the news that the Bank in Collinsville had been robbed after dark, the manager picked up senseless in the strong room, and about £8000 in notes and gold coin missing. The manager in this instance had been stunned by a heavy blow behind the ear, and on coming to his senses was completely ignorant as to how it was done or who did it.

Of course gossip alleged that it must have been "Midnight" again; none but he had either the talent or daring to accomplish such a deed.

Fate seemed indeed to have dealt hardly with Captain Garforth. Not only did he happen to be in the town at that identical time, but he had actually called at the Bank that very day, and deposited a sum of fifty pounds with the manager, who was a personal friend of his.

"You would have thought the Captain was mad. "I shall lose my commission through this," said he.

"To think that out of the few times I come here, once or twice a year perhaps, that devil should have chosen one of them to rob the bank under my very nose. I believe he is the devil, and no mortal man."

Well, it was boot and saddle for the police, white as well as black; you bet. Of course we were only too glad to get the valuable assistance and advice of Captain Garforth's famous "tracker" and orderly "Joe."

Beyond the town, he at once picked the hoof-marks of a horse, sometimes on and sometimes off the road. We followed them twenty miles, and arrested a quiet-looking fellow who looked as if he couldn't say "bo" to a goose, and who was riding a sorry-looking horse.

There wasn't the smallest particle of evidence against
him at the trial, and though we scoured the district far and near we did no good.

'Captain Garforth left for Queensland in a perfect fury, stating that he should send in his resignation.

'Luck was dead against him, and it was more than a fellow could stand.

'With all his "swagger" he was downcast and sullen, and there was a restless fire in his eyes, which seemed to show that he had been aggravated beyond endurance.

'I was at Morabinda when Garforth returned, and he blustered greatly as to what he would do with "Midnight" when he captured him. "For," said he, "if they accept my resignation, I will hunt him down myself!"

'Well, I had been piecing my puzzle together bit by bit, week by week, month by month, and as Garforth, with all his advantages, did not seem to be able to act as thief-taker, or to solve the mystery, I made application to headquarters to be allowed to carry out a scheme of my own, and that was to put myself in such a position as to be "stuck-up" by "Midnight," either venturing upon his seizure then, if I got a show, or to mark his face and figure for further identification; so that I might have something tangible to go upon, better than this fleeting, uncertain individuality which had hitherto so successfully evaded the clutches of the law.

'Garforth went over to the barracks, and it was some time before he came back.

'"Midnight" had ceased to give further trouble; but a horse-stealing case at Fulliver's attracted the Captain's attention, and he was down on this new offender like lightning, bringing his prisoner into Morabinda, as it was proved he came from there. As luck would have it, I was away at the time on urgent business, but
Captain Garforth and his faithful orderly "Joe" rode into the township, and having consigned the prisoner to the lock-up, went to the principal hotel, the "Criterion." (I daresay you have noticed that the smaller the town the more imposing is the name of the principal hotel.)

"Well, they walked into the bar, the Captain treating the orderly and calling for something stiff himself.

"There was an old shepherd there from the "back-blocks," spending his cheque liberally, a grizzled old fellow, with that half-shrewd, half-childish look generally stamped upon those accustomed to solitude. The old man was pretty "well on," and said he:

""Captain Garforth, you're a good hand at keeping down the blacks and catching horse-thieves, but I can't see why "Midnight" should be too much for you. You're a big, strong man, as big as "Midnight" himself, they say."

""Who says so?" asked the Captain.

""Well, nigh every one, I think," said the old fellow, "leastways, every one I've spoken to about it."

""Confound you!" roared the Captain. "You mind your own business, and let "Midnight" be. I've had enough of him. If I could only get at him, I'd stop this talk."

""What would you do, Captain? What would you do?" asked the shepherd pertinaciously.

""Do?" said the Captain, "I'll tell you what I'd do. I'd strip him and tie him to a tree, single-handed, in the way he is said to treat those who resist him, leaving him to boast of his deeds to the next passer-by, but I'd take care to be handy, and when he was released it would but be to be tied and handcuffed alongside of my saddle on his way to gaol."
"No! would you though?" said the shepherd with a face as long as his arm.

Then he asked the Captain to take a drink with him, and the Captain knowing that nothing really offended an "old-hand" so much as a refusal to a special invitation in this form, acquiesced, "shouting" another for him afterwards.

The old fellow was getting very well "on" when, who should come in but young Hammersley from "Yunta" a cattle-station near by, and nothing would do but that the Captain must come to tea with him.

"I will come later on," said the Captain. "Can't come just yet," and soon after that young Hammersley jumped upon his horse and rode away.

Captain Garforth talked to the landlord a bit, and then went up to the store. When he came back, it was near sundown, so telling "Joe" to "saddle-up" he remarked that "Joe" was to stay in the township that night to help to keep guard on the prisoner, "but I shall take him ("Joe") as far as the crossing-place, as I have instructions to give him. I must return the first thing in the morning myself, as I have to give evidence."

Just after dark "Joe" came back saying that the Captain had gone on to Yunta, and that he had left him about two miles this side of the station.

That night at about ten o'clock, as the down-river mailman got into the big timber near the crossing place, his horse shied so suddenly as nearly to unseat him, and that was not easily done as a rule, for Jem Donelly was a smart lad in the saddle.

There was Captain Garforth tied up to a tree, and his horse hitched up to another a little farther on.

He was pretty stiff when Jem helped him to mount.
'He had been “stuck-up” and robbed by a tall man on a black horse; had tried to fight him, but found his pistol-holster empty; would have sworn it was there before he left the hotel.

‘Well, when he got back to the township, “Joe” and he left at once to get the “tracks,” but here again fortune was against them.

‘They got the tracks at the river where the tussle had been, for the road crossed it twice on the way to Yunta, but a downpour of rain occurred, which obliterated everything especially on the hard ground near the river. Once clear of the road there was no sign.

‘The prisoner was to be tried, and they could not accomplish impossibilities, so they returned after daylight.

‘I had got back, and by a curious coincidence, Colonel Lysaght, and Sergeant Major Tuke, with two constables, had arrived in time to take part in the proceedings. You should have seen poor old Magistrate Browning’s face, when I walked across the Court just as Captain Garforth was going to question his prisoner, and laying my hand on his shoulder, said: “Captain Garforth, alias “Midnight” I arrest you in the Queen’s name for highway robbery generally, and assault and robbery at the Bank in Collinsville in particular.”

‘He fought like a wild cat.

‘It was as much as four of us could do to hold him.

‘But we got the bracelets on him, though I got that,’ said the inspector, touching a deep scar of old standing under the right eye. For some time, I believe the bench and spectators thought we had gone mad, but Lysaght, Tuke, and I knew what we were about.

‘“Dick the Devil,” the man arrested for horse stealing,
was in our employ and had got arrested on purpose. He had been prowling about the "Barracks" for some time before this, found that the Captain and Joe worked together, and gathered quite enough evidence to piece my puzzle together, though the two were very "fly."

'I had many proofs, quite unnecessary to go into now, but one of the best I had I consider I possessed when I personated the old "back block" shepherd "on the spree."

'When I launched that shaft about the Captain's strength and size being identical with that of "Midnight's" he had turned deadly pale, but I played my part too well for him to suspect that I was in the secret.

'That ruse of getting Joe to tie him up to a tree near the Yunta crossing-place was a clever move, and his trump card to allay suspicion, but the finding of the revolver in the river, alleged to be stolen by "Midnight," was only dead weight against him.

'Well, he confessed.

'It was as Captain Garforth he had assaulted the manager and robbed the bank. It will be remembered that earlier in the day he paid a visit there to pay in a sum of money. Returning after office hours to take further stock of the premises, he came suddenly upon the manager locking the safe in the strong room, and the opportunity was too much for a man of his propensities. That was to have been the end of it all, and the robbery was to have been accomplished at night, under the personality of "Midnight" after he himself, as Captain Garforth, had left.

'He never divulged where the money was hidden, probably in some remote corner, known only to him and "Joe." The latter vanished the instant he saw trouble
"Our Chinaman."—Page 112.
brewing, taking his carbine, but leaving his horse and trappings.

‘It was no use our trying to find an agile, bare-footed black fellow skilled in bush art then. Besides, our hands were completely filled with our prisoner, who was both game and desperate.

‘A peculiar smile lit up his features when he heard that “Joe” had eluded us.

‘As we wound along the up-river track *en route* for the Queensland Capital with our prisoner strongly guarded in our midst, on the evening of our third day’s journey from Morabinda, just where a beautiful pine ridge juts in on the river, I heard a sharp, ringing crack, saw Garforth fall lifeless from his saddle, and was conscious of seeing two of our men charge up the bank into the timber.

‘There was another report. They found “Joe” in that ridge, but Death had got hold of him as well as Garforth, and Law was out of it. That’s the story, gentlemen.’
DOZY KATE

We've had our gallop in days of yore,
Now down the hill we must run;
Yet at times we long for one gallop more,
Although it were only one.—
ADAM LINDSAY GORDON.

The 'boss' had gone away to Melbourne for a 'spell,' leaving instructions that the station (Yerilla) was to be represented at the forthcoming races to be held at the public-house and blacksmith's shop, which composed our township, three miles up the river.

There was no 'lock-up' in those days, we knew not the 'durance vile' of a higher civilisation, and our mounted troopers had higher quarry to fly at than the person of a hapless 'drunk' in the reality of desperate and determined bushrangers. We knew, however, that the rendez vous at the 'township' would concentrate all the available capital and sporting genius of the district for the time being.

Late one evening, therefore, Jack Carter and I deliberated with regard to the said races. Before we separated for the night our decision was made. We would run 'Caffyn,' a tireless fast old stock-horse, the pride of the river in his day; and even now, a noted wild horse runner.
'Midge,' my 'Sunday' horse, was as fast for a mile and a trifle over, as anything we had got; and our pet, 'Moselle,' was to be our mainstay for the two big events—'The Squatter's Plate' and the 'Lachlan Cup.'

The mare did not really belong to us, but was merely running on the station at the desire of an old friend, but we were as fond of her as if she did by reason of her grand temper and wonderful capabilities. She was not much to look at, exception being made of her well-bred game, 'Oriflamme' head, and the way she carried her tail and moved on her legs.

Jack Carter, our head stockman, was a total abstainer from spirituous liquors, and did not smoke. He possessed a cool, resolute manner, and as kindly a heart as ever beat in human bosom. He could ride anything bare-backed, and was the idol of the station hands.

Having saved money, he had educated his orphan younger brother and sister out of his own hard-earned means, and had actually learned to read and write himself during a visit to town, after a fashion only, as the brief note handed to me hurriedly three days after our consultation proved:—

'Privit. Rases cum orf on Chusdy, 23 Nov. Keap youre i opun.—Jack,'

It was the second day of that month, so that we consequently had only a bare three weeks to train 'Moselle' for the two principal races.

As aforesaid, we expected 'Caffyn' to win the 'stockman's purse' for bona fide stockhorses, and 'Midge' to pull off the 'Maiden Plate.' So we began to put our horses in training, and daily three diminutive black boys in Bedford cords and boots were to be seen exercising the animals.
Jack was going to ride at least two of the horses, and we gave them an occasional 'scurry,' besides their daily gallops on the vast plains, which stretched away to the horizon from before our doors.

Meantime rumours began to fly about that we were not so sure of winning as it first appeared to us.

Old M'Pherson of 'Wyadra' had a 'dark' horse, a direct importation from town, it was whispered, and the training of this animal had been kept a profound secret.

There were at least three others from the town of Redbank, twenty miles up the river, which were reported to be particularly good, and their owner, a certain Mr Isaacs, was reported to be a very knowing card.

A week before the races we tried our three, 'owners up' for George Peyton, 'Moselle's' master, hearing we were going to run the mare, had ridden in from the 'back-blocks.'

The race was over our marked course of three miles, and resulted as follows:—

At one mile 'Midge' led easily. At two, 'Caffyn,' and at three, 'Moselle,' as she liked. As George Peyton said, 'She was a wonder.' To look at, well, she wasn't. She had a hip down, and was an ordinary-looking mare, though very strongly built. But we knew there was a strain of high breed in her not to be matched in those parts.

Back to sturdy old 'Premier' she could trace her descent, intermingled in herself now with the grand 'Riverina' and 'Oriflamme' blood. And there she stood in her loose box, game, wiry, strong, sinewy and healthy, eating oats out of the palm of my hand. 'Moselle,' daughter of Riverina, alias 'Dozy Kate,' as Jack and I had agreed to re-christen her, in order to
take a rise out of the knowing gentry we had to deal with.

How Jack chuckled and laughed that afternoon as he tightened up her girths. She was as quiet as a sheep from kind treatment, and merely looked at him in an inquiring sort of way as if she rather liked it, when he nearly pulled her off her legs by a mighty strain.

She was now to make her final trial with the other horses, as arranged after the last 'scurry' on the previous day. But mark the difference when Jack was up, and the magic control of the man's seat and nerve shot through the mare! What a proud, elate, far-seeing glance was in her eyes as she raised her deer-like head aloft, and trembled all over with excitement. She could see 'Caffyn' and 'Midge' at walking exercise at yon far belt of timber by the boundary fence. They are to come from that spot to where we, George Peyton and myself, were mounted on the stockyard rails as judges, a distance of three miles.

Australian station-horses don't think much of a three-mile gallop. Even the foals are accustomed to come tearing along that distance with their dams, and the ground within half-a-mile of the stockyard is like a race-course having been pounded flat by hundreds of galloping hooves, as it is the usual 'run in' of the animals not at grass in the home-paddocks.

She shoots away, pulling double, with a long swinging easy stride, and after a time we can see Jack joining the others. They walk up and down a bit and then range together.

*They're off!* You can see the dust rolling out on the plain from the rapid hoof strokes. On they come, faster and faster. Half-way as usual 'Midge' is last. 'Caffyn'
and 'Kate,' neck and neck. Then the old horse slowly drops, and Kate comes by like a cannon shot, outpacing everything, and is with difficulty pulled up, shaking her head fiercely at the restraining bit.

"Dozy Kate," eh?" queried Jack with a calm smile, his iron frame in no way discomposed by the 'spin.' 'She don't seem to sleep much.'

'They'll be wide awake to catch her.'

'I tell you what, gentlemen: I don't mind betting you a "fiver" apiece that I ride all three horses and win four events with them!'

But his confidence rather took us aback, and inwardly hoping that he might be justified in his opinion, we busied ourselves in getting the nags rubbed down, their mouths washed out, etc., and retired to bed that night full of anticipation.

The auspicious day broke at last, bright and sunny.

The first race for the 'Maiden Plate' was to start at ten o'clock sharp, so half-past eight saw us in the saddle, jogging comfortably along under the tall gum and box-trees which fringed the river road. Jack was riding his favourite 'Premier' by (old 'Premier'), a perfect little nugget of a horse, fleet of foot and a wonderful jumper, from whose back, when 'pounded' on a run by a wire fence, he was accustomed to dismount, hang his coat, or tie a handkerchief on the top wire and then ride him over it. He led Moselle alias 'Dozy Kate' by her racing bridle. The small, neat saddle was girted outside her cloths.

Two of our black boys, grinning with delight, were perched on 'Caffyn' and 'Midge,' looking remarkably like diminutive tomtits on particularly muscular rounds of beef. Old 'Caffyn' is snorting with excitement, and
'Midge' executes a two-legged dance most of the way.

At the hotel, in front of which was the race-course, was the usual assemblage; swarthy shepherds and bush-hands, stockmen from all the neighbouring stations, a couple of mounted troopers, gallant, gay, and debonair, owners, grooms, the members of the betting ring, and black fellows.

Our arrival, of course, gave rise to a good deal of 'chaff,' mixed up with hints that our horses were not good enough, either for the Wyadra stranger or the Redbank contingent, which latter string had been picking up money all over the district.

'And,' added a shepherd, 'old Isaacs is a downy own, you bet.'

'Big one drunk last night,' quoth Jerry, one of our station blacks, as he sauntered up with a twig in his mouth. 'All about white fellow tumble down, this fellow "cobbon" (greatly) thirsty this morning. You give it tchilling. Mine want 'em nobbler.'

There had indeed been a debauch. The revelry had been prolonged all night, and with the usual recklessness of bush crowds; half of them were drunk still. Suddenly, cries arose from the hotel bar, which was crammed with customers, of 'Turn him out!' 'No you don't, boys!' 'Fair play's bonnie play!' 'Form a ring and let them fight it out!'

Presently a crowd rushed out, bearing in their midst two inebriated individuals foaming with rage, and yelling at the top of their voices, one a white man, a bush hand, and the other an athletic black fellow. Owing to a whim of a neighbouring squatter M'Diarmid, who had trained nearly all the able-bodied blacks in the neighbourhood
to a thorough knowledge of the gloves, the fight was not nearly so unequal as a casual bystander might have supposed. A ring was now quickly formed, and both men stripped to the waist.

The bushman was a hardy fellow, and the black seemed a model of symmetry. M'Diarmid wielded the sponge for the 'nigger,' shouting out challenges all round, but as he was the best exponent of the 'noble art' now that our chief was away, there was no very cordial response. He was supported by several blacks, who both before and during the scrimmage doused their man plentifully with cold water from a bucket, which procedure seemed to revive and sober him considerably, and he pounded in con amore, but the shower-bath, which went impartially over both combatants, produced an astounding amount of 'tall' language from his opponent.

The fray was not of very long duration. The black fellow got in several straight hits from the shoulder, but the white man at last, getting tired of the buffeting, rushed in, regardless of science, and nearly succeeded in strangling him. He was promptly pulled off the prostrate body by spectators, after M'Diarmid had 'downed' two or three of the nearest, just to compose himself, and as the two erstwhile enemies were subsequently discovered 'liquoring up' together, it was evident that not much ill-feeling was left between them. Indeed, they afterwards took in so much ballast that late that night, long after the races were all over, they woke simultaneously in the hayloft over the stables, whither they had gone together under the impression that it was the grand stand. On coming to themselves their ideas seemed to suggest, first, that it was to-morrow, and secondly, that it was high time to drink something.
But now the weighing-in bell is heard in the saddling paddock, and forth from the stables (where a crowd of supporters have been inspecting him) comes the Wyadra 'crack,' a magnificent chestnut horse, to be led about by his groom before his final preparation.

The 'Maiden Plate' of one and a half miles was a foregone conclusion for 'Midge,' and the order of running was as follows:

Mr Browne's b.g. 'Midge,' by Mosquito—Ladybird.
Mr Isaacs' ch.m. 'Terpsichore,' by Vaulter—Mazurka.
Mr M'Diarmid's 'Upper Cut,' by Tom Sayers—Virago.
There were four other starters.

'Midge,' however, won by half a length, 'Terpsichore' being quite as good as report made her, but it is still my opinion that Jack did not let the little horse do his best. With 'Caffyn' we won the 'Stockman's Purse;' amounting, with stakes and bets, to over £60, and as we knew that now the old horse would have little chance, except, perhaps, in the 'Hurry Scurry,' we prepared to pay 'Kate's' entrances for the two big events.

'What did you say the name of your mare was?' asked the entrance-clerk.

'Dozy Kate,' drawled Jack, as if the winning or losing of the animal in question was a matter of perfect indifference.

And so, apparently, thought the clerk when he turned away from him as he stood there, dressed in plain crinean shirt and moleskin trousers, with a silk handkerchief tied round his head in lieu of a cap.

Very different, however, was the officials' greeting to the natty 'Wyadra' jockey who sported old M'Pherson's colours of blue and white, with all the self-appreciation of a bush dandy.
"I met his onward rush with a straight right-hander."—Page 123.
DOZY KATE

‘Nothing else in it, I think, Mr Ord?’ quoth the clerk.
‘You bet there isn’t,’ responded that youth, gaily.
There was a quizzical gleam in Jack’s eye, but he said nothing and looked as grave as a judge.
The weighing-in and preliminaries having been duly adjusted, the horses, ten of them, were brought up to the starting-post. The ‘Wyadra’ horse ‘Cervus’ by ‘Wapiti’ out of ‘The Fawn’ attracted most of the attention. There were two or three fast platers in this race, notably Mr Isaacs’ ‘Devilshoof,’ M’Diarmid’s ‘Contest,’ the publican’s ‘Ocean,’ and ‘Tarry-Boy.’ The rest were outsiders or unknown to fame.
After a false get-away, they are off together. ‘Cervus,’ pulling madly, bounds to the front. He is a great horse, and very soon it seems that there is nothing in it but himself. Somehow, though, ‘Dozy,’ going sweetly and easily, seems to get through her horses without let or hindrance, and creeps slowly and surely closer and closer to the chestnut. I saw the ‘Wyadra’ jockey give one astonished look, and then he let his horse out, but Jack though apparently unconscious, had eased his hands also, and the mare’s wonderful powers brought her up nearer and nearer. At the distance post they are even, and a second later ‘Moselle’ (without the alias) is ahead—and keeps the lead!
‘Won by half a length!’ is the judge’s fiat.
There are two more races to be run before the great event of the day, the ‘Lachlan Cup,’ in which we have entered all our horses, including little ‘Premier,’ and on the result of which we have staked all our money.
‘Moselle’s’ mouth has been washed out with a lemonade bottle full of water. She looks as if she has
enjoyed herself, just 'stretched' herself a bit, and there is a latent fire in her eye which means business.

Again they are all away for the big race, which it is needless to chronicle further, except to say that at two miles and a half our wonderful 'bit of blood' went clean away from Cervus, and the big horse was 'all over the place' at the finish.

The result financially to Jack, who richly deserved his success for his wonderful riding and judgment, was, including bets, about £100, not counting the ten pound note which he handed over to the publican to dispense drinks to the crowd with. The members of that crowd, meeting in two's and three's in after years, were wont to talk about our wonderful coup, and 'Dozy Kate' became a by-word on the river.

'Don't tell me,' said old Isaacs aside to us, as we rode, flush in pocket and gay at heart, back to Yerilla, 'don't tell me. I saw she was a "Riverina" mare the moment I set eyes on her; and another thing, my boys (with a wink at Jack), I generally keep my eyes on the winner! Old Ike wasn't born yesterday. Do you remember a travelling pedlar who stopped at the men's hut the night your last trial (which was timed) came off? Well, he was of my race, and in my pay. He had two carrier pigeons from my place in his cart. Mum's the word, my boys. He had two, because I thought that one might get shot!' And the old sinner laughed till he nearly fell off his horse.

Jack's £100 went to a Melbourne Bank in trust for the benefit of the two orphans left in his charge. Such traits of prudence and economy had heretofore marked his sojourn amongst us, but having somersaulted, horse and all, over a fat bullock whilst going best pace in the
DOZY KATE

furious turmoil and impenetrable dust of a large cattle-
muster, he has now, regretted deeply by all friends who
survive, gone to a better land.

Alas poor Jack! Amongst the group of old mates who
will, we are taught to believe, stand at the golden gates
which guard those happy hunting grounds of the future,
I should like to see thy face, confident as of yore, and
smiling a joyous welcome—that is, if I ever get there!
OUR CHINAMAN

Faithful below he did his duty,
But now he’s gone aloft.—DIBDIN.

A hot summer noon, a burning, blinding haze lambent on the parched ground. A dry sultry sirocco of a wind sifting fine sand through every crevice of our bush-hut. Inside, darkness and contentment.

We had spoken little that morning. It was too hot for a flow of words. Beyond striking a match for an occasional pipe-light in a languid and desultory fashion, our party of three had exerted themselves very little. Corporeal and mental energy lay dormant, content with the pleasant sensation of rest and quietness.

Some hours had elapsed, when it was remarked that the best way to spend a real hot day in Australia (when the sun heats a ‘bullock-yoke’ to that extent that it cannot be handled), is to close doors and windows, to cover chinks and apertures, to ‘keep dark,’ as it were, after the custom of the opossum, an aboriginal of the country, and therefore qualified to know what means to adopt.

Suddenly a footfall aroused our slumbering senses. There was a good deal of meaning in that hesitating, weary step. It foretold lassitude, even trouble.

Shambling around the hut, the owner of it halted in
an uncertain manner at the slab door, which constituted the main entrance to our domicile, and a body fell against that rough-hewn piece of architectural simplicity. On inquiring into the cause of this, and the door being hastily opened, we found a Chinaman lying on the threshold apparently dying, livid, ghastly, and limp.

'Water, boys, quick,' said our chief, as he supported the almost inanimate body.

Forcing the parched lips and clenched teeth open, we administered a little of the beverage from time to time, with a marked result, for in a few minutes the half-dead Mongolian, incapable of speaking before, gave utterance to the single word, 'Leewa.'

'What the deuce does he mean?' we inquired breathlessly.

'The river,' said our chief. 'He's been dying of thirst, and has probably got lost on the "back-blocks"' (country away from the river.)

When he was partially recovered, he related briefly but earnestly, the following statement:—

'To-day—no blakefast,' we were moved to sympathise with him; but when he additionally stated that 'yesday—no blakefast,' and that day before yesday he had experienced a total impossibility of procuring that important meal, our sympathy was extended to such dimensions, that it showed in various ways, being still further excited by every feeble statement, such as, 'Day before, day before, yesday no blakefast,' until the lever was forced to escapement at the words, 'No mealie fi day.'

A fire was started at once in the rude outhouse, which served the double purpose of kitchen and larder, and whilst supplying our patient with jorums of milk and wedges of damper as a safeguard against the utter extinc-
tion of life's vital spark, a hot repast was made ready in no time. We were cookless just then, 'Nerangi Dick's' culinary efforts, tempered with absorption of our brandy, having resulted in his ignominious dismissal.

Our Chinaman did ample justice to our skill, merely remarking in a casual sort of way, as a query, having stowed away the half of what was before him, 'No vedgygobells?'

We stated that the common sow-thistle, familiarly known to us by the synonym of 'warrigal cabbage,' was about our highest attainment in that line. And that we were obliged to trust to the natural production of this vegetable, as we had been quite unable to grow anything in the arid patch of ground, called by courtesy 'the kitchen garden.'

Owing to the animation caused by the meal, and a little brandy and water, our Chinaman then remarked:—

'You wantchee vedgygobells? Me makum plenty: cabbaggee, punkin, turnipee, sellely; you makee me man again, me makee cabbaggee, cookee beestake.'

To this determination he afterwards adhered most punctiliously. Rising each morning just before daylight, he commenced making a large enclosure near the river with a stake fence; but somehow we never had to wait a moment for any meal, which he cooked delightfully, and served in person, arrayed in the cleanest of white garments, which he made himself from calico, purchased from our store. We supplied him with garden seeds, and in a marvellously short period a flourishing patch of greenery appeared upon the riverside. All hands soon revelled in spinach, cabbage of various sorts, tomatoes, and other vegetables. Even fresh salad artistically compounded was a common event in our
lives, and warrigal cabbage was banished into the limbo of a dark and departed past.

Tom Ah Chow, or as his name came to be by constant repetition, 'Tommy Cow,' proved to be a most valuable acquisition to our ménage. The very 'wood and water joeys,' namely, two superannuated 'black gins' (γυναι, women) and four 'picaninnies' (children) of opposite sexes, became clean and tidy, under his supervision. Not a scrap of provender was wasted, and the kitchen became as much a marvel of tidiness as the garden was of culture.

With regard to the latter, it was roughly estimated amongst us that Tommy Cow toiled patiently up and down some steps cut by himself in the river bank with ninety buckets of water daily, two at a time. By-and-bye his irrigation system was improved by a neat windlass, iron bucket, and rope, with runnels and tanks all over the garden. He used to sponge each leaf of every cabbage in the garden with soft soap to keep the aphis in check.

From 'early morn to dewy eve' he worked unceasingly, ungrudgingly, uncomplainingly. He had his peculiarities, for all that—most of us have. One of these peculiarities was a great partiality for made dishes, always beautifully cooked and seasoned. We had turtles made of pastry, fishes, and various forms of animals, filled with appetising mince meat. He could make anything edible by the simple process of cooking it. He experimented with wallaby, paddy melons, even possums, but here our chief stepped in.

On being interrogated on another occasion concerning the composition of a certain entée which we had all
enjoyed very much; he smiled, and his pig tail, albeit considerably shortened by somebody, oscillated with suppressed merriment as he replied:—

'Me cookee mulga tlee glub. Welly ni mulga glub.'

We had partaken of mulga-grubs minced, as to their fat and luscious bodies. But it was too late to find fault with our chef. Strange to say, they did not disagree with us. They were very much like oyster patties.

We had to part with Tommy in his capacity as chef during the lambing season, as he preferred to take charge of a lot of ewes at that season, as a change from household duties. And it paid us, for his average of lambs was always the best on the station.

On one occasion he had even offered to pistol the aboriginal in charge of the 'strong-mob' for losing one lamb. This threat produced a marked effect upon the native mind, collectively and individually. We were constantly besieged by 'blackfellows' old and young, carrying lambs, King Billy having issued an edict to the effect that all stray lambs, wherever found, should be at once taken to the head station, and our chief once met this dusky potentate surrounded by his crowd of coppery sultanas, and hordes of children all armed with green bushes beleaguring a solitary lamb, not three hours old, with a view to its protection. It died from exhaustion and unlimited 'shoo-ing' afterwards, but the aboriginal mind was contented.

Before Tommy Cow's advent, however, we had positive proof that King Billy and his tribe were addicted to spearing stray lambs, and feasting upon them when hungry, because a lamb is so much easier to catch than a kangaroo, and the Australian blackfellow hates trouble.

However, after Tommy Cow's advent among our flocks,
the custom died out, and the tribe led by King Billy bowed the head before him, as to a superior being, marvelling greatly as to his colour, which was not exactly 'flourbag' (white), but more of the 'sugar-bag,' and 'ration-sugar' at that.

Time, the omnipresent, yet everpassing, had obliterated the episode of the 'glub' pastry from our minds, but the episode, and consequent brief fracture of our faith in Tommy's morality as chef de cuisine, was again brought vividly to mind, after shearing, during the second year of his sojourn with us.

The bullock-driver had presented him with a collie-bitch, and her philoprogenitiveness had induced a litter of puppies, black, blind, and adipose.

We had been short of beef at the head station, but a smoking pie had somehow been prepared by our Chinaman, as dainty to our palates in its peppery savouriness, as ever was chicken. With the last mouthfuls came doubt and apprehension. Tommy was requisitioned.

'How did you raise the pie, Tommy; was it wallaby?'

The cheery answer came unhesitatingly:—

'“Lassie,” she catchee seben poppie, me keepee one, cookee tlix; leetel poppie welly ni!'

After this, stern orders were given forth, that grubs, puppies, and such like 'small deer,' were to be excluded from the menu, 'or, by Jove, we shall have “possums” or bush rats and even centipedes, stewed up some day as an entree,' argued our chief when Tommy had been dismissed from our august presence with a solemn admonition to stick to mutton and beef, and avoid 'kickshaws.'

Another idiosyncracy of Tommy's was the almost
worship and veneration in which he held our chief. He continually made this apparent. He would clean his saddle and bridle until the leather shone with unwonted lustre, and the bit and stirrup irons (to say nothing of the D straps) glittered like silver (the British, not the German article). He continually abstracted his shirts, subjecting them to a washing process of his own, until they assumed new glories. He purloined his boots when laid aside, and brought them back like ebony.

But when hard times came upon us, and the wool from the shorn sheep no longer paid the working expenses of the station, Tommy Cow came forth in his true colours. He refused to accept a single penny of wages, and worked 'double tides.' By many a miracle of finesse and management, he kept our table supplied as of yore, and turned a deaf ear to any remonstrance on our part, merely remarking with gentle stubbornness: 'You makee man of me, me growee cabbaggee, cookee beeftake.'

When the tide turned, and our affairs prospered, still our Chinaman was part and parcel of the household, and to have missed him, with his smiling face and clean white clothes, would have caused a blank, a blank we did not even dare to dream of. But towards the end of the fourth year of his service, he led our chief aside, and told him that he had saved sufficient money to take him back to China, and live upon for the remainder of his life, and that he intended to leave us. Though he was 'only a Chinaman,' I felt a lump in my throat when his simple words were reported to us in common council.

'You makee man of me, me growee cabbaggee, cookee beeftake. Me savee money, go alonga China see mudder, fader. Me only Chinaman; all about whitey man tellee
me, you no savey, go 'hellee; you makee man of me.' And he had sobbed like a child, covering his face with his white apron.

We sat up that night later than usual, pondering much over our paragon's departure. He was to go early on the following morning, and had begged a photograph of us all to take to China with him.

'No doubt,' remarked our chief, 'it will be better for him to go, though we shall be the losers. He has made money, and has home ties.

'A Chinaman, as a rule, gets more rough usage in the colonies than kindness, but they do manage to bag the dibs. Tommy deserves all he has got anyway. Now mark my words: he will probably buy or rent a pagoda attached to a paddy-field or two in his own country. The river will flow close by. He will possess a junk or a boat. You can read his future in the willow pattern plates, you know. He will fatten and prosper, grow and cook his own rice, wear his grass shoes, Nankeen coats and pyjamas. There may be a Mrs Cow, perhaps two or three. Think of that, boys!'

But his surmises proved to be incorrect after all, for whilst discussing Tommy's many good points, and grieving over the loss we were about to sustain, a knock was heard at the door. Our chief opened it.

'Are you boss here?' demanded a rough voice.

'I am,' was the reply.

'Then bail up, d— ye. Up with your hands or I'll let daylight through ye!'

We had leapt to our feet, only to be confronted by two levelled guns, backed up by two villainous determined-looking faces. Resistance was hopeless!

'Give us something to eat, and we'll clear out,' said
'We generally carried revolvers, and were able to give the coup-de-grace by riding close up.'—Page 134.
the first speaker; 'but,' he added menacingly to our chief, taking aim at him as he spoke, 'I've a good mind to shoot ye for a blasted swell.'

Tommy Cow now joined us, cool and calm, rather to our surprise.

'That's yer blank chunky cook, I suppose,' said the leader of the two. 'You blank swells can eat hearty when the likes of us is starving in the bush.—Fetch the dinner,' said he, wheeling suddenly to one side, and levelling his gun at Tommy.

Judge of our amazement when Tommy at once became a very object, trembling and paled with excess of fear. The bushranger absolutely revelled in the spectacle thus afforded him, and laughed aloud, saying, 'I guess I frightened the heathen; now, look sharp, and dish up that dinner!'

Tommy, after one elegant flash of his eyes at our chief, too swift to be noticed by any one but him for whom it was intended, fled to the kitchen, returning almost directly with bread and meat.

Whilst setting the table in order as fast as his apparently trembling hands would let him, he, with marvellous dexterity, placed a loaded revolver in our chief's hand. He had managed to conceal it on his person during his brief absence.

Too late! a report and a fearful oath simultaneously. Two lightning-like flashes from the revolver, and we were free, but at what a cost! One bushranger, the one who had detected Tommy passing the revolver behind him, was dead, the other was dying, both sped by the unerring hand of our chief. But alas! Tommy also lay gasping on the floor, the blood welling from his mouth at every respiration. He was shot through the lungs. He glanced
lovingly up at our chief's face, as he supported him for
the second time in his life, but that life was now ebbing
fast, as he spoke his last words.

'You makee man of me, me glowee cabbaggee, cookee
—beeftake, me savee—whitey man, blushlanger alonga
Ballalat, he stealee my money, tellee me go—hellee, me—
makee blieve aflaid, fetchee—you—pistolee—all—litye!'

And the weary head of this social pariah as judged by
the Colonial standard, fell back on our chief's shoulder.
He was dead! Gone beyond the portals of erring human
wisdom to that place, where the verdict of 'only a China-
man' will not affect him, onward to judgment, where all
is remembered and no good action blotted out.

He gave up his life for his friend and master. Who
could do more?

Perhaps he found his paddy field. Who knows?
'HUTKEEPER.'

How can a man die better than by facing fearful odds?
—LAYS OF ANCIENT ROME.

I was on duty down at the washpool, where I had the sole management of the men. When we came to get some of the merino rams through the operation of crutch-washing, eventually passing them through the swimming-race to the drying-ground, I had the misfortune to lose two of them by drowning the very first day. So I sought out 'Hutkeeper,' the 'warrigal' blackfellow who usually attended to them, and asked him who he would choose as a mate to help him to keep them from entangling their horns in the sides of the race, whereby the drowning occurred. To accomplish this successfully the two blackfellows would have to do a lot of swimming during the day and remain in the water a great deal, either holding on to the rails or submerged to the armpits. But swimming was child's play to 'Hutkeeper.' Many a time on the cold winter mornings have I seen him swim over the river in front of the station-houses and light a fire on our side to warm himself, naked as he was born, and dripping wet. There he would wait for his breakfast, and that disposed of, I would give him half a plug of Barret's twist, which he would stick into his matted hair for
safety, and swim back to his rams, remaining away all day, and returning at sunset. Then he would go through the same performance. The rams having been safely yarded, and in 'view' from our verandah, he would go to the black's camp sometimes. But oftener he preferred to camp by the sheep.

Now with regard to 'Hutkeeper' and his chosen mate. He picked out 'Bulgabrow,' another warrigal, as being nearest to his own kidney. By liberal promises of tobacco, and by keeping the idea of a crimean shirt apiece hanging over their heads, to be given them when the work was over, I induced them to accept the rather unpleasant task. None of the white men employed at the washpool would have dreamed of taking the job. They were a wild, coarse lot, the very sweepings and scum of civilised districts, horse-thieves and hut-burners, when they could get the chance, men who would make a holocaust of the brush fences, if they got a cross word in at the station. The language habitually used by them was simply appalling. There was a certain adjective used by them which signified 'sanguinary,' and it coarsely emphasised everything under the sun, from the manager of the station himself to the pettiest minutiae of every-day life.

These men were generally known up and down the river as 'sundowners,' travellers, or tramps, who arrive at stations about the time their name suggests, asking for work, and devoutly hoping they wouldn't get it. But as sheepwashing paid well, some of them had condescended to stop and have a 'go' at it. And such were the sort of people we had to deal with that season. When they got their cheques, they would spend every penny at the first public-house they came to.
He was a vagrant.—Page 139.
'Hutkeeper' and his companion worked well for half a day, saving the lives of several valuable rams. Then they both disappeared. I afterwards learnt that their defection was simply owing to the way they were abused and sworn at by the washpool men, during the brief intervals of my absence.

I was quite well aware that I must lose more rams if the race was not guarded. There were a few more to do, and after working in the water myself the first day I resolved to steal a march on 'Hutkeeper' and try to make him return. I meant to surprise him asleep in camp, as I knew he would be off into the bush at sunrise.

Next morning, very early, without saying a word to my partners, I got out of bed, dressed quietly, and slipped out of the house. It was just near the grey dawn, which the blacks in their picturesque language call 'nerangi daylight' (little daylight). The morning star was high in the heavens, flashing with that peculiar glitter which heralds Aurora.

The blacks' camp was half a mile from the house, situated in a clump of 'gidyahs,' which bordered the flats of a clay-pan swamp, and here and there I could see the wreaths of blue smoke from their smouldering fires. I had a horse in the stable at the time, as it was necessary for me to get down to the washpool early, but I didn't trouble to get him out, and reached the camp on foot. Under the bark 'gunyahs,' which formed a little street on one side of the clay-pan, I noticed several huddled forms all fast asleep under their possum rugs and government blankets.

Every now and then a black's dog would half-howl and half-bark, with hair erect and drooping tail, as the
'white fellow' passed by, and whenever this happened, I could see glittering eyes from under the 'possum rugs looking askance at me. But I was well known, and with a kick or a thump to the dog, they would lie down again.

'Hutkeeper's' gunyah (hut) was right at the end of the primitive street, and removed a spear's throw from the main camp. He had always been a 'warrigal,' and the others were much afraid of him. He also had a playful habit of throwing spears at any who came too near his domicile. When I got to his fire, he was asleep with his two 'lubras.'

I happened to be carrying a light whip with lash and thong attached, and I touched him with this to awaken him. He sprang wildly to his feet, rubbing his eyes, and glancing furtively at me.

I at once told him to go down to the washpool and mind his work, to find 'Bulgabrow,' and take him too.

This he refused to do. 'Baal,' (No) said he.

Thinking to enforce my order, I let the lash of the whip drop across his shoulder, assumed a threatening attitude, and pointing in the direction of the water-hole, said—

'You yan' (you go) 'burraburri,' (go quickly). He glared sullenly at me, then stooped to collect his weapons, picking up his ' nulla nulla' (club) 'heilaman' (shield), boomerangs, and two or three light spears, whilst at his movements the two 'lubras,' gathering up their netted 'dilli-bags,' burst forth into a low, crooning song. I did not know it at the time, but that song prophesied my death!

The 'lubras,' well knowing the fierce and untameable
temper of 'Hutkeeper,' who was a gigantic savage of over six feet high, and corded with muscle, were but putting their knowledge of him into words, and the speedy avenging of the indignity he had suffered at my hands, by being struck, however lightly, by the whip.

They were singing of my demise. The lash had only fallen lightly on him, I was only a 'new chum' then, and I had meant it to imply a threat, but I had insulted a born fighting chief, and the only thing which would wipe it out was my blood!

Still pointing towards the washpool with my hunting thong gathered in my right hand, I waited until the three of them walked off in that direction, 'Hutkeeper' casting furtive glances at me over his shoulder as he departed.

When they had gone some distance, I turned and walked back through the blacks' camp, again passing through the street of gunyahs, with the smouldering fires in front of each rude habitation. Glancing down the lines, I could see 'Mickey,' one of the horse-blacks, in the act of stifling a portentous yawn.

I was about to address him, when c-r-r-ash something came down on my head with stunning force, hurling me on to my knees.

My first thought was that a limb of a tree had fallen from aloft, when another heavy blow followed, and in one horrified second, I saw 'Hutkeeper' with eyes ablaze with wrath preparing for another. I was on my feet like lightning, although half stunned, and was lucky enough, to evade a third blow by springing aside. Then I met his onward rush with a straight right-hander fair between the eyes, which staggered him. As I followed it up with another he used his tomahawk for the first
time, but I guarded it with an instinctive move of my arm catching his wrist on it just by my own elbow, and the keen blade dropped at my feet, shivering the rim of my straw hat. However I struck instantly with right and left, and both blows went home, sending him over like a shot.

I was young, strong and active then, but the memory of it makes me shiver now when I think of it, and how near I was to death. Following up my advantage, I sprang upon him, seized his wrists and knelt upon his shoulders. Lithe and agile, he wriggled like an eel, disappearing sometimes almost behind me so that I could only see the top of his head. The deadly struggle went on. I dared not loose him, for I was afraid of his regaining his tomahawk.

The other blacks now came running up and seized his weapons, which they threw to a distance.

I was glad of this as I was beginning to feel sick and giddy from the loss of blood caused by the two heavy blows of the 'waddy' (club) on my head. I was half-blinded with it. So at last, feeling that I could not hold him much longer, I let go suddenly and leaped to my feet and to one side, reeling as I did so.

But he had had enough of it too, and vanished like a shadow into the scrub, thinking, no doubt, that I had a derringer and would use it.

I remember staggering down to the station and being met at the door by the senior partner, who after a hurried exclamation helped me to a bunk in the sitting-room. Just before I lost consciousness, I heard the hoof-strokes of a galloping horse. It was my brother, who, as I heard afterwards, wildly excited by my gore-bedabbled face, garments, and enfeebled condition, had gone to the
stable, got out my horse, and galloped furiously to the blacks' camp to punish the offender. But he soon came back, long indeed before I recovered consciousness. The blacks naturally enough had all disappeared, and he had no chance of seeing them, as they were afraid of reprisals.

For some time after this, I suffered from severe headaches, and was unable to attend to my work as formerly, being looked upon as an invalid, and feeling very like one. As luck would have it, one of the mounted troopers rode over from the Browar barracks on the very morning of the fight, and the blacks at the camp were convinced that we had a secret means of communication with them.

This circumstance did more good in after years to keep us free from sudden attack that anything else could have done. We made the most of it, and taking the trooper into our confidence surrounded the camp late that night, with the intention of capturing 'Hutkeeper' if possible, but he knew too much for us and was not to be seen, though most of the station blacks were in their accustomed places. As they had helped me at a critical moment, of course they were not interfered with in any way.

When the occurrence was reported to the police, they made a formal investigation, and I was duly sworn upon the facts.

It was then decided to try and capture 'Hutkeeper,' and to send him for trial to Brisbane as an example to the others. Our district was in a very unsettled state, and it was considered that an unpunished attack like this would lead to massacres of the settlers.

One afternoon, about two months after the assault, I was sitting in the cool verandah idly speculating upon
things in general, when the senior partner rode up, and saying that he would like to start the shearers’ accounts for next day, suggested that I should take his horse, ride up to the ‘shed,’ and tell the ‘ringer’ (head shearer) to ‘hurry up.’

‘There are only about two hundred to do. Tell him he must get through with them to-night, and to-morrow will be the settling-up day.’

So I rode off, and on arrival at the shed, was at once accosted by the ‘ringer’ himself with, ‘Please, sir, would you mind riding out a bit to see if you can find the two “gins” with the sheep. They should have been here an hour ago.’

Seeing that he was of the same mind as our senior, I told him so, and touching ‘Keighran’ with the spur, cantered off in the direction I knew the sheep would be coming, and in about a mile, saw the dust of them, as they were coming forward through some timber.

On riding up, I saw to my astonishment several forms of blackfellows, besides the two ‘lubras,’ looming through the dust raised by the sheep.

When I became visible they disappeared, and as we had lately lost a blackfellow in our employ, one who had come down from the upper station as one of the shepherds of the yearling lambs, I naturally thought that his presence might account for the stampede.

Telling the two women to ‘burra-burri’ (go quickly) with the sheep to the woolshed, I set off at a gallop to intercept the retreating forms of the others. I soon made out one man running, and following him, passed a number of women and girls bathing in a large water-hole. They scuttled out and hid behind trees, and in the long grass, whilst the man ran on until he joined
about a dozen full-grown males, who were seated by a water-course under the shade of some large eucalypti. Their hands stole out of their ‘possum-rugs’ to their spears and ‘nullahs,’ as I reined up in front of them; with one exception, where a form cowered, completely covered with a red blanket.

Laughing at this agitation, without knowing the cause of it, I took a stick of ‘Barrett’s twist’ tobacco out of my pocket, dividing it as well as I could amongst them, and asking carelessly at the same time, who it was that was huddled in the blanket, and why he didn’t reach for a weapon.

‘Ah-h,’ they replied, ‘that fellow, big one, ‘wee-wee’ (sick).

After a few words I rode off again, having satisfied myself that the man I had chased was not ‘Murray’ (our runaway), and soon overtook the lubras, who were close to the shed with the sheep. They volunteered the information that ‘plenty blackfeller sit down all about,’ which I took to mean that the hunting blacks had come in to the ‘frontage’ from an excursion ‘out-back,’ but I could not get them to say whether ‘Murray’ was amongst them or not.

Strange to say, I had no thought of ‘Hutkeeper’ all this time. I had often thought since the fight, that it had been a fight, and although the odds had been terribly against me at one time, and it was quite ‘on the cards’ that I might have been wiped out, I had certainly administered severe punishment to my antagonist, and had driven him off. So I bore him no malice, always judging myself to have been imprudent and hasty in threatening him, and touching him with the whip, when I knew so well what a fiery old warrior he was. My only excuse
was that at the time I had been greatly worried by the hulking ruffians at the wash-pool, and irritated at having lost the valuable aid of 'Hutkeeper' and his ally.

Luckily the sheep reached the shed in time to be all shorn that night, and tired out with my unwonted exertions, for I had not yet quite recovered from the two heavy blows on my head, I was sitting peacefully in the verandah at the home-station that same evening after tea, exempted from further work, whilst the others, my brother included, were busy making up the shearers' accounts.

My thoughts were far away with my people in the old country, recalling many a happier day under different surroundings, when I was startled by half-a-dozen ringing carbine shots followed by shouts and yells, which died away into mournful wailings. In a moment we had all seized our revolvers, and were hurrying towards the blacks' camp, where the shots had sounded.

In the centre, between the fires, lay a tall figure, stark and still.

It was 'Hutkeeper.' He had been shot. One bullet had gone through his chest, another through his throat, and yet another had broken his leg.

Warrior to the last, he lay dead on two or three broken spears. He looked stern and grim even then. The other blacks ran about wildly, and their mournful lament rose and fell upon the night air.

Stopping 'Jerry,' who seemed the most collected one of the lot, I asked him to explain matters.

He replied that the black troopers had shot 'Hutkeeper,' which of course we had guessed, though we had no idea they were in the neighbourhood.
Going back to the house, we found that the crying and wailing ceased after about an hour, and we were just thinking of 'turning in,' when there was a sudden clatter of hoofs, the clink of scabbards and accoutrements, and up rode Seymour the sub-inspector, and eight black troopers.

'Good-evening. Can I stop here to-night?'

'Of course you can, old man; get off your horse, and come inside,' said our senior partner.

'Tommy,' in a stentorian roar to our Chinese cook, 'you get some supper ready directly.'

'Wilson' (to the storekeeper), 'serve out some rations to the troopers.—I suppose they will camp by the creek?'

'Yes,' replied Seymour; 'they will be all right.—'Mayboy' (to his orderly), 'we start to-morrow for the barracks "nerangi daylight" (little daylight). 'You have horses saddled up, first thing.'

'But, I say, Seymour,' continued our chief, 'what the dickens have you been doing, shooting 'Hutkeeper' in this way? I thought you had orders to take him alive?'

'Me shoot him my dear fellow? I never shoot niggers, only disperse 'em.'

Nothing further was said then. The black troopers always moved about the country in the most mysterious way, coming and going when least expected.

Probably after the attack on the camp they had at once cleared out to a distance, remaining perdu until all was quiet again, when they rode up to the station as if they were coming from the barracks, on the main road.

But in private, Seymour, who was well-known, and much liked by ourselves and every one else, told us all about it.
'Hutkeeper' had been surprised, and taken quietly one night about a fortnight before all this; and was even on his way to the Queensland capital to be tried. I was to have had a summons to attend also, but on the road the wily savage had managed to escape.

He was handcuffed, and fastened to one of the troopers every night, but the latter having gone to sleep, he managed to untie the line and vanish.

He then made straight back to his own 'tauri,' often contriving to baffle the troopers, but they followed his tracks like the unerringly sleuth hounds they are, and were actually concealed in a neighbouring scrub, watching the blacks and me, that very afternoon when I had ridden up to those sitting by the water-course under the shade of the gum trees.

As it turned out, the very man sitting covered with the red blanket was 'Hutkeeper' himself! Though I was unconscious of it, they (the troopers) knew well enough, and were merely waiting till nightfall to retake their prisoner.

There is no doubt that 'Hutkeeper' was concealing himself from me, aided by the other blacks.

The reason they seized their spears, was because they were afraid I should suspect; but such an idea never entered my head.

A blackfellow often covers himself up in this way when ill, and remains silent. They are great fatalists, and if they imagine they are going to die, generally do.

When I rode away, the troopers remained until dark, when they crawled stealthily as they alone can do, surrounded Hutkeeper's fire, springing up like so many spectres.

The stern old warrior instantly speared 'David,' one of the best trackers in the district, through the thigh.
"I fired at once point blank." — Page 149.
'David' being wild with pain, instantly fired at him, and so did three or four of the others.

'Hutkeeper' fell dead at once, with his spears under him.

I often think how near to 'kingdom come' I must have been the second time earlier in the afternoon of his death-day; when I rode up, and halted so close to the figure huddled in the red blanket.

His own weapons, tomahawk and deadly 'nullahs,' were gripped close under his blanket, and if he or the others had had the least suspicion that I knew he was there, I should have been speared before I could get my pistol out of the leather case by my side.

Seymour said he was on the point of calling out to me, when he noticed the blacks lay down their weapons.

'Hutkeeper' was buried by the tribe with all the ceremonies pertaining to a noted warrior, but the place where he met his tragic end, and which had always been a favourite camping ground was tabooed for ever after.

There where he fell, no doubt, still lie the bones or dust of the old fighting chief who warred like Ishmael, against all mankind.
A GHOST OF THE AUSTRALIAN INTERIOR

There is doom, there is wrath in the air,
A curse riseth up from the ground.—KENDALL.

Many years ago, whilst residing on a sheep-station in Queensland, of which I was part owner, I was sitting in the verandah of the house at headquarters, enjoying the evening air, when the sudden furious barking of our dogs, of which we kept a tribe of all sorts, aroused me from a reverie.

The ground was hard and dry over the river, and my faithful guards always warned me of the advent of any stranger long before arrival, as the ring of horse’s hoofs could always be heard by them at a great distance. Therefore I was not surprised at the approach, some ten minutes afterwards, of a tall, gentlemanly-looking man, riding a fine bay horse, and leading a brown, carrying serviceable saddle-bags.

He at once introduced himself to me according to the invariable ‘bush’ formula: ‘My name is Watson. I am on the way to Blackwood, and I should feel obliged if you would allow me to “spell” here for the night.’

Of course, hospitality demanded the instant rejoinder, ‘Ah, very glad to see you, Mr Watson. Jemmy’ (to an aboriginal, one of the many who had come peering up to see what was in the wind), ‘take Mr Watson’s horses
and put them with "Bluerock's" mob up the river, and you look after them and don't let them make back.'

After helping my guest to unsaddle, and seeing Jemmy off with his charges, I proposed a dip in the river, to which we adjourned with towels.

During our peregrination, I found, to my great delight, that Watson, who was older than myself by some six or seven years, was not only a member of the same university I had belonged to, but was actually a graduate of the same college I had matriculated at. Therefore, through the subtle freemasonry bestowed by Alma Mater upon her liege subjects, we began to forge the bonds of a friendship which was afterwards more solidly ratified by weeks of close companionship.

For my part I was only too glad to have met with such a friend. Apart from the loneliness I had experienced of late since my partners had taken their departure for town, I found Watson's ready wit, quick repartee, and genial nature quite a solace. He was a little particular and fussy about his belongings and dress, even to the extent of wearing gloves when out on horseback, but he made many a day more pleasant to me than it would otherwise have been, and I experienced a great help in my daily work and station accounts.

I was living in very comfortable circumstances at this particular time, unusually so for a bachelor pioneer squatter on the remote 'back-blocks' of Queensland. I had a man and his wife as servants at the home-station, and Tom Barnard was as trustworthy and useful as his better half was a good cook and housekeeper.

As aforesaid, my two partners were in Melbourne, enjoying themselves after a long spell of hard work on our station, and I too was yearning for my time to come,
"The old horse is already there to receive their caresses."—Page 152.
and ferreted out all the town news from Watson, after tea. As he was not more than three months away from some of the principal cities on the coast, he was enabled to supply me with some interesting details.

Well, we hunted kangaroo and emu daily, shot ducks, turkeys and wallabies, sometimes, as was the custom in those early days, attending, by special request, some large 'corroboree' or war-dance of the natives after an unusually successful hunt on their part.

Of course the work of visiting shepherds, drafting, and counting sheep, carrying 'rations' to the various out-stations, etc., etc. was not neglected in the interim, but we managed to adroitly combine duty with pleasure.

As I have before stated, our dogs, two bull-terriers (rather unpleasant customers for an outsider), about a dozen 'collies' and kangaroo-dogs, the latter strong and fierce enough to pull down a bullock, were our trusted guardians.

The blacks had of late displayed no animosity, and we went to sleep at night with a feeling of perfect security, knowing that we should get timely warning of any attempt to attack the home-station.

And so, day by day, Watson and I drove or rode out to the different sheep-stations, generally contriving to bring home a kangaroo tail with us, or perchance an emu skin. Kangaroo-hunting is pretty sport, unequalled in the world in its own way, and with just enough danger in the pursuit to enhance the pleasure of it.

To sight a 'mob' of these weird-looking animals from horseback, to give the quick warning 'hist' to the dogs (trained to follow at the horses' heels), who after a bound or two in the air to sight the quarry, go off like the wind. To go plodding on, as if nothing had happened, thus
making the 'mob' keep their eyes fixed upon you and the horses (as higher objects) until the dogs have got a rare start, in fact, are quite near to their prey before they are seen, is the general procedure. Then comes the 'scurry,' and splitting into sections of the kangaroos.

Perhaps, as is often the case, one dog will single out the biggest 'old man' and 'bail him up,' whilst the other takes after a 'flyer.' The first furious gallop after the latter, or the battle at the death of the big one, then occurs.

One must be wary, too, as the dog is sometimes seized and ripped (unless a very knowing old stager), and the rider may have dismounted, to his own danger, and has to fight the kangaroo hand to hand.

We generally carried revolvers, and were able to give the coups de grace by riding close up.

It is a stirring, exciting sport, and my heart beats all the faster for thinking of it, even after long years.

We used to come home pretty well tired out every day about sundown. After a plunge into the cool river, we would find, when dressed again, a substantial tea waiting for us, and became convinced that our lot had fallen upon pleasant places.

Generally after this meal, Watson, who amused me by his 'pernickety' ways, would take about an hour cutting up tobacco to fill his pouch; first spreading out a newspaper upon the table, and shredding each minute atom, as if a kingdom depended upon it. He then used to pack and rearrange his saddle-bags, which contained clothing, count the notes in his pocket-book, and these idiosyncrasies over, was wont to clamber into a swing hammock in the verandah, and smoke at ease.

One never-to-be-forgotten evening, after we had duly
carried out our routine, he was idly swinging in his hammock, from whence, as I sat in the dining-room adding up some accounts, I could hear him whistling some refrain.

The dogs were lying about outside, in various postures, as was their wont, when all of a sudden I heard a sharp, terrified sort of exclamation from Watson, and a subdued yelp of terror from all the dogs, some of which rushed inside the house. Old 'Spot,' I remember, seemed so alarmed that she ran into one of the bedrooms and frantically tried to hide in a box full of clothes. Yet I had seen this same bitch face a camel! Immediately afterwards Watson rushed in, white as death, and throwing himself in a chair, buried his head in his hands.

Naturally feeling anxious, and thinking he was seriously indisposed, I put several hurried questions to him, none of which he answered.

I was on the point of running over to the kitchen to get Tom Barnard's help, when he looked up with a dazed and horrified expression, and said, 'I have seen something awful, and it has gone into the store.'

When he became more composed, he declared, that as he was lolling idly in his hammock, something glided swiftly up, almost touching him. It was in the shape of a woman, with eyes of fire—that is to say, what he did see of it, for he said it was vague and indistinct. It was not touching the ground, but seemed to float in the air.

After looking at him with a fearful expression—he shuddered visibly at this point—the dreadful apparition shot off to the store, and disappeared. Such was his testimony.

I could not doubt the man; he had really seen, or imagined he had seen, something unearthly. His agitation
and nervousness betrayed it most palpably; and the dogs? They would have pulled down a beast, or a black fellow, with equal gusto, if dancing round the house at that time of night.

With such thoughts running through my head, I seized a revolver, and hurried over to Tom, whom I found reading aloud to his wife. My colloquy was short, but to the purpose.

'Tom, did you lock the store to-night after you had served out the usual rations?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Well, Mr Watson has seen a ghost, and it has gone in there.'

Tom's look of amazement was worth seeing, but after lighting a lantern, the whole posse of us went over, to find the place locked, and nothing whatever visible in the shape of any unearthly form, and we could never find out anything about our ghostly visitant from that day to this.

It was a long time before Watson got over the effects of his fright; indeed, he averred that it presaged evil to him, as such omens had been noted in his family.

He was right, poor fellow. After he left me he got into sad trouble and disgrace; in fact, was imprisoned for the theft of a bank-note.

It is needless to say that he was entirely innocent of the crime he was charged with.

He wrote me a most pathetic letter denying the charge against him. Briefly, the facts of the case were these. At a station where a friend of mine lived, and to whom I had given Watson a letter of introduction, a five-pound note had been lost. Watson changed it himself at the township in company with the rightful owner of it.
The number of the note (previously missed) had been taken.

Watson was arrested, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment.

Subsequently, however, it was proved, to my great joy, that the storekeeper on the station had purloined the note, became afraid of discovery, and noting Watson's habit of counting his money, had watched his opportunity and slipped the money (the missing note) into his purse, which was kept as a rule locked up in his saddle-bags, but from which he had employed a ruse to decoy him.

Watson, thinking he was amongst friends, left the bags open, with his pocket-book just thrust inside. Before he returned, the deed was done.

As this was the first defalcation which had been made plain, numberless other charges were sheeted home to the storekeeper, who had confessed, during the remorse consequent upon his act, and he deservedly suffered imprisonment instead of my poor friend, who left the court, as the presiding magistrate remarked, 'without a stain upon his character.'

Whether the ghost was simply an hallucination or a reality, remains to this day a moot point, but I can never forget the alarm of those fierce dogs, old 'Spot's' extraordinary behaviour, or the sequel of disaster to my friend.

I know I used to feel creepy after dark when alone, and the dogs used to show a disposition for some time to sneak into the house and crawl under the beds.

Verily, truth is stranger than fiction.
"Flat on his back, with a bottle of whiskey and a smashed pipe."—Page 158.
POMPEY

Every man knows where his own shoe pinches.—Proverb.

The Pompey I mean was not a Roman general. On the contrary, he was only an old African negro, who lived in a wretched little cave across the bay in which our house was situated. He used to eat a good many limpets, either boiled in an old tin ‘billy’ or roasted in the ashes of a wood fire. We used to watch him do it. We boys thought he had strayed or run away from a ship. He had probably been kicked out of one, as being too old for his work. Anyhow it was a great matter of conjecture with us as to who and what he was. One of our schoolmates suggested that perhaps he was an African prince. He certainly was a feeble, tottering old chap, and would go doddering about the rocks searching for shell-fish.

I don’t believe he had even a fishing-line. He had a bit of blanket, and was clad in a tattered suit of clothes.

He could keep himself tolerably warm at night, with a fire of sticks in front of his hole, for it was little else, and he had to almost crawl in and out. How it must have hurt his rheumaticky old back.

We used to make up parties sometimes and row to the point to watch him. We never calculated whether we
hurt his feelings or not. He never used to smile, but would merely look sadly at us.

Besides limpets his larder was supplemented once a week by crusts of bread and broken victuals collected from the houses of opulent citizens living round the bay.

He was a vagrant, and to make matters worse, he was a black one, and would feebly totter along the road until his provision-bag was full.

Therefore, according to our code of moral suasion by law, he should have been 'run in' by the first policeman who came along, and condemned to bread and 'skilly.' The bread and 'skilly' would have been an improvement on his general bill of fare, and the 'skilly' might have warmed him, but the hard labour would not have suited old Pompey at all.

For Pompey couldn't dig, or work much, and was not in the least ashamed to beg, and—the policemen let him alone.

There was a subdued earnestness of expression in Pompey's weekly appeal for provisions at the back door, which immediately enlisted the cook in his favour.

The cook won over, the housemaid generally shed a tear or two into her print dress in secret.

The footman remarked 'Pore dayvil,' and the coachman, grooms, and gardeners were of opinion that if suitably clad in a white choker of portentous magnitude, and evening dress, with a vast display of shirt front, Pompey would make an excellent corner man, or give a first-class stump oration, if aided thereto by a few good 'square' meals.

We procured a job ourselves for Pompey once, at a shilling a day. He would have to find himself.
Exasperated by his refusal, we stoned him over his evening meal of limpets. I don’t think any of the missiles struck him. I should be sorry to entertain the idea they did now, after the long lapse of years since we first discovered him, patient and sad, black and cold, in his miserable cave, but can distinctly remember that we exhausted our abilities in slang (and they were considerable) in reviling him.

He only looked out wistfully over the water. Perhaps he thought of sunny Africa. A vision of wife and child, kindred and friends, might have moistened his eyes, for they did moisten. Perhaps he felt a little more lonely and ill that night had we but known it, for he was dying of consumption. What of that! A ‘nigger’ had a good right to be miserable. He had no right to be anything else. Being black, every boy with any spirit at all should feel it his bounden duty to jeer at him. Scoffs, taunts, sneers, and whips, ay, and fetters too were made for ‘niggers.’ Let them feel the jeer sink into their hearts, and the knotted thongs lacerate their flesh. Let them die as an outcast dog dies, but not until they are worked out and useless. Keep them out of all friendly and benefit societies, with the formula: ‘I’m a white man, you’re an adjective nigger. Don’t you come anigh me.’ There is something eminently Christian in that. Hades was made for niggers, that’s why they’re black.

Foolish, ignorant boys as we were, cowardly young dogs as we had proved ourselves to be; perchance if we had seen into the mind of poor old Pompey we might have found something like the above thoughts portrayed. Looking back upon that distant time from a graver standpoint, I believe that a legion of bright angels encamped very near that poor solitary old outcast’s cave.
I can picture one noble form, kingly in mien, ever directing their ministry, and perhaps when Pompey was asleep his dreams were apportioned among his own people, and the thrilling, soul-stirring music of some heavenly instrument, some divine banjo, might linger in his ears and memory, even when he awoke in the morning, chilled and stiff, rheumatic, sore, and hungry.

On the morning after we had stoned and abused him, we returned rather repentant to make amends with a loaf and some cold meat.

Pompey’s body, cold, senseless, and emaciated, lay in the cave, but the soul had departed. A few raw limpets, the remains of his last night’s supper, were piled where he had placed them.

I fancy, somehow, that the angels had mustered in force the night before and that their loving sympathy for Pompey had induced them to ask him to aid their minstrelsy; also, I cannot help thinking that Pompey’s song that night, translated into English from his own language, was, with banjo accompaniment:—

‘I’m coming, I’m coming,
My head is bending low,
For I hear their gentle voices
Calling old black Joe.’

And I also believe that the kind and courteous reception given by the audience, albeit a large one, of all nations, tribes and kindreds, induced Pompey to accept the situation offered. Anyhow, I have got to be certain that it was a permanent engagement, and that in due time, with such a company, he must have become a millionaire
in heavenly riches if the Manager, with that impartial spirit for which He is so renowned, took into consideration the meekness and patience with which poor old Pompey endured his share of tribulation upon earth.
'WALBUNGING'

'Eheu fugaces, Postume, Postume.
Labuntur annos.'—HORACE.

The good old times are gone now from Sydney Harbour, as far as the fishing, shooting, and botanising are concerned. Ay, and its pristine beauty is gone too. Church spires crop up on the north shore by the dozen, where in the old days the parrots blazed amid the blossoming eucalypti.

Where will you get black rock wallaby (petrogale niger), 'bronze-wings' (phaps chalcoptera), or 'wonga-wongas' (leucosarcia picata) now? Or where catch a 'snapper' (pagrus unicolor)? Not on or off the many headlands of that lovely sheet of water, with its many bays and inlets, but in the old days the sportsman might fill his bag, the fisherman his boat, and the naturalist collect specimens to his heart's delight, within sight of the city of Sydney.

Civilisation and a rapidly increasing population have done all this:—crept year by year upon nature in her own domain, and her wild creatures have retreated to remote fastnesses.

'Why, I walked twenty miles to-day with these dogs,' said a man on board one of the Manly Beach steamers a few years ago, 'and never saw a wallaby!'
As a survivor of those olden times I speak of, I said nothing at the time, but felt wondrous wise. Let the recollection of a day or two spent 'camping-out' in the wild 'she-oak' woods on the shores of two picturesque lagoons, 'Dewai' and 'Narrabine,' recall the past.

'Are you going to "Dewai" on Saturday?' said a voice suddenly behind me one day, as I was gazing into a shop window in Sydney. 'I am—you had better look up your Eley's green cartridges' (breech-loaders were not invented in those days) 'and meet me at Circular Quay at eight o'clock sharp.'

'All right,' quoth I delightedly, 'I'll be there,' and on the morning in question we shot away in the Phantom, puffing, blowing, and disturbing the long line of aquatic birds, sunning themselves on the long jutting reef at the end of Garden Island.

Our party consisted of a genial sportsman about fifty years of age, hale and hearty, and a well-known naturalist into the bargain, my interlocutor above referred to, two blacks, a horse, two kangaroo-dogs and a small rough terrier.

The Phantom or Panting, as Billy the black fellow, called her (now indeed a wraith of the past), rolled considerably on the swell when crossing the 'Heads,' and I remember how the crew used to walk backwards and forwards athwart the steamer, and against the roll, carrying fifty-six pounds weights in either hand to steady her. I suppose they did some good. She was a narrow, long boat, but the fastest excursion steamer in the harbour in those days. Perhaps they saved us from rolling completely over.

My friend, and the organiser of this expedition (one of many) was a first-rate shot, and keenly devoted to sport.
There was a rumour among us youngsters that he could hold out a 'fifty-sixer' at arm's-length, depending from the last joint of his little finger, and I always thought of this feat when I saw those 'fifty-sixers' on board the **Phantom**.

In calm weather they used to repose on the deck near one of the paddle-boxes.

Manly, that now fashionable watering-place, with its lovely harbour, ocean view, and sandy beaches, its aquarium, rink, and crowds of people, was a different Manly then, with its one hotel and one street, which led right through to the blue Pacific.

The host of that one hotel mentioned was a veteran wallaby hunter, and to this day I can see in my 'mind's eye' the beautiful silver ingrained double-barrel with which he had killed so many on North Head, and at the back of the quarantine ground.

A Sydneymite of the present day would think you mad if you hinted at the possibility of a wallaby in this locality; but *nous verrons*.

We have to walk about ten miles from the little hamlet along the sea coast, in the first instance, commencing with the ocean beach at the back of the village, where both at high and low water mark, the fragile serpula, the lesser cowrie, the rainbow-hued haliotis, together with a host of other beautiful shells and heaps of scarlet and white seaweed, may be picked up in abundance.

As we pass along the sand gives that peculiar squeak under our feet, which only shell sand does. How the storms of a hundred centuries must have raged and thrashed to make all this sand, perhaps before the memory of man, before Adam was created, There lie
the golden beaches however, smooth, lovely, and hard, for comfortable walking nearer the sea.

There is no green line in that breaking wave, such as we see in New Zealand seascape. The Australian wave is diluted sapphire.

We pass the small lagoon at the end of the beach; many a shot have we had there in the gloaming at wild swan, black duck, teal and widgeon; and ascend the rocky, scrubby promontory we must pass over, before we get to the next stretch of sand.

At the top the dogs are very uneasy, and we see plenty of 'sign.' We have already knocked over a couple of bronze-wing pigeons, keen, fast flyers, three or four blue mountain parrots, several grass parakeets, together with a curlew and two brace of quail. There goes a wallaby!

The dogs are frantic, as they are in leash, but we don't care to let them go here. Bang! go all the guns, but he leaps into space from a rocky wall with a ten foot drop, and is away into the bush in a twinkling, startling up several others as he goes.

Here is a 'native' rose. What Australian can forget this little flower, with its full, pink flush, its marvellous, undying perfume, its seclusion and comparative rarity.

What a wealth of wild flowers are here. Look at that perfect creeper, the sarsaparilla, with its amethystine clusters. Look at the scarlet and white epacris; and if the thousand and one varieties of colour do not please you, inhale the incense of the burning grass tree.

Now we dip into a densely-wooded dell, with a water-course merrily gliding through it. What a wealth of light and shade! Hark to the swish of the 'coach-whip' birds, and the low, booming note of the 'wonga
wonga' pigeon, fit for an epicure's table, too shy to be approached however.

Bang! bang! bang! at the gill birds and mockers (grand additions to our pot). 'Whirr,' two large bevies of quail—bang! bang! redoubled. 'Two brace and a half. "Fairy's" after the "runner"—ay, she has him! Shove him in the game bag.'

'Listen—wallaby crashing through the scrub.'

The sun is setting and is gone as we call at a settler's, whose cabin, enclosure, and surrounding forest, are red-brown against the blazing west.

This settler makes a lot of money by bee-hunting. They are tame bees gone wild. This year he has taken a ton.

Eucalyptus honey in these scientific days is said to possess many therapeutic properties.

But poor X did not know this then. How the song he sang, as he stood at the top of the rise, in dark silhouette against the fiery sky, has come back to me in after years, and brought the man himself and the wild bush gloaming before my eyes.

It is getting dark as we cross the last stream up to our middles and make for the 'Dewai' hut. How the 'flying foxes' (cynonicteris collaris) 'whiffle' out of the trees. We want their skins. Ah, a wounded one has got little 'Fairy' by the nose, and there is a pitched battle, in which terrier wins.

How that tall red gum tree rears its darkened form over the little deserted bark 'shanty.' How those lemon and orange blossoms scent the air.

You can get a peep of the lagoon from here, lying silver-white under the rising moon through the 'tea trees.'
How the ducks quack.

A blazing fire is lit, and our friend the naturalist, with a twinkling eye, calls one of the blacks: 'Here, Billy, I can't light this pipe; you see if you can clean it.' Billy pokes a grass stem into it, digs away with his knife, blows into it and hands it back to the naturalist. During a brief absence our joking friend has filled the pipe again, and on Billy's return pretends the pipe is as bad as ever. Billy tries a pull. It goes all right.

'Budgeree that fellow' says he. 'Baal' responds our friend. 'That one no good, you light him.' So Billy takes a firestick, gives a few strong pulls, when, puff! an explosion—Billy drops the pipe and runs off as hard as he can amid volleys of laughter. T. was always playing practical jokes on the blacks, and had put a thimblefull of gunpowder into the bowl.

Now comes supper and pipes, and then the camp-stories, lying there on our blankets in the glorious Australian night.

Yarn after yarn, until the blackfellows have crept under cover in the old 'skillion' of the hut, and built themselves in with sheets of bark.

'Wait a bit, you boys,' says T. 'We'll have some fun; I'll make the niggers see the devil.'

So he crawls to the slab of bark forming a door and scratches on it. They have been talking, but instantly there is a dead silence. He scratches again. There is a frightened whisper. Again 'T' scratches, and grunts; there is a wild rush out into the night from the other side of the hut, and the two 'coloured' gentlemen have fled into their native bush.

They come back after a bit looking rather foolish.

The Australian blacks are very easily frightened after
nightfall, though there are hardly any left now in the district I am speaking of. The last of the Sydney blacks died years ago.

Still it runs through all their tribes to this day, far north, interior, or distant coast where they 'most do congregate.' They are full of superstition and ghostly legends handed down by their ancestors.

Thus when 'T' personated the wood demon, who is always after blacks, whose mode to gain admittance is to grunt and scratch, they were terribly frightened.

Should the demon succeed, he tickles the occupants. If the occupants laugh, he instantly strangles them.

Now to sleep. I doze off, listening to the bush sounds, to the long plaintive note of the curlew, the cry of the 'mopork,' the strident hum of the large green and gold beetles, the ducks, the opossums and the stealthy hops of the wallaby outside the paddock fence.

I have slept apparently about ten minutes, when I turn in my blankets. The air is cool and fresh. Aurora is rising. The eastern sky is showing a faint pink, and the morning star is shining wan and white.

I light the fire afresh on the red embers, and the fragrant smoke makes me think of other happy mornings in the country I love so well.

And after a bit, as the sky turns crimson, cheep, cheep, cheep, cheep, boom, boom, boom, hoo, hoo, ha!

Now for it! Laughing jackasses (dacelo gigans), swans, cockatoos (white and black) gill-birds, bell-birds, shrikes, silver-eyes, magpies (oh, the silver chorus!) blue mountains, lories, king-parrots, wongas, bronze-wings quail (with their querulous pipe), and many more forgotten birds take up the jubilee chorus for the sun rising as a golden globe far out at sea.
The breakers answer the forest voices, and we are all on the bustle, for to-day is our first 'walbunging' of the season.

To 'walbung' is to beat the forest for the black rock wallaby.

One moiety of the party was detailed for this work, notably the naturalist on a horse, the two blacks, and 'Rambler,' and 'Rover' the kangaroo dogs.

The shooters take up ground by big trees, near the tracks the animals make in the scrub or undergrowth, or on some other ground suggested by the locality. It is exciting work for the shooters, as you must remain perfectly still, or the keen scenting, quick-eared marsupial will not give you a chance. And the wind must be from them to you.

I shall never forget my first essay at rock wallaby shooting.

I had been stationed at the base of an immense forest gum tree with strict injunctions to keep very quiet, and only to fire in certain directions. The undergrowth thereabouts was very thick, and I only had about five yards clear at the base of the tree. My shoulders were about on a level with this thick undergrowth, as I stood on raised ground leaning against the trunk of the red gum.

Breathless and motionless I waited for half-an-hour.

I could hear the 'walbungs' far away on the outskirts of the forest to which they had taken a wide circle.

Just then I fancied I heard a slight rustling, then I saw the scrub tops move apparently about thirty yards off. Now, the wallaby steal away on these undergrowth tracks half stooping, silent, and ghost-like. I gave a
'Taking some white ashes . . . he threw the dust towards the ocean.'—Page 173.
sharp whistle; immediately I saw a deer-like head, large eyes, and big ears, raised above the brushwood.

I fired at once point blank, and heard a kicking and struggling. One or two went past at full speed. Chanced one.

Presently the first process was repeated, and though I did not see one of my quarries after firing, there were five splendid wallabys, three bucks and two does, lying dead within about forty yards of my position, when the beaters came up. My friend had been equally successful, and the bodies, placed in a row, were gralloched, filled with fresh fern, and tied on the horse for transport, the blacks carrying one each, and our two selves ditto. I did not tell the assembled company just then, but about a quarter of an hour before they came to pick up and get ready the fallen game, my heart had been beating wildly, for I had nearly committed a serious error.

Whilst on the *qui vive* under my tree I had seen what I took on the instant to be a wallaby, and my finger, in another second, would have pressed the trigger, when I saw it was a dog, and none other than our elderly friend's famous 'Rover'!

He had 'winded' a 'possum and was standing up against a tree with his paws before him in an attitude much resembling that of *petrogale niger*, and thus was in imminent danger of sudden death. Our wallaby made a goodly show when hung up on the rafters of the old house.

The next day we had some grand wild fowl shooting round the lagoon bagging a lot of ducks and three wild swans (black).

Despite the 'stingarees,' a dangerous foe when wading
out from shore, I swam a hundred yards to get a swan I had laid low with a bullet.

Judge of my chagrin when on getting close to him he flapped up, rose into the air, flew across the sand hummocks and a quarter of a mile out to sea where he dropped.

At night we waited for black ducks coming into quarters, dropping several by firing just in front of the splash they make when taking to the water. Next day saw us en route to Manly.

We left a swan, some wild-fowl and two wallaby with X. 'T' had a goodly pile of the latter on his horse, whilst four of us caused considerable sensation by walking through the village with a large wallaby apiece slung on our backs, their long black tails, stiffened by drying, standing straight over our heads, a sight to terrify the children of the present era, I think.

Ah, the old days! the pleasant, free, hearty, happy old days, when there were no syndicates or big gold and silver 'booms,' but joyous open air sport. Fain would I recall them, but I must let the curtain drop on the long ago, this wanderer's distant 'Aidenn,' the inaccessible something that one's spirit longs for, but does not often get.
'And the children clustered around and listened with bodelight eyes.'—Page 175.
'WHALEBONE'

A demon of muscle and pluck,
Flashed onward the favourite horse.—KENDALL.

In a paddock, starred yellow and white with Queensland immortelles fetlock-deep amongst the 'crowsfoot' and rich winter herbage, a blue roan horse is feeding, but his glossy coat is year by year getting silvered with old age.

Along the ridge, amongst the 'ironbarks,' the magpies are singing a jubilant chorus, and the great shrikes, or butcher-birds, are mocking them. The dew sparkles everywhere for it is early morning, and the balmy west wind shakes incense from its wings, as it passes through the aromatic pines which fringe the paddock.

They are not awake yet at the old home-station, with its white-washed walls and low verandah, festooned with jasmine and passion-flower, so carefully trained upon its uprights.

But even after that hard day's work with the cattle 'out-back' at 'Quart pot box' and 'Golgotha' pine-ridge, Jack Carter, the stockman, comes forth from his own cottage (for Jack is privileged) somewhat beyond the home-station. He is the first to rise, and proceeds spick-and-span, though spattered, to the stables. He soon
emerges, leading 'Clarion,' the most promising colt of the day, and perhaps the worst buck jumper on the river.

But 'Clarion' and Jack are on good terms now, and away they go, brushing through the dewy herbage, over the rise, and down the dip, through the timber and out upon the plains beyond. The old horse in the home-paddock raises his handsome head, and with distended nostrils and staring eyes, gives a low whinnying, trembling all over his gallant body, remaining with head up and tail erect, until the colt and his rider have disappeared from view.

A thin spiral of blue smoke now rises from one of the station chimneys, the kitchen. The men's hut, and the storekeeper's and overseer's cottage follow suit, and a scent of burning pine-wood is wafted into the old horse's nostrils, making him shake his head, and give an impatient stamp, after which he begins to feed quietly again.

Soon afterwards, a lady, accompanied by two children, a boy and a girl, come out into the verandah from the owner's house, and remain there for a few moments, talking, laughing, and gathering the passion fruit.

The blue roan neighs loudly as he hears their voices, and the three go down to the paddock slip rails through the flower garden.

The old horse is already there to receive their caresses, and the large slice of white bread which the little girl somewhat shyly gives him, for she looks upon the noble animal with great respect, and is never tired of hearing how he saved her mother long ago.

The little boy strokes the horse's lowered head with confidence, for has not father often placed him upon the
broad back, and he never even offered to buck, but followed his master all over the paddock.

Two bright tears fall from the lady’s eyes, as the great black muzzle is gently thrust against her hand, and she strokes and fondles him, calling him by name.

But here is father too, striding to the gate with jingling spurs, crimson scarf, belt, cabbage-tree hat, and handsome bronzed face.

‘Thinking of old times, love?’ queries he. But the lady answers nothing, only a few more tears fall amongst the immortelles like drops of rain.

But what is this all about, and wherefore this display of feeling and affection?

‘Whalebone,’ son of ‘Cold Steel,’ is an old horse now.

But there was a time when one heard of his fame far and near, though years have passed by since then, and times are more civilised, and less rough and stirring. Nurtured among the stony ridges, left for three years to run with the ‘galloping mob,’ the colt of this history munched the sweet grass and herbage for many a long day and dewy morning, by the side of his beautiful dam, without suspicion of ‘mouthing bit’ or ‘tackle,’ ‘surcingle’ or saddle, until he grew as strong and supple as his name denoted.

When at length he was taken in hand, and felt the restraining power of the ‘dumb-jockey,’ he was amazed, and it was only after he was first mounted that he made a desperate fight for mastery. Failing in that after furious and repeated efforts, he became docile, but the gallant spirit inherited from his parentage, fired every vein, and tingled in every pulse in his body.
The blacks who used to hunt by Lake Yarulan had long since flitted away to their shadowy spirit land and skeleton-painted ancestors.

The lake itself was but a reedy tarn deep down in the mountain gorge, fed by the rocky stream, which roared and foamed after the heavy rains into one of the wildest, loneliest and deepest ravines in the great dividing range. Morass and pool, rock and shadowy recess, forest timber and craggy heights were its surroundings, whilst from above the darkness was riven with the white sunlight which spread under and over and through like a sword with point and blade in ever-shifting simultaneous passes.

None of the existing tribes save an outcast or proscribed man would now go near this lake. It was a spot unhallowed, and lived only in the memory of the oldest man, from legends told by their fathers.

The 'bunyip' haunted those deep and sedgy pools.

Even Jack Carter had been there but rarely, and always declared himself glad to get home again.

Yet at the time when 'Whalebone' was in the zenith of his fame, one day by Lake Yarulan stood a tall, powerful man with restless eye and determined look.

A grand bay horse was hobbled close by, and as the man glanced at him he smiled, a smile of deep and vengeful meaning.

Listening intently, he suddenly turned to the eastward, and the next minute was confronted by an agile black-fellow, who seemed to have started out of the very ground, so sudden was his appearance.

A day later, sixty miles away, a young lady, ethereal in soft muslin, is gathering flowers in a sweet shady nook
under the laburnums and lilacs of a sweet homestead garden, and is humming a joyous melody to herself, for is not the day fixed; father and mother's consent obtained, and James Ramsay her own true lover and devoted knight? As she goes back into the house, with her fragrant bouquet of roses, heliotrope, jasmine and myrtle, the canary warbles in the sunlight, as if his little heart was lifted on the song to the golden gates of heaven.

But close by, down there in the 'lignum' at the end of the paddock, broods revenge.

The same man we have seen by Lake Yarulan is riding swiftly towards the house on the blood bay.

A piercing shriek arises shortly afterwards, then the thunder of a horse's hoofs at full gallop!

The men had been busy mustering at out-stations, and were horror-struck on returning to find the two women servants hysterical and wailing. Miss Lucas gone! Colonel de Lisle standing, gravely making inquiries, ready for instant action, and two native troopers waiting for orders. 'God bless you, James,' said Major Lucas, as young Ramsay leads out 'Whalebone,' full of fire and vigour. 'There goes "Mayboy" on the tracks!'

The few moments that now passed were as drops of blood from the heart of one there, in that awful ten minutes of suspended action, as the black trackers, like sleuth-hounds, marked out the tracks of the blood bay clear from amongst the footprints of the large mob of station horses run in at daybreak that morning.

Beyond the outside ring of galloping horses at last, thank God! and straight to the big 'Divide!'

One by one the troopers and others fall behind, though riding as if Old Scratch were after them, for
holding 'Whalebone' in a grip of steel, rides James Ramsay. The first wild rush of the powerful horse steadies to a rapid elastic swing. No falter, no mistake, as the magnificent limbs strike true and firm. The muscles of the blue roan are like polished steel. No whip, no spur; always heading straight for the big range. Second wind comes to the gallant steed as he breathes the air of his youth, for the land is now rising into those stony ridges where he was born, and here and there his shod hoofs strike fire. Onwards and upwards swiftly, mile after mile, now sideways along a spur, now straight.

'Here are the tracks. The blood bay has been ridden carefully here. One hoof lifted, not pressed so deep. What a start the villain had. Oh God, if I should be too late!'

At last, with a wild snort, as stones and boulders clatter down below, 'Whalebone,' trembling in every limb, breasts the highest ridge of all. To the left, plain enough, and now away for miles over the level spur towards the setting sun. Four hours have passed, an eternity, two hours to sundown.

Ah! the spur ends, and now down, down, into the cool, fragrant gully. No man in his sober senses would ride down here, but there are the tracks, and with many a slide and scramble, down goes the blue roan, foam-flecked, blood on bit, a convulsive trembling showing what he had endured. Lower and lower, till with one wild shout and reckless plunge, the flat is reached, and again by Lake Yarulan stands the evil one. Near by a senseless form and a crippled horse—the blood bay!

'Surrender!'

'No fear!'
The bronze-wing pigeons rise high overhead, and speed away, as those pistol reports echo in grim and deadly earnest from the surrounding cliffs.

When Major Lucas, Colonel de Lisle and the trackers came up, Nellie Lucas was weeping bitterly, and James Ramsay was supporting the prostrate form of a dying man.

'Your blood is on your own head.'

'I know it is, but I swore I would have revenge, and I got it too. I loved the girl and I was tired of life, but I would not harm a hair of her pretty head.'

'Why, d— ye,' said the dying man, raising himself on one elbow, and glaring furiously around him. 'It was because I worshipped her at a distance, and would pluck a flower which her dress had touched that I hated you, Jem, who were so near and dear to her. It was because I loved her so hopelessly that I took to the 'roads' and became an outlaw. It was through you and her, that the dogs of law and those d—d trackers have been after me, day and night, until I turned into a hunted devil, listening to every sound in the bush with rage and apprehension, knowing that I was a felon, and had no hope this side of the grave. I hated you worse than other men, but—I have—escaped ye all.

'Colonel, don't be hard on Warrigal Jerry. He did nothing but bring me "tucker," and tell me where you and your infernal trackers were, since I broke out of gaol.

'It's—hard—to—go—so young; Jem, say good-bye to Miss Nellie for me. I was mad to have brought you on this wild ride. That horse of yours is a grand beast. I thought "Gambler" had no equal, but—I'm—mistaken.'

An ashen grey began to creep over his face, but he squeezed James Ramsay's hand and said:
'I fought ye fair.' James nodded assent. 'And brought ye a durned long ride with your heart in your mouth.'

'Yes!'

'Well, I've had my revenge.'

His grasp relaxed, the blue eyes grew stony. He was dead!

And this is how it came to pass that the blue roan horse inhabits the home paddock. He is gone upon every leg he possesses now, yet the fire that courses through his veins pulsates with the same mighty throbs as of yore.

And so we will leave him to browse upon the rich succulent winter herbage, as we pass on, pensive and sad, with many an ancient memory, for what is this narrative but a day-dream of old Australia.
BLOGGINS' CHRISTENING

'Wrastled with my finger, the little cuss.'—BRET HARTE.

Jem Bloggins was a miner, and as his life had been principally engaged in descending to, and ascending from the bowels of the earth, and during other intermittent operds getting inextricably entangled in 'supplejacks,' and rolling down the sides of rocky gorges, when drunk, it is not to be wondered at that his outer man presented a rough and slightly-bruised aspect.

Nevertheless, Jem was of gentlemanly habits, according to his tenets, and polite withal, especially in his manner of sitting in his wife's best parlour with his hat on, and about a panful of rich wash dirt adhering to his boots. Had Jem been duly prospected, washed, and panned out on these occasions he might have paid for the damage done to the carpet.

He also at times was particularly felicitous in his manner of camping out in the verandah, flat on his back, with a bottle of whisky and a smashed pipe by his side. There was always a smashed pipe near Jem. He was unable to help it. As he expressed his liability to this failing himself, he was 'death' on pipes. Moreover, it was customarily estimated in the 'Gully,' that the local storekeeper and publican derived a large proportion
of his income from the money expended by Jem upon pipes, tobacco, and rum. But as all this might be, an event came to pass in the domestic economy of the Bloggins family which could only be designated by an impartial, or even a partial, witness as a free fight. Some of those present, we do not say all, were dimly conscious of it themselves.

It was originally intended to have been a christening, the maternal Bloggins having presented Jem with a son and heir.

To say that Jem was astonished when informed of the occurrence during a lucid interval, would be but feeble phraseology. He was dumbfoundered, 'flabbergasted,' as he himself expressed it. After smashing three pipes in succession and polishing off a bottle of rum, his paternal feelings asserted themselves in a string of oaths, and he staggered off to inform his mates of his unexpected good fortune.

'When I see the little 'piccaninny,''' said he, 'you might ha' knocked me down with a—bottle. Why, he's as red as—as red as—' But here Jem's feelings got the mastery over him, and he wept tears of mingled rum and tobacco, concurrent with profanity.

To be brief, having expended all the vituperation he was capable of, he proceeded to arrange matters for the auspicious event of naming the youthful 'Bloggins.' And as he and his mates had recently come upon very rich washdirt, the ceremony bid fair to be of great magnificence, according to the lights of 'Sailors' Gully.'

'French Billy' was the successful mover of the scheme for importing the clergyman to the 'Gully.' Bloggins had suggested a hearse with the plumes off, as the vehicle to be hired from the nearest township; 'because you know,'
said he, 'we can all sit on the top, and sing, and drink, and smoke, and kick around. The parson will fit inside, and it will be as good as a "bus" anyway.'

But to this 'French Billy' demurred as not being strictly en règle with a baptismal ceremony. The plan at length adopted, after an excited discussion, was as follows:—A cavalcade of miners was to escort the clergyman from the township to the 'Gully,' and the 'shandrydan' to be employed, an American waggon tastefully draped, with evergreens, ferns, and national flags. A cask of rum was to accompany the procession in a cart, and the health of the infant was to be drunk at five minute intervals throughout the journey. Judge of the reverend gentleman's amazement when he was interviewed in his own house by a crowd of miners with Bloggins and 'French Billy' at their head.

Rough and rude as these men were, they were rather in awe of the clergyman, and on that gentleman requesting them to be seated, an awkward silence ensued, which was only broken by Bloggins (who had been nervously fidgeting with his hat), bursting forth with the following astounding statement:—

'My missis has jumped a little stranger, and me and the boys would like to know what you will pan him out for.'

'I really can hardly understand you,' said the clergyman with a smile, 'but I shall be happy to oblige you, if I can, in any way.'

At this period Bloggins kicked 'French Billy' and that bearded ruffian, hat in hand, with native politeness, became speaker for the assemblage.

'Meeses Bloggeens, she prepare for ze neekname of ze baby, and Bloggeens, he wish you to christen ze leetel monkey.'
This speech, as Bloggins afterwards remarked, 'fetched' the reverend gentleman, and the mode of conveyance being stated, the shareholders in the 'Devil's hole' Claim departed, well-satisfied, to refresh at the nearest public-house.

The auspicious day arrived; the procession had filed along the steep mountain road with the clergymen seated in state in the midst, and had arrived and halted at the log hut occupied by Bloggins and his family, when that worthy, who was already 'half-seas over,' took the clergymen aside and whispered in his ear: 'He's red, mind yer, red as a biled beet, but he's a true Bloggins and has been born meller. What'll yer have? "Schnapps," "Square," "Battle-axe," "J.D.K.Z.," Mountain Dew, Glenlivat? Only name your "smile," pard, and I'm game to go it to my last cent.' And he dashed into the house, whence immediately rose discordant objurgations from enraged women of the Amazonian type, and athletic and powerful at that. Presently he emerged triumphant, cradle and all, placing it and its tiny occupant, ready dressed for the ceremony, at the clergymen's feet, murmuring in a husky whisper, redolent of rum:—'He's red, mind yer, red as a beet.' From its vantage ground of cradle the baby glared wildly into space, and sucked its fat red thumbs with energy and decision.

The reverend gentleman paused, and then by some instinct of divine pity, took the infant tenderly in his arms and walked inside, followed by 'French Billy' and a few others.

Outside, the diggers lolled about or acted as props to various trees; inside, the preparations were grand and effective. Several gaunt women, the body-guard of the maternal Bloggins, were in waiting. A pulpit had been
manufactured out of gin cases, draped with the Union Jack, Bloggins and 'French Billy,' deeming it to be necessary and church-like; it certainly was very imposing. A basin of tin on an up-ended brandy keg, also draped with a flag, did duty as the font, and in a corner of the apartment an extempore bar had been made, teeming with all kinds of strong drink, whilst the 'skillion' at the back of the hut was crammed with kegs of rum and whisky, as the reckless and hospitable Jem had decided to prolong the 'spree' for weeks.

Handing the infant to the nearest woman the clergyman, after having been introduced to 'the missus' by Bloggins, proceeded with the ceremony. Mrs Bloggins was fearfully and wonderfully 'got up,' amber silk with black points being the general idea of dress which emanated from her. She was not exactly drunk, but very 'meller' and affectionate, continually making darts at the baby during the service. Being restrained by her friends she wept aloud and her sobs shook the building. Bloggins reclined gracefully on a gin case, muttering, 'Red as a tater,' and when at last the clergyman demanded of the godfathers and godmothers the name of the child, Bloggins started up, and laying his hand with great empressement upon the shoulder of the reverend gentleman, expectorated and said:—

'This yere baby's name is Beelzebub Adonijah Bloggins, and I don't see no cause nor just impediment why these here persons' (indicating 'French Billy' and the gaunt women aforesaid, with an imbecile sweep of his hand) 'should not be joined together in holy matrimony.'

After this unseemly and irreverent interruption, Jem Bloggins was expelled from the building by common consent, until the ceremony was over, and the infant
duly entered as a Christian being upon the roll of mortality. From the moment that the clergyman left, the fun became fast and furious. The diggers 'rolled-up' *en masse*, and such a scene of drunkenness and blasphemy took place that the angels would have wept if there had been any about. After about two hours of shouting, swearing and hard drinking, during which Bloggins, after having fought three pitched battles with his best friends, and made it up again after three good hammerings, was brought forward to look at his offspring, who lay in his cradle sucking his thumb, Mrs Bloggins and many others having gone to sleep in various positions on the floor. Shading his blackened eyes with one swollen hand, Jem Bloggins spoke as follows:—

‘Why, durn my skin, he's redder nor he was, redder nor a beet, redder nor a lobster. He's red hot, but (hic) he's got the appearance and idees of a Bloggins yet, and he'll be a credit to his father!’ Then to the terror of his friends, he gazed around him with a smile of imbecility, gradually changing to a terrible *hunted* expression, and with a wild yell, before any one could prevent him, kicked off his ‘highlows,’ and bounded from the cabin.

The others were far too drunk to follow at such a break-neck pace, though some few were frightened into sobriety for a brief space. The ‘Hatter’ remarked that Jem had ‘got em’ bad’ this time; and then relapsed into insensibility.

The others continued the carouse until night crept upon the ‘Gully,’ then one by one fell asleep until the cabin resounded with drunken snores.

A feeble infant's wail roused all the maternity dormant in Mrs Bloggins' heart, and taking the child to her
'McGrath's avenging rifle rings.'—Page 189.
bosom, she staggered to her apartment. Soon all Haunted Gully was hushed in slumber.

The tree-cricket chirped unceasingly. The kangaroos came down the ranges to water with a measured flop. The constellations flashed brightly in the heavens, and the myriad sounds of nature and night stole through the bush in murmurous unison.

'Morepork!'

The night air grew colder, the southern cross rose in the vaulted sky, and turned itself over, and the kangaroos began to feed back, and hop towards the ranges again.

'Morepork! morepork! morepork!' A breeze stole through the tree-tops, and the shivering leaves responded mournfully like an Æolian harp. The click of the bats' wings, and their sharp, strident cry as they hunted the beetles and insects among the gums and 'she-oaks,' would have brought evidence to any listener that many other creatures formed for the night were abroad, besides kangaroos and 'moreporks'.

Very often, too, could be heard the sharp rattle of claws on the bark of trees, as the opossums fought and fed, or a sharper rattle and scuffle denoted the 'native-bears.'

But what recked the human spectre on yonder range of such sights and sounds, under the lustrous moon?

For the liquor was dying out of Jem Bloggins now, and he, mad at the first, was getting madder now. He ran until he could run no longer, and then tottered on with bleeding feet, pursued by whispering fiends, demons, and grotesque and awful shapes urging him to destruction and annihilation.

'Morepork!'
The morning star swung up, ever larger and brighter, above the horizon. The air grew still colder, the luminous grey to the eastward changed to silver, from silver to saffron, from saffron to rose colour, from rose colour to gold and crimson, and suddenly the glowing burnished disc of the sun flashed forth over the vast plains below the ranges.

Ho, ho, ho, he, he, ha, ha, ha! from the laughing jackasses, and a burst of melody from every warbling throat for hundreds of miles, for a glorious new day has begun.

The magpies, thousands strong, sing ringing flute-like choruses, and the bell-birds mark the time. The honey-eaters treble the accompaniments and the wonga's boom comes in drum-like.

But, miles away on the mountain side, was a cave, and in that cave, a being, half human, half lunatic, crawling on all fours, snapping, snarling, and foaming at the mouth like a wild dog, as it writhed into the inner darkness, wallowing and gurgling inarticulately, or biting the dust in impotent fury. 'Jem had got 'em bad.'

By degrees, recollection dawned upon the roisterers in the 'Gully,' and 'French Billy' and a few of the hardest heads started to find their mate.

'Don't tell the "missus,"' said the 'Hatter,' who was one of them, on departing. 'She'll take it to heart, I reckon. Jem's got 'em bad this time, and he'll be troublesome enough before he fetches round.'

On the evening of the second day they found him just alive, unconscious, and utterly prostrated, a low moan ever and anon escaping his parched lips. How he had ever lived, after the awful horror he had gone through, and which looked out of his eyes, and shivered in his
faint breathing and pulsation, was indeed a miracle. When they had appeased his raging thirst, they got him home, but his mind was gone, and he sat for days idly plucking at the shreds of his counterpane, and smiling vacantly, but at last he said feebly to 'French Billy,' who had stuck to him all through his delirium: 'Red, ain't he, red as a biled beet,' and looking at him, they saw the soul struggling to come back into his eyes.

Mrs Bloggins, although masculine and vulgar in appearance, yet possessed a wife's instinct, and a woman's nature, which moved her at this juncture to place the infant across its father's knees. The rough, but sympathetic bystanders, then saw a curious, nay, wonderful sight. Placing a huge hand, cut and bruised during his frenzy, upon the child, he murmured again:—

'Redder nor a beet, ain't he?' and a tear slowly forced itself from each eye, growing larger, and larger, until two bright drops fell upon the bare poll of the child, helpless in its swaddling clothes. Then another and another, until a perfect rain of tears welled out and gushed from the hidden depths, as the better part of the man was stirred within him, and insensibility to love born of long years of toil and callous heart, was shattered, splintered, and broken down by the first golden gleams of a new awakening. Presently he fell asleep, but stirred uneasily if they attempted to move the child from his side, where it had been placed, and next morning it was noticed, that although weak and emaciated, he was clothed, and in his right mind.

After this the population of Haunted Gully, including the 'Hatter' and 'French Billy,' noticed that Jem Bloggins eschewed sprees, worked harder, and was
kinder in his manner to all with whom he came in contact.

One morning, while lowering a mate into the Claim by the windlass, he was heard to remark _sotto voce_, 'Redder nor a beet he was, pore little feller.' And unbidden tears started to his eyes.

It was also remarked at the subsequent periodical christening in the Bloggins' family, that the clergyman had no need to beat a hurried retreat, and revelry, flavoured with rum punch, had entirely departed from the log-hut occupied by Jem, the missus, and the rising generation. As the 'Hatter' phrased it: 'He got 'em bad, did Jem, but when he seed his baby coiled up before him like a little 'possum,' he took on powerful, and when they takes on powerful like that, and cries, why I don't say but what they will get over it.'
OLD-TIME AUSTRALIA

This is the forest primeval, the murmuring oaks and the hemlocks,
Bearded with moss, like druids of eld, indistinct in the twilight.—
LONGFELLOW.

The Austral sun is setting, a scintillating burning disc
of ruby-red far out at sea. Pacific billows rolling shore-
wards in long unbroken surges, are thundering in azure,
white, and gold battalions, in one continuous line of surf
for hundreds of miles on the Austral shore.

On that pleasant land sand hummocks extend along
the thousand beaches, just above the highest watermark
of even the greatest hurricane, piled up as a protection
to the large sheets of inland water, brackish near the
shore, which are called 'lagoons,' in the present day, and
abounded with all manner of fish and wild fowl.

Iron-bound promontories of a rugged character inter-
sect these beaches, and mark them into various lengths.
Jagged reefs jut from these promontories into the ocean,
and here and there off the coast, an island, or a group
of islands, merely barren rocks, crop up as if they had a
purpose to carry out, as an advanced guard in the day of
turmoil and trouble, when the mountainous billows roar
and rush, and the storm fiend is abroad. But this is a
rare occurrence, and Nature with her wealth of warmth,
fertility of soil, and ample rain in due season, has formed
such lovely spots in such sweet landscapes, that if here-
unto brought by magic power, that Jew, the doomed and
errant soul of yore, would see heaven, in the thought
that if he could only break the spell here, he might lie
down and rest for evermore.

The coast line with change from golden sandy beach
to rocky cape, aromatic with tea tree, and various wild
flowers; from rocky cape to golden beach, with \textit{en passant},
many a lordly flat of pasture-land and noble forest,
extends far to the north and south in a certain con-
tinuity, except that here and there at long intervals,
and just where it is needed, is the inlet to a mighty
harbour, where fleets could lie secure from any adverse
gale.

In the old far past, in the dead decay of years, before
civilisation marked its path with industry, commerce and
progress, with wealth of gold and merchandise, with
concomitant and increasing swarms of human life: in
the old far past, only handed down by record and custom
by the fast failing aboriginals of these shores, the following
scene was one of almost daily occurrence.

Just by that gleaming sandy beach where the hummocks
die out and tone off into the flat perspective of level sward,
through which a streamlet sparkles, rise the dark masses
of a she-oak forest, the long straight needles of which,
stirred by the frailest zephyr, give out eerie, ghost-like
melodies, similar to the strains of an \AEolian harp.

In this forest there have been other continuous sounds
all day long besides the dreamy monotone of the trees,
and the dash of the billows. Gorgeous parrots and
cockatoos have whirled through its depths of light and
shade.

The 'honey-eaters,' 'gill-birds,' 'mockers,' 'bell-birds,'
and thousands of other bright-plumaged songsters, have been eating the 'native cherries,' and abstracting rich stores of honey from the petals of the flowers, whilst vocal melody has resounded far and near. 'Bevied' quail have uttered their plaintive notes from the verdant sward, so variegated there in the woods, so coloured with gentle touches of green shade, from the bright Australian sunlight, so odorous from the scent of the balsamic and blossoming bush. The 'boom' of the 'wonga' pigeon has echoed through the grove, accompanied by the strident cry of the 'coach-whip' bird, and the gentle coo of the 'bronze-wing.'

As the sun, gorgeous in its last flash above the horizon, sinks out of sight, the tints which have rested with such a warmth of crimson glory on every salient point of land and sea (from that huge 'comber' rushing in on to the glowing sands), to that craggy outline of sandstone rock and cliff, grow gradually colder in outline and form, whilst the chill of the approaching night is distinctly felt.

Out on the adjacent lagoon, its wide shores a labyrinth of bulrushes and reeds, wild ducks, teal, musk duck and widgeon are quacking noisily and splashing down from on high to their nightly rendez vous, and troops upon troops of them are circling warily, far in the middle, on the alert for outlying foes. Bats begin to flit through the openings in the tree-tops in search of the myriad insects now on the wing, and from the vistas of the forest in some dense lonely shade, a flying fox or 'kalongo' barks here and there, whilst the glow and sparkle of numerous camp-fires of nomad blacks begin to light up the gathering gloom. Nightfall shows skeleton forms, flitting busily in the fire-glow with
ghastly streaks of white, yellow and red ochre displayed on coal-black skins. Men, women and children are preparing for a great 'corrobborree' or festal dance, and that huge central fire upon which they are piling logs of wood and armfuls of sticks and dry branches thrown anyhow is the point around which they will gyrate.

As the darkness deepens, the cries of the opossums, night-birds, and startled wild-fowl resound. The rock-wallaby have crept and hopped away to a distance where they look on with startled eyes, and then commence to feed. A hundred agile forms whirl about, and sing around its fierce circle of light, whilst from the women and spectators on the outer ring arises, slow at first, the regular tap of hardened sticks, and the beat of many hands upon the folded 'possum rugs' had the effect of the death roll of muffled drums. Each frantic warrior now has the accompaniment of a gigantic shadow, ten times more active and grotesque than himself. One and all of the performers are fully equipped for the battle. Their hair is bound with bead fillets made from a bright, hard water reed, which shines like gold against their black shocks of hair, and this fillet in the persons of the principal warriors or chiefs supports the orange and crimson feathers of the black cockatoo.

When the frenzied savages have worked themselves up to the highest pitch of excitement, they stop from sheer exhaustion, and begin again gradually in a slower measure as they regain their breath, and the rhythmic chant again takes possession of their senses.

The ceremonies they are performing are in honour of, and dedicated to, His High Mightiness, Prince Platypus, in their vernacular 'Bulgin Barlejaru.' They imitate to the life the somewhat uncouth antics of this remarkable
animal, half beast in its shape and fur, half bird in its
duck-bill and webbed feet, and in the singular fact of its
laying eggs. To this being, therefore, deity of land and
stream, they are giving thanks for a successful season of
hunting and fishing, and to-morrow they will depart
to their own 'tauri' or country farther inland, with
their weapons, nets, and families.

The mystic refrain of the chant: In—a—ma—la—a—
bar—le—jar—so swells and dies away in fitful cadence,
now passionate and sad, as mighty hunters, or renowned
warriors of ancient days are called to mind. Now merry
and brisk as the amount of the provender in camp arises
in the fickle minds of these black children of the forest,
stream, and seashore, until at last it ceases altogether,
and, as tired nature asserts itself, they seek rest under
their rude shelters of bark and boughs, and draw their
fur rugs over their prostrate forms. As they say in their
quaintly beautiful language, but variable as their char-
acters in different tribes: 'Morang!' (It is dark)
'Moockay!' (Let us rest); but they beguile a short time
before sleep, with stories of perils, fancied or real, during
the day. How one had thrown a spear at 'Nargun,'
the cave demon, who appeared in the shape of a black
rock-wallaby, and knew it was the spirit, because the
spear returned to his hand. How a lucky individual had
even seen 'Loo-Ern,' the greatest deity of all, in the
form of a prismatic sun-glow. How they had caught the
'wirrin-bown' or snapper off the rocks seawards, and
with far-thrown-out lines had also hauled in the 'bim-
biang' or flathead, and speared the 'stingarees' in the
sandy shallows. How an ancient sage had found the
true talisman on the summit of a rocky ridge. It was a
round quartz-crystal, and he averred that the possession
of this treasure would ensure the safety and happiness of the tribe.

As the fires waned, the oldest man in the tribe prophesied prosperity for twenty moons, and after that, battle and death, but eventually deliverance from trouble. After muttering softly to himself, and apostrophising some of his departed friends, he broke into a wild lament; whereat all the prostrate forms raised themselves into listening attitudes.

Thus sang the sage:—

'THE SONG OF THE STING-RAY'

Two women wandered by the sea,
Their hearts were sad.
Their husbands had been false;
They had gone away with two young girls.
The women were sad.
They dived into the great salt sea,
The sting-ray, it pierced their sides,
It drew them between the waves;
The women were dead.
The black men sought some ants, some large blue ants.
They placed them on the bosoms of the women.
Severely, intensely, were they bitten.
The women revived; they lived once more.
Soon there came a fog (manentayana),
A fog as dark as night.
The two black men went away,
The women disappeared;
They passed through the fog, the thick, dark fog.
Their place is in the stars.
Two stars you see in the cold clear night.
The two men are there,
The women are with them.
They are stars above.

He ceased. There was a murmur of applause, and soon after the whole camp was still. The cold lustrous
moon rose. The bright stars glittered in the vaulted blue of the heavens. The night air stirred the Æolian music again into life, tremulous and low, sweet and sad, as if in sympathy with the joys, sorrows and ignorances of these wayward scions of a nomad race. Through the long hours of the night, the sea answered the forest, and a silver veil of mist covered the sleeping earth, and spread out into the bay. At last the bright grey light in the east, in which was poised the morning star, grew roseate. Bars of lustrous golden cloud appeared, and with a bound, it seemed, the sun had topped the horizon. Then the previous sleepy twittering of the birds burst forth into a glad vociferous medley, and all nature was awake. By noon the tribe had departed, and were wending their way inland laughing, singing and hunting, as they were wont to do.

But the old sage had lingered with clouded brow, and stood looking intently seawards. Taking some white ashes from the festal fire of the previous evening he threw the dust towards the ocean, saying as he did so:—

'Wygonon' (I am dying). 'Ngarive' (alas! this day). 'Nyoo Koorig' (It is yours). 'Padi karo kara' (I go to another country).

And with dejected mien and faltering footsteps, he followed his tribe.
FLOURBAG

'To-day he floats on Honour's lofty wave;
To-morrow, leaves his title for a grave.'—Proverb.

He was the oldest man in the tribe. His appellative was derived from the fact that he had a snowy top to his jet black body, commonly called 'Flourbag cobbler' by the blacks. He also was paralytic. The children concentrated their minds upon him, and spun round him like small satellites. He attracted them like a magnet, and it was only when they were bathing or fishing, or climbing trees after 'possums, or catching the lizards with which the cotton bush abounded, that they forgot him.

But, true to their allegiance, when satiated with play, they stole back to their planet to listen and stare with wide open eyes, and ivory white teeth exposed. For a conjecture, strengthened by hearsay, lurked in their impish little souls, that 'Flourbag' would soon shift his sable skin for a white one. As they expressed it to me. 'Nerangi while "Flourbag" tumble down' (In a little while 'Flourbag' will die). 'Dreckly jump up white fellow' (He will come to life again a white man). Such is the universal belief of the Australian native.

'Flourbag' was, of course, not able to walk about, but was carried in warm weather out of his 'gunyah' (hut) and placed in the shade upon a skin mat near the
omnipresent fire. And there the old man would croon out his chaunts. Doleful and wheezy and cracked were they, but they told of hunt and foray, battle and sojourn in the wilds. And the children clustered around, and listened with budelight eyes, to accounts of the time of coming of manhood to 'Flourbag' to the present day of his old age. And the Southern Saga flowed on in wheeziness, and related how he and the great fighting tribe to which he belonged—sadly dwindled now, alas!—had warred against other tribes. How he had even seen the advent of the white man, in the aboriginal hunting grounds. He described the astonishment which possessed his tribe, when they saw skins of a different colour to theirs (white) though bronzed with the sun. How they were not sure whether men on horseback were all one animal, until they saw them dismount. And their clothes, were they not the skin of the strangers? How they dodged these strangers, unseen themselves, until the tribe suddenly charged them, throwing spears and 'waddies,' and 'boomerangs' and wounding some of the cattle and horses. And how they had been met with a sudden discharge of firearms, which belched forth thunder and lightning and sudden death to them. And how they fled and hid themselves. And the children would creep closer, and cook 'possums' or fish or 'geckoes' for 'Flourbag.'

The cooking was primitive in design, but quickly done. The animal, bird or reptile, without having the entrails drawn, would be thrust into the fire, fur, feathers, or scales adhering to it. Then a horny-toed youngster would kick some red-hot ashes over it, and when a strong smell of singeing arose it was considered done. When sufficiently cool, these succulent morsels found
their way down 'Flourbag's' throat. And his ancient eyes glistened, and the Saga went on.

How he and the great chief organised a vast expedition for hunting the emu and kangaroo. How heaps and hecatombs were slain. How he had been rewarded for his prowess in hunting and tracking with a whole emu. How generations passed. How the tribe dwindled under bad habits taught by the whites, and especially by their fire-water, and how the good old days were gone, when the quarry waited for his spear, when game in abundance was on the uplands and the lowlands, when the rivers teemed with fish and wild fowl, when 'possums' lurked in every tree.

Ah, the good old times, and the mediocre present days! All this had gone on for many a moon and still the old man lived, when down came winter with a frost or two, and 'Flourbag' 'got a chill.' He held forth against it valiantly, but it assailed his lungs. The garrulous tongue ceased, and one night when near morning, the old man dreamed.

He dreamed that he was back in the old days again, and there was a smile upon his face. His thoughts wandered back to the time when he had a wife and child of his own. He loved that wife after a savage fashion. She had cost him a hard struggle to get.

He had stolen one night to the camp-fires of a hostile tribe, and had had to stun her with a heavy blow from a waddy (club) so as to be able to carry her off without uproar. But he had done it, and she bore him a son. And his memory went on in his dream until the child grew, and promised to be as great a man as his father.

And both he and his wife cared for it. And it grew and grew until it was big and bold enough to climb a
tall gum tree, and catch its first 'possum, and 'Flourbag' remembered how he had 'cuffed' that little son, and taken its 'possum' from it, eating it himself with great gusto, and without the smallest compunction. And in scenes of dreamland went his mind, over and over the old ground until it reached the point where he had been presented with a whole emu! What a gorge that was! Ah!

With the expiration of that breath, 'Flourbag' was dead.

A startled yell from the first wakeful imp who interviewed him at break of day proclaimed the fact to the tribe. And there was great moaning and wailing, and cutting of naked flesh among them. And the corpse lay covered all day, whilst the moaning and crying went on. But in the evening the dead body was carried to a red bluff which shot high up above the swirling river, where the sweet-scented Australian pines sighed, and murmured in the breeze their own quaint dirges of minstrelsy. A hut had been built in the centre of a large canoe form made of the red sand, heaped up and patted down by many busy hands. Outside all was a stake-fence, built in a square, with a little wicket-gate at one corner. In the middle of the floor of the hut a grave was dug. Into this grave the body of 'Flourbag' was put, the earth was heaped up over it, and then it was covered over with big stones and logs. Then the door of the hut was closed, and the dead man left alone.

Outside the door was placed a day's provisions, also the dead man's canoe, paddle, and weapons ready to his hand. Then the tribe waited outside the enclosure till nearly dark, when they went back to the camp. The next evening they came back, opened the wicket gate
at the corner of the enclosure and squatted inside, but clear of the canoe-form, whilst the elders of the tribe held conversation with 'Flourbag's' wraith, the listeners fancifully hearing the reply in the wind moaning through the pines. Translated, their questions would be something after this fashion:—

'Whither goest thou, oh "Flourbag," in the canoe? Guard thyself from foe ("bunyip" or "debbil-debbil"). The way is dark, the water deep. Tell us what you see.'

And the answers would come to the imaginative hearers in this form:—

'I go forth in the canoe. I cannot see, the way is dark. I paddle on. The water is deep and drear.'

And at last in breathless silence some old man would mutter that the sound vouchsafed by the spirit was, 'I have gone,' nothing further. He has passed! And the tribe, with bowed heads, went back to their fires and rest.

A fitful moaning arose from a few here and there, but soon all was quiet, and in a few days 'Flourbag's' body was forgotten, but the memory of his personality lived. When the next death happened they would probably use part of 'Flourbag's' hut and fence to wall in a new corpse with, but the canoe form is never touched, and the grave is held sacred by the tribe.

Wild animals and wandering cattle may partly deface the burial places, but the shape of the canoe is traceable for many years, becoming covered with grass, moss and wild flowers, whilst the yellow yam and lovely purple sarsaparilla bloom and run riot over these sacred places.

The children, on being asked, held to the opinion that
'Flourbag' would have a good time, and that his paralytic arms, being strengthened by death, would be able to smite the bunyip hip and thigh with a great slaughter. As to paddling a canoe, that was easy enough. Any blackfellow could do it if it was only with a yam-stick. And they were of opinion that after a bit his rheumy eyes, becoming stronger than when in life, would be able to discern the spirit hunting ground on the other side of the dark river, and that as he neared it he would make out his former friends 'Combo' and 'Bulgabrow' walking down to meet him. And 'Eacharn,' a playmate of theirs who had died, would be there, also the dead man's father and mother, and many others of the spirit tribe. How there also would come to meet them all the great Chief, he who had gone to wrest these happy hunting grounds from the evils that had formerly possessed them, where every one would be white; and how the great Chief would be clad from head to foot in the skins of the 'bealbah' or native rabbit. How it would always be summer, no cold, or want of blankets or rugs. 'Possums' in every tree, fish wherever water was. Heaps of game everywhere, including the white man's cattle and sheep. And they were sure that 'Flourbag' would have a good lot of 'tucker' on landing. Not the head or entrails or hooves, but mutton and beef and potatoes, and tea and bread. But we disagree about this, though I have no doubt there is some truth about their belief.
'THE LIGHT BEYOND THE RIVER'

'And here by thee doth hum the bee,"
For ever and for ever.—TOMBSTONE, Isle of Wight.

Primeval gum and box trees, from time immemorial, had shadowed that long rocky water-hole, which scintillates in broad patches beneath the moon's ray, and darkens again so absolutely under the sweep of the high bank, where it is so still, unless disturbed by a fish rising at the night-moths, when ring after ring of glittering silver unfolds from the shadowy surface, so smooth, yet withal so deep. Year after year, these rich solitudes were only intruded upon by vagrant tribes of blacks, who flitted away like ghosts after clearing out the game from the district, and rejoicing at the success of their hunting, by the mystic rites of the 'corroboree,' by glare of bonfire, by feast and repletion, the heaven of their hungry souls; but until now no white man had invaded these regions.

To-night, however, voices are to be heard on the west bank. The ring of horses' bells, the clank of hobbles make a different accompaniment to the usual voices of the night aforetime awakened only by bird or beast. Stray aboriginals, nature's own sounds in the jubilant murmur of the shallows, and the whistling of the wind in the tree-tops. Night was prone to the silent imaging of her own fair self in gleam of starlight, in pool or cascade, in shadow of
tree or rock, or mountain, or sward, or by her very presence in balmy aromatic zephyrs from herb, and forest, and plain.

Yes, there were strangers in those solitudes, and the black cormorants and the various species of duck and teal which made this lonely waterhole their nightly resting-place, had splashed, and dived, and soared away. The ducks had come whirling and wheeling back several times after sundown, scared at the camp-fire, yet loth to leave their erstwhile comfortable quarters, and the Nankeen cranes had, after several noisy protestations according to their wont, settled down upon their own particular branches, only giving vent to a hoarse ‘bough-wough’ as a hint against any unusual louder tone of voice, or to any occasional burst of laughter from the party of five ‘over-landers’ who were camped at the base of that giant copper-leaved gum tree, near the shallow where they had crossed the river that evening. All around was strewn the paraphernalia of bush travel, pack saddles, red and blue blankets, rifles, and revolvers.

Who are these intruders? A party from Yerilla, a station on the Lachlan River, looking for new country. They are 500 miles from Yerilla now, as the crow flies. Let us describe them.

First and foremost with the fire-glow on his strongly marked features, as he reclines with his chin on his palms, watching the game—for they are playing cards, four of them (at least)—is Sandy M‘Grath, the erstwhile overseer of Yerilla. Next to him is Will Barton, once a colonial experience, now a stalwart bushman; the other dramatis personæ are Charlie Jamieson, Major in the First Dragoon Guards, on lengthened leave of absence;
James Scott, storekeeper, Jack Carter, stockman, and Jerry, McGrath's black factotum and shadow.

What are they saying? Listen.

'Now then, McGrath, are you going to play, or are you waiting for Beelzebub there to give you an inspiration from the nether world?'

'Naither, Maister Will, but I'm speering whether there's anything in second sight or preesentment. I felt my flesh creep three times and was thinking of the old adage, "There's some one walking aboon my grave."'

'Play, man, and don't talk such confounded nonsense. There, that's three by honours and the odd trick! It's easy enough to beat a Scotchman anyway. They know more about kail brose and kippered herrin' than whist.'

'That's maybe richt enough, Maister Barton, but you will remember that when ye first came to Yerilla, a real Jackeroo, it was myself finished ye in whist, and taught ye to play for dam points, and wells on the rub, the usual points for a frontage station that has to get the owners to go to expense to provide water for the stock out back. Ye'll no gainsay me?'

There was a roar of laughter at Will's expense, and Jerry's budelight eyes fairly blazed in the flickering firelight with elfish glee.

'McGrath was saying, I believe,' quoth the major after the laughter had subsided, 'that he felt as if some one was walking across his grave. How do you account for that?'

'I dinna ken,' answered the sturdy Scotchman; 'a body has queer thoughts sometimes. I mind hearing a story once of a man lately married who had to go to Aberdeen on business, leaving his wife in Edinbro'. Weel, he had dinner at the hotel, took a walk round the
town, returned and sat down in the smoking-room to read the *Scotsman*. He hadna but jaust glanced at it when something compelled him to look towards the door, and there, to his astonishment, stood his wife. He had hardly fastened his eyes on her when she disappeared. Thinking his dinner might have disagreed wi’ him, he looked back at his newspaper, raising his eyes again after a minute or so. There she was again, and melted away in the same fashion as before. Becoming alarmed he rang the bell and asked the servant if he had met a lady in the ha’. The servant said “he had seen no one.” Once more he saw her that night in the same room. It was more than flesh and blood could stand, and he became most uneasy. After a sleepless night he became so unsettled that he took train back to Edinbro’, and fairly ran fra the station to his ain hoose. His wife opened the door for him, looking rather pale. She said that she had wearied for his coming back, the more so as the next house had been broken into and robbed during his absence, and she herself and the old Scotch servant, who was half doited, had sat up two nights in terror, hoping and wishing for his return.

‘Well, that night after dark, just as they were going to bed, came a knock at the yett, and on going out, there was an ill-faured loon there, who wished to see the mistress. On seein’ the maister out of the dark he took to his heels, and Angus could see twa mair rin awa’ wi’ him doon the street. He told the police, but they could not trace them. What will you ca’ that?’

‘A warning or a mere coincidence of thought,’ said the major. ‘I have known men to make their wills and write farewell letters to their wives and children before an en-
gagement, and in nearly all cases their death ensued. But I do not want to hint at that ending for you, because if it comes to that, we are all in the same boat, and what will happen to one will in all probability happen to more, or all of us.'

M‘Grath laughed. ‘I dinna care a brass bodle for the omen. I daur say I can meet my end when it comes, as well as here and there one, but I should like to set eyes on Auld Reekie yet before I dee.’

‘M‘Grath’s good enough for any amount of damper and mutton yet,’ said Will Barton; ‘or, seeing that we don’t get much of the latter at present, I will substitute turkeys, ducks, and fish, with an occasional kangaroo thrown in; but as we are still on the way to find out this wonderful mare’s nest of Jerry’s, and will have at least another day’s journey before we get there, I vote we turn in and go to sleep, or we shall be raising a nightmare for the whole boiling of us. Jerry’s will be a black one, I have no doubt.’

Jerry’s eyes twinkled, but he said nothing, and soon afterwards silence reigned supreme.

One at a time they kept guard on the camp. M‘Grath’s was the first watch, and he walked about a hundred yards away from the fire, and leaned against a tree, alert, and with his Winchester ready. Thus he could see without being seen.

‘When ye travel through new country, and the warrigal blacks are aboot,’ he had often said, ‘light a big fire and then go and sleep a long way from it, or ye may wake up with twa three spears in ye.’

Our overlanders were not to be caught napping, and the watch was relieved during the night hours with unvarying regularity, the only disturbers being some wild
dogs, one of which pulled Jerry's saddle from under his head, and was rewarded by a 'nullah nullah' in his ribs, after which he disappeared, and the others with him.

Morning broke at last, clear and frosty, and the birds sang their roundelay with glee and emphasis, commencing with the smallest, and winding up with the largest and noisiest, the laughing jackasses carrying off the palm for devilment, and the magpies for beauty of sound, from all the myriads of rollicking roisterers. The smoke from the travellers' fire curled lazily upwards in blue spirals amongst the river timber, as they started to get their horses, and to prepare breakfast.

Ten miles off, on the side of a mountain range, Bundaberg, a blackfellow, engaged in hunting wallaby, rose out of his 'possum rug, started, took his dilli-bag, painted himself 'skeleton' with rings of white and red ochre round his eyes and mouth, and outlined every rib in ghastly fashion. He then took his long spear, throwing-spears, four boomerangs, his 'womera' or throwing stick, and climbing to the summit of the range, lighted a fire of dried grass, making a smoke with a green bough or two. In a minute he extinguished it. In five minutes seven other smoke fires arose from different high points. They too were almost instantly extinguished.

Jerry, who had just come up with the horses on an elevated platform saw the smoke of three fires. He took the hobbles off the horses, bridling one. He then jumped on the back of the bridled horse and drove the others back to camp, fingerling his shot-gun. Jerry's chief point of character was one of unalterable fidelity to his self-chosen master, Mc'Grath, who had got him a
black wean from a tribe in the vicinity of the station, and by unvarying kindness had changed the inborn savageness in him to gentleness. When an Australian blackfellow takes to a man, he is a true friend to him, and so it was with Jerry. He would have given his life for McGrath.

It has been said of the aboriginal that he is devoid of feeling. I can verify the contrary. He is even affectionate; clever, he certainly is, in his own peculiar domain. Who can 'track' as he can, and who living understands the birds and beasts he lives amongst in his wild, free wilderness better? Roving from day to day, always restless, indolent, except when he has food to provide, there is yet that about this misjudged scion of a falling race to enlist the sympathy of those who come in contact with him.

Failing as his tribes are, explorers can point with certainty to traits of his character, in the help and aid given them by friendly blacks in unknown districts, where their influence and regard have shielded them through many dangers. Treated with consideration, they are mirthful, helpful, and certainly a whole host in themselves in finding water, that boon to the thirsty traveller, and providing food in the natural game of the forest. They can live where a white man will starve.

Therefore Jerry, being anxious on McGrath's account, rode back fingerling his shot-gun. His marvellous eye, quick as a hawk's, had seen what the less observant white man would have missed, or would not have been able to interpret the meaning of. He had seen the sign-manual of a whole tribe of hostile blacks, who would dodge his party as they rode through the bush, who would ambush where no mortal eye but his would see them,
flitting like spectres from tree to tree, from rock to rock, from hill-top to hill-top, lurking and waiting until their time for revenge was ripe.

There were intruders in this strange new country of theirs, an alien race, who robbed their heritage of stream, and lake, and bush-land, who fought their uncivilised hordes with weapons which struck terror to their hearts. They saw the flash, but they could not see the leaden messenger of death. Therefore they lurked _perdu_ until the pale dawn, when 'white men sleep the soundest,' or any other chance of travelling should offer them the chance they coveted.

M'Grath rode in unusual silence that day.

Jerry kept like a shadow at his side, his ever-vigilant eye keeping watch and ward.

The party, as aforesaid, were a company of stock-owners from Yerilla station, partly in search of new country, whereon to depasture stock, and partly hankering after a certain mountain of gold, the like of which had never before been seen, but the tradition of which had been handed down by certain of Jerry's ancestors who had in their annual migration to the north after the bread-fruit, remembered to have seen in quantities the yellow metal the whitefellows slaved and fought for.

M'Grath possessed the 'taischatr' or second sight of his nation in no ordinary degree. His slight notice of uneasiness the night before, which gave rise to his exclamation over the game of cards, was in reality a much deeper feeling to which he did not care to give full expression.

Towards nightfall, Jerry, taking a quiet opportunity, told him his own doubts and fears thus: 'M'Grath, I
see smoke along a range when I caught the horses this morning. "Combo," wild fellow, that one, there. You and me keep a sharp look-out to-night. That gold there all right; I think I find it two days to the sundown."

'We'll keep the horses close along the camp to-night,' said Mc'Grath, communicating this intelligence to the others; 'these beggars might be dangerous, and try to rush the camp, I'm thinking.' It was a vigilant party who mustered that night under the twinkling, silent stars; the solemn heavens looked down in all their beauty upon the wayfarers at their halting-place.

It was a lovely spot in a rocky gully, with plenty of grass and water. Feathery gum trees with their white wan stems, glancing in the moonlight, grew in rows beside the shimmering water. On each side were signs of primitive habitation; a few bark 'gunyahs' were clustered on one spot, where the trees were the thickest, but apparently, these had not been used for months. It was only a casual halting-place for the wandering tribes when the spirit was upon them, and the game was thickest in the vicinity, and when the fish abounded in the waters. Several of the trees bore the marks of stone tomahawks, and many of the box trees a little back from the river had up and down incisions on them, where a 'possum' had been cut out to form a toothsome morsel for some hungry hunter.

Of sleep there was none that night. Vesper hummed her musical song to the trees and sandalwood bushes. The never-varying chaunt of the morepork resounded until the small hours, but there was neither surprise or attack. Tired out with vigil, the party travelled on their way, almost with the sunrise; at noon they halted, turned out the nags, and forgot their caution.
After a lunch on damper and cold wild-duck, even the Major and M'Grath stretched at full length on the green sward, under the shadow of a spreading mulga tree, slept soundly. Barton and Scott were off almost directly. Jerry leaning against a tree is dozing.

What is that dark, sinewy form stealing through the sandalwood bushes? past the brigalow clumps, stopping anon to listen, and then stealing on so noiselessly that not even a twig crackles beneath his feet. What are those agile, creeping fiends, who follow him so closely in single file? Ah, white men wake up, or your doom is sealed! Nearer they crept, and nearer, until they have surrounded the little band of heroes, as they lay exhausted with long travel and want of sleep.

Old 'Bluey,' best horse on a cattle camp, has heard something, however, as he feeds at leisure, cropping the crowsfoot and flowery winter herbage, and as he suddenly raises his head, his small pointed ears cock forward, and he is motionless, as he eyes one portion of the surrounding scrub intently.

'No, it is not a kangaroo, old man; kangaroos do not carry deadly spears.'

The old horse suddenly starts and gallops forward in hobbles, snorting with fright.

Jerry is wide awake on the instant. A yell and a hurtling volley of spears, boomerangs, and nullah nullahs follow. M'Grath is speared in the leg with a jagged barb right through the calf. Scott through the fleshy part of the arm. The Major wakes with four shafts sticking in the ground across his body, and a fifth through his shirt sleeve. Amazed yet undaunted, they all leap to their feet, and the Winchesters speak fast and true. As M'Grath staggers, white with wrath and wild with
pain, a gigantic blackfellow, nude and glistening, streaked like a *fantoccini* all over his face and limbs, leaps on a fallen tree, and sends a spear straight at the Scotchman's heart; but not so quickly but that Jerry had seen the danger. One quick step and he shields his friend's body. but the shaft drinks his own life blood.

M'Grath's avenging rifle rings, and the painted fiend with a convulsive spring falls headlong forward, stone dead.

All is over. Like phantoms, the fighting tribe disappears. Their reception has been too hot for them. Six lie still where they have fallen, and more than one will have time to tell the rest of the tribe of the fatal prowess of the white man before his wounds heal. One lengthened mournful yell, as they rush through thicket and verdant glade and they are gone.

Jerry is gasping his life away. With his fast glazing eyes fixed on M'Grath's face, who is supporting him, his spirit passed to the land we must all go to some day. M'Grath is sobbing like a child; the others with wrath in their hearts, and vengeance in their faces, stand by with their rifles firmly gripped.

They were not again molested. In fact, they saw no trace of the blacks again; no trace either was found of the mystic hill of quartz and gold.

Buried in the heart of almost impenetrable ranges which lay to the north, environed by dense undergrowth and scrub, it was hidden from their eyes, and with Jerry's death every clue to its whereabouts passed away. Some day, as civilisation progresses, some wandering prospector will drop on to it, in the way so many valuable diggings have been found, by pure chance.

The best of the open country our travellers had passed
through on their trip, was taken up in the name of the firm, Jamieson, M'Grath & Co., duly gazetted, stock moved to it, houses built, and the general work of a large and prosperous cattle station carried on.

But near M'Grath's house (he is the working partner), is a grave, the headstone of which bears the inscription:

**JERRY**

**ABORIGINAL**

*Killed whilst trying to save his master's life, by a hostile tribe on the Euroka River.*

This spot is carefully tended. The native cucumber with its scarlet pod and beautiful foliage blooms above the poor remains, and the darkened soul, which at the moment of leaving this earth was illumined with great brightness by the Light beyond the River, may perchance revisit the spot.
THE RETRIBUTION OF MENILDAREE

'For the sin they do, by two and two
They must pay for, one by one.'—KIPLING.

MENILDAREE was a large sheep-station on the Quondong River, in New South Wales. It was situated in the Riverina district, the Quondong itself being one of the confluents which make up the watershed to the two big navigable rivers, the Murray and the Darling; the combined streams of these large rivers at length going by Lake Victoria and out into the Pacific Ocean beyond Adelaide.

People didn't know much about electricity at the period I write of. Bicycles, motor cars and breech-loading guns were in their crude state, and even old Father Time did not wear seven-league boots as he does now. And nothing had then been heard of the new woman, and the representatives of the old world woman were decidedly scarce in the bush.

In the days I speak of, I would willingly have ridden twenty or thirty miles for the mere privilege of seeing or speaking to one of the gentler sex. And there were actually two women to be seen and spoken to at Menildalee. One of them was stout and elderly. The other was young, very good-looking, and fond of admiration; of which she got plenty from all the men in the district.
Menildaree home-station proper consisted of: First, the overseer’s house—a big, roomy, one-storied dwelling, thatched with sheets of silver-grey river-box bark, and possessing the great advantage of a broad, shady verandah completely round it. It was a serviceable, strong building, with a large sitting-room containing two bunks, transferable into sofas in the day-time. Off this room again were two partitioned bedrooms. Outside, and joined to the back of the house, was the bathroom ‘skillion,’ whilst another skillion at the opposing corner in front was dignified with the name of ‘The Office.’ Herein were all the station accounts made up, shearers settled with, stockmen and bush hands interviewed, and from which ‘sundowners’ out of their latitude with regard to station etiquette, were often dismissed with the curt formula of, ‘Go over to the store and see what Mr Delacourt says.’ Sometimes the storekeeper made use of this idiom himself if he happened to be in the room and felt the interruption, but if he did, he always followed the intruder over to the store and introduced himself. So the ‘sundowners’ couldn’t complain.

Behind the overseer’s house, and distant twenty-five or thirty yards, was the kitchen, with a covered way from it to the house. The kitchen was also a three-roomed building. Then, at various intervals, and forming quite a street: the big store, the men’s hut, the stockman’s cottage: another large domicile for station hands exclusively; the stables, the cart and waggon sheds, and various other buildings. Beyond all again, the stock-yard. These, and a view of tall white-stemmed gum-trees following the course of the river, the big fenced kitchen garden and the Chinese gardener’s hut, make up the general appearance of Menildaree.
There was a nice, well kept garden in front of the overseer's house, enclosed with white railing. A passion flower creeper dominated the whole verandah and greater part of the roof, making that verandah a delightfully cool and shady lounge on a hot day.

Once clear of the outlying belt of river-box, and 'lignum' swamp, somewhat back from the river's course, the aspect from the edge of the stretching saltbush plains, possessed a diversity only as you looked north, south, east or west. Towards the river to the south, boxtrees, gums and 'lignum' swamp. To the north 'out-back,' great saltbush plains with scattered clumps of myall, and intervening box ridges to the far distance. Up and down the river, nearly east and west, a long winding line of thick timber, a regular forest, about a quarter of a mile broad on both sides.

The owners of Menildaree, a wealthy syndicate, which possessed many other stations in various parts of Australia were known officially and commercially as Jones, Smith, Delacourt and O'Brien. Two were in parliament; Delacourt and Jones. Smith was a millionaire, O'Brien was a great stock and sharebroker. They had all done a good deal for their adopted country, and for themselves also.

Menildaree was a paying station; it had always been well and thoroughly managed. The wool-clip more than paid the yearly working expenses. Then the sale of 'culled sheep,' ewes, hoggets, weaners and rams put clear profit into the owners' pockets. The fat wethers added grist to the mill, for the Menildaree sheep were well known and highly valued in the market, and the whole run was fenced and subdivided into well-grassed and watered paddocks. In fact, the country was about
the best in the Riverina. The wide 'salt-bush' plains, the dammed creeks, the patches of good-feeding scrub, and the deep whim-wells, made the run capable of carrying 100,000 sheep.

Crutch-washing in the old time-worn fashion had been superseded by spouting, which had just come into vogue, with the consequence that the wool came out as white and clean as driven snow, and topped the prices. And Sandy Mc'Grath, the manager, was a fixture, and a mighty power on the Quondong. Next to him in dictatorship came Frank Delacourt, a nephew of one of the syndicate. Frank, as he was generally called, had been under some sort of cloud at Oxford; and it was deemed advisable by his parents to let him try Australian life, to see how he would turn out. He was a dark, handsome, well-proportioned young fellow, with a devil-may-care manner and an energetic temperament. He was very good at figures and accounts, and rode fairly well.

A family named Collins inhabited the kitchen. Matthew Collins had begun his colonial life as a small farmer in the Western district, failed, took to drink as a consolation, but was pulled up sharp by his wife, and a keen perception of the fitness of things in his own mind. Whereupon he reformed altogether, and fighting manfully against poverty and hard times, made his way onward until he found himself in the comfortable position he now occupied of a trusted servant, as general all-round man; skilled to work amongst either sheep or cattle. Sarah Collins, his wife—a buxom, good-tempered woman of forty—was cook and general dispenser of good things. Lizzie, her daughter, was, as aforesaid, remarkably good-looking; a daring horsewoman, and a bit of a flirt.
There were two or three other very necessary 'hands' on the home-station. Dick Conran, the head stockman, who at present combined the duties of boundary rider, with the looking after the small herd of four hundred cattle on the run, was a 'Cornstalk.' He was 'born in the saddle,' so to speak. Indeed, his mother had carried him on horseback when he was a very small child. He could not remember his father, but people who did, also spoke of him as a noted rider. Dick was a 'whistler' in his management of horses, and whenever you see a real bona fide 'whistler' at work upon a young colt, you can make up your mind that he can ride anything that ever was foaled.

In 'whistling' a horse, a buggy-whip is also employed, but a good 'whistler' never hits a horse with it, unless the animal happens to be obstinately vicious or a 'man-eater.' In the latter case, the 'crush,' a narrow lane in the stockyard, and a little starvation coupled with a dumb jockey and mouthing bit, generally makes the animal amenable to discipline.

I only knew of one horse which refused to be tractable after this treatment, and he was the most magnificent looking 'brumby' I ever saw.

The use of the whip in 'whistling' is more for the purpose of keeping the horse's head towards the breaker. And undoubtedly the man's eye and will have much to do with this method of training.

The next of the station hands was Harry Bergmann. He was a long, lithe, sun-tanned specimen of a colonial bushman and bullock-driver. He could drive bullocks ever since he was ten years old. He could drive them almost anywhere from his natural position on terra firma, and he could drive them by word of mouth merely,
from the top of a tree. So well had he trained his teams that even his young bullocks would obey him from this position.

Add to Bergmann, the Chinese gardener, and we have the personnel of the home-station.

One evening, after tea, Mc'Grath and Delacourt were smoking their pipes in comfortable, canvas, prop-back chairs in the verandah.

The mail had come in that morning and Sandy produced a letter.

'This is from ma "bosses," Mr Delacourt,' said he, 'at least, it's from the head "boss" of the tither three, Maister Smith; he writes:—

"DEAR M'GRATH.—We are thinking of forming a cattle-station on country immediately adjoining the Menildaree run. We have bought blocks, Outer, Lower, Upper, and West Brymedura; Outer Back Bungerah, Yalli East; South East and West Yapunyah, Lake Bunyip, and Mount Merimbula."

'It's a braw kintra,' added Mc'Grath parenthetically.

"There will be some damming to be done on Yalli and Wintherong Creeks; and you had better see about the contracts at once.

"When you have that work thoroughly in hand, a good house and cattle yards must be erected in a suitable position overlooking Lake Bunyip; Dick Conran will be nominally in charge after you get the cattle in. The whole run is fenced, as you know. Get store-cattle as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN SMITH."

'And I call Maister Smith a varra sensible man,'
resumed M'Grath, as he turned his eyes full on Delacourt.

'Oh, man, man, gin ye only had a wee more expariance in bush work, what a gran chance for ye to manage the new Lake Bunyip cattle station.'

'They'll have four thousand head of cattle on it soon.'

'But I'll have the books to keep any way,' replied Delacourt.

'You'll have to do the "bossing," and Dick the looking after.'

At this moment Lizzie Collins emerged from the kitchen and came round to the speakers. Besides her duties as milkmaid, she waited, or rather arranged the table for the two, and therefore was a good deal about the house.

'What is it, lassie?' asked M'Grath.

'Oh, Mr Delacourt, would you mind opening the store and giving me some sticking-plaster. Dick has hurt his knee a bit, and I said I would get him some. That Oriflamme colt jammed him up against the stock-yard rails this afternoon.'

And with rather a conscious blush she tripped away towards the store, the care of which was Delacourt's particular work.

Their eyes met over the counter and again the girl flushed.

'Well, Lizzie,' Delacourt said, with a look from his ardent eyes, 'Dick is a lucky fellow to have such prompt attention from you; I wish it had been myself.'

'Now, Mr Delacourt,' replied Lizzie, 'don't say that, you know how gladly I would do anything for you if you chanced to get hurt.'

After this came a rather embarrassing pause, and
Lizzie at length, rather timidly raising her eyes to Delacourt, ran off with the plaster.

Lizzie was engaged to Dick Conran; she had accepted him within the last six months, and they were to be married in another two.

Delacourt had been in the colony but four months, two of which he had spent in town at his uncle's place, consequently he was quite a new chum or jackeroo on Menildaree. But when one's duties are principally book-keeping, there is not much need for bush-lore. That comes later on, to those of an inquiring disposition, men who like excitement and a rougher life. What with being summoned to rope calves for branding, having some fights with 'mickies' (yearling bulls) in which four out of five of the operators, as a rule, come off second best—knowledge soon comes.

Frank was rapidly learning branding and yard work, and these two items alone are enough to knock some ideas into a tyro. Thus he had begun to qualify by degrees for brevet rank. Still he was very short in his knowledge of generalities, which of course was not to be wondered at. He could point out the difference between a 'clean-skin' and a 'pody,' but was not yet a reliable judge of a fat beast. And his knowledge of sheep was about on a par with his knowledge of cattle. But he considered himself to be improving.

'To be a first-class "jackeroo," you must tackle anything that comes along first,' McGrath had often said. 'Take the dirtiest work, as a rule, and don't be afraid of anything; there's a great variety of dirty work among sheep; the safer and cleaner billets will come by-and-bye.'

And Frank, whose heart was in the right place, was
not too fastidious to learn all he could, as any jackeroo should, who sees in station-life a method of advancement, and whose top of the tree of knowledge is to be a "squatter" himself.

Frank Delacourt was like many another unthinking young man; possessed of good and bad points, and the average young man is not always exactly an angel or a plaster saint, as Kipling has it. He had not, to do him justice, thought much about Lizzie until lately. The fact of her engagement to Dick would have kept him from that indiscretion.

But she had unfortunately taken a liking to Delacourt. She could gauge her position of course, and thought him a great deal above her in social position, but as it happened, a chance look, a squeeze of the hand, or the language of the eye, worked an incalculable amount of harm to these two young heedless souls. Daily proximity and a natural affinity drawing the two together, were items also helping to the determination of events.

Dick Conran, Lizzie's intended, was a hard, conscientious worker. He worked because his heart was in his work, and therefore he loved it. He was acknowledged to be the best rider and horse-breaker on the Quondong, even amongst so many good riders, and he certainly broke in a number of splendid colts.

McGrath had dropped across him in Melbourne when buying horses, and had taken him up to Menildaree with him, having his eye upon the future purchase of Lake Bunyip, recommended to the partners by himself. He wanted a classed man there. The other stockman had met with an unfortunate accident, leaving with the knowledge that he would never ride again.

Frank's thoughts as he returned to his seat in the
verandah, after his brief interview with Lizzie Collins, were various.

'Bother the girl, I am getting to like her too much, far too much. She is such a seductive little witch! Engaged too! No, it won't do, won't do at all. The governor would simply cut me off with anything but his blessing. My uncle would order me off the place. I should lose my position and any chance of preferment in the future, and yet—'

His meditations were suddenly broken up by Mc'Grath coming out of the house, with a proposition:—

'Maister Frank; it's a braw nicht for 'possums. They're gettin' too thick ava, always rin, rinnin' up and down the roof, in at the window and out the lum, wi' all their deil's cantrips, so that it's no possible for a body to get a bit sleep the nicht. Dick's awa at Quarr-t pot box, to get a bullock fra the Red Camp to-morrow for the killin', or he would have come. But awa and get your gun. The mune's well up, and we'll jaast get old Collins and his wee deil of a dog, "Whisky." He's a canny chiel for 'possums, is "Whisky."

Lizzie Collins came too, with her father, and to see the gentlemen shoot.

The four of them then followed the dog, who knew all about it. He led them to one of the largest river-box trees, about two hundred yards from the house; and then the popping began.

'Possum-shooting' is very easy, if you only know how to do it as they are stationary in the trees when one is underneath, and the shooter has the bright circle of the moon as a guide or target.

The opossum, or *vulpine phalangist*, feeds on the leaves of the various species of eucalyptus; such as the iron-
bark, plain, and river-box, the red and white gum, the apple tree, and the mallee. But the river-box, apple tree, and plain box are his dwelling-places chiefly, for they are almost invariably hollow from bole to branch, with natural holes at the ends and sides.

In districts where the opossums are plentiful, and these are generally the semi-civilised places away from towns where there are not many blacks, their natural enemy, you hardly even require a dog to prosecute the hunt, unless he happens to be useful in retrieving the fallen marsupials. Then he is an ally worth having.

First of all, select a large tree, and get it between yourself and the moon. By walking forward you bring the moon down the stem; by stepping backwards you run it up again, and by reversing the process and going sideways right or left, you will gain possession of all the branches with your silver reflector behind them. When the moon is fairly aligned with the 'possum,' as a foreground, the soft fur of the animal looks like frosted silver, and it is an easy shot.

After an hour of constant fusillading, during which scores and hundreds of marsupials gave up the ghost, to be transformed into goodly rugs, Frank and Lizzie found themselves out of sight of the others.

Their hands meet, their lips meet; and where they stood, at the base of a gigantic river-box, there is a long, clinging, close embrace.

'Oh, Mr Delacourt, what must you think of me?' panted the girl; her bosom rising and falling with excitement. 'Whatever will become of me? What will everybody say?'

'Never mind what they say, my own darling; marry me, and let Dick go.'
'Dick will kill me,' whispered Lizzie. 'And my father and mother.'

'Leave it to me, dearest,' replied Delacourt softly; 'I will arrange to get you clean away, and we will get quietly married in Melbourne or elsewhere by special license. But we must join the others, or they will begin to suspect something.'

They separated hastily; Lizzie running back to where she heard the shooting; and Frank edging away round the river-box clumps, so as to come up with them in a different direction, firing at unwary 'possums' as he did so.

After partaking of a glass of whisky with Mc'Grath when they returned to the house, and having finished his last pipe, he went to bed, with his mind running on the day's events, and upon the position in which he stood now with regard to Lizzie.

'I'm in for a tolerable scrape,' thought he, 'and there will be old Harry to pay.' But being a healthy, well-exercised, young animal, he soon forgot his anxiety in dreamland.

Next morning he woke refreshed, and in spite of all things, with a great joy in his heart. He bathed, dressed, and then met Lizzie in a passage. A touch of hands, a brief, happy look from the girl, and that was all.

Shortly before eleven o'clock, Delacourt told Mc'Grath that he was going to ride as far as the new woolshed up the river, but would be back to dinner. So he caught his horse, saddled up, and started.

All the hands were busily employed about the station. Dick Conran and the black boy were not expected with a small mob of cattle until about three o'clock.
'Lizzie Collins ... was waiting for him in a low thicket of bushes.'—Page 231.
After riding up the river road for half a mile, Frank tied his horse up to a tree with a light halter. He was well out of sight of the station round a turn of the winding road, and also in a deep hollow formed by a 'billabong' or flood overflow of the river. This 'billabong' ran back and right round Menildaree proper, joining the river again beyond the main crossing-place.

After satisfying himself that his horse was firmly secured, he ran along the bottom of the overflow, which had been dry for months.

At the end of about a quarter of a mile or so, he achieved his quest in the person of Lizzie Collins, who was waiting for him in a low thicket of bushes on a terrace, having ostensibly got there by a pretence of looking for milker's calves.

Frank told her his plan of getting her away from the station. That she should suggest to her mother that she wanted to get some things in Melbourne; and by hook or by crook to get there somehow, where he was to join her, and the rest they would manage as Fortune dictated.

'If necessary, my dear,' said Frank, 'we will get away to Tasmania or New Zealand.'

'I will go with you anywhere, Frank,' murmured the girl.

So they matured their plan to the best of their ability, Frank's great difficulty being about the probability of procuring proper witnesses so as to be legally married, the alternative being a move, and residence for a certain time in another land out of the ken of the Menildaree folk.

They conferred earnestly for some time, Frank finally going back to his horse and completing his ride, whilst
Lizzie arrived at the homestead in triumph with her calves.

In a week, McGrath had made his arrangements with the contractors for damming Yalli creek in various places, building Dick Conran's house, and erecting the necessary stockyards on the site of the future Lake Bunyip Station. He then left for the Clarence River, New South Wales, by the way of Melbourne and Sydney.

Dick went to Melbourne with him to see the partners as he was to be promoted, and expected to hear something important. Thus the conspirators had a pretty clear field to themselves, and everything seemed to work together for their advantage, the more so that Delacourt received a letter from McGrath saying that Dick was going on to the Clarence with him, instead of returning at once.

'Could you conceive anything so fortunate,' he said to Lizzie. 'I will do my best to propitiate the old woman, meaning your mother, my dear, even in driving her to Lake Bunyip, as I hear she wants to go, and you must do the rest. I will make a bolt of it after you are down, get an important letter or something, which will necessitate my presence in town.'

Collins had orders to keep an eye on the cattle, and his wife's long intended visit to choose a site for the house of the newly married pair (to be), gave Delacourt the chance of driving mother and daughter out, whilst Collins was to ride and cast about for mobs of cattle, en route.

Delacourt had told Mrs Collins that he much wished to make one of the party to choose the site of the dwelling-house at Lake Bunyip, and the matron had said;—
'La, sir, I don't deny but that I am mighty proud that you should take such an interest in my daughter's welfare, and when Dick comes back he will be as pleased as I am.'

'I am considerably in doubt on that subject,' thought Delacourt. But of course he did not think aloud, and Mrs Collins was highly elated.

Meanwhile there were more clandestine meetings between the lovers, quite unobserved by others. A slip of paper, or a sign, often conveyed wishes or arranged them.

Still, Frank felt all the time that they were trembling on the brink of a precipice, and he continually urged Lizzie to get the Melbourne plan worked out. She, poor girl, was only too anxious to do so, and was waiting a fitting opportunity.

The suspense and secrecy was very trying to both of them.

Frank thought a great deal of Lizzie, and any passing pang of remorse, for the part he was about to play in the withdrawal of her fealty to Dick, any regret for his own loss of position was completely upset by his own strong attraction to the girl.

She certainly was just what a young woman of nineteen should be. Strong, healthy, lithesome, active, daring. She had faultless teeth, white and even, a clear if rather sunburnt complexion, laughing dark blue eyes, sunny hair, with a bronze gold glint in it, and was neither too short nor too tall.

The girl was artless enough, but her passions were strong, and she knew little of the world or the world's doings.

She had got to love Delacourt dearly, and was only too willing to become his wife.
The tenderness of his wooing, the contrast of his manner with Dick's rather matter-of-fact courtship, had prevailed upon her, and though she was aware that Dick really loved her, the superiority of Frank's gentlemanly address, and a certain wish in her own heart to be a lady, made her think less of the blow she would inflict upon him by her conduct.

The daily intercourse and the utter absence of suspicion in those about them were hurrying matters to the climax.

Though Lizzie was a bush girl she had not been neglected. Up to fourteen she had attended school whenever possible.

Mrs Collins was far too clever to abandon any chance for her daughter, and it was only after Collins failed that she had been in a subordinate position at all. And Australian bush girls can keep house, cook a meal, and make a man comfortable, and that I take it, is what most men want on marriage.

On the morning of the day for the expedition, Frank found that the original plan for him to drive would be out of the question; as he had important letters to attend to, so Collins had to go in his place. Frank was however to ride after them as soon as he could. But he found that, work as he would, there was no getting away for him, until too late to catch them, so he determined to start, get as far as he could, and follow the next day. What with one thing and another, and a neighbouring squatter calling, to whom he had to do the honours, it was but an hour to sundown when he did effect a start.

As aforesaid, Delacourt did not possess that knowledge of bushmanship which would have been of value to him.
The spot selected for his night's camp was very attractive; on a creek with plenty of grass and water. There was a long, deep, water-hole close by, the favourite haunt of many wild-duck and teal, which flew away noisily on his approach. He turned his horse out in hobbles, and attached a bell to his neck. After placing his saddle, bridle, and saddle-cloth over the limb of a sapling, he proceeded to select a spot at which to kindle his fire, which he made at the base of a large box tree.

Could no one warn him?

There was a nice, smooth, gently sloping sward under this tree, which spread its branches widely. It was soft lying too, being white sand at about an inch from the top-soil. He selected a spot near the fire for his 'doss,' and placed armfuls of the sweet scented water-rush down as bedding. When he had spread his blanket over this, and brought his saddle for a pillow, and his saddle-cloth to be dried near the fire to act as a 'hipper' for his recumbent body, he contemplated his bivouac for the night with entire satisfaction and even pride.

After a hearty supper of cold meat, hot tea, and damper, he smoked two pipes, strolling off to look at his horse in the interim. When he at last drew his blanket over him, with his 'hipper' properly arranged over the fragrant rushes, his thoughts wandered over the events of the last few weeks, piecing out, and working the problem of release from daily anxiety.

He was, of course, desirous of preventing any esclandre, and at one time the expediency of making a bolt of it together, suggested itself. But the utter hoplessness of such a proceeding soon forced itself upon him. A long ride, no way to get to the nearest railway station, but
by an additionally long coach journey, and the certainty of detection by some one who knew them.

And after many and many perplexing turns and twists of reasoning, he decided that the only feasible plan was for Lizzie to get down to Melbourne under some pretext, and the comforting thought that after all it would be best to leave the manner of getting away to his sweetheart's ready wit and foresight at last lulled his troubled brain to sleep.

A low mournful howl from an errant warrigal 'dingo' in a distant pine ridge, the chant of the 'mopoke,' the scuffle of an opposum, and the splash of fish in the waterhole, mark the hours and minutes of the night.

Frank is sleeping rather across the fire, which seems to be blazing very brightly, and to be eating into the tree itself. There are alternate sudden flashes of light and smoke in several places up among the branches. The ebon darkness of the woodland flashes into bright relief, to be as suddenly darkened again. And it is not quite easy to guess the cause of it all.

Now a flame bursts out high up in the big trunk. Father of Mercies! the tree is a blazing chimney! The fire is inside it! The horse, two hundred yards away, is watching the strange sight and gives his head a fierce shake, ringing his bell violently. The whole forest is now lit up for a circle of two hundred yards in diameter. The nankeen cranes are barking in their curious way. Opossums are moving and jumping clear of the trees to the ground, where they race away, and many scared day birds are flying about, some of them flying right into the smoke and fire.

A crackle, a whistling sort of hissing sound, a roar,
and a rending tearing crash. Frank's horse gallops off furiously, bell, hobbls and all.

The big box tree has fallen right on the unfortunate man, who was just waking at the imminence of the catastrophe.

A large lower branch, which grew across in a twisted corkscrew fashion, had pinned him to the ground, with alas! his thighs broken and other injuries to his body.

Oh, the pain and pity of it! Oh, the horror of it!

A human being in full life and vigour suddenly crippled, almost exterminated.

Even in his pain and half senselessness, the instinct of self preservation gave him strength to actually dig himself out of the dreadful trap with his sheath knife. He would be burned to death if he did not do so, for though the big vent hole of the hollow tree was beyond him, the base would steadily burn, communicating with the branches, and all that would be left of his once vigorous frame would be ashes.

Somehow the poor crippled body did drag itself clear of the timber for a few yards, and then most mercifully the end came. It was better so. Oblivion utter and complete, of all his pain and suffering. And thank God his sufferings were short.

'Bulgabrow' who was after station horses early, came upon the body. He had heard the dead man's horsebell, struck across to it, caught the horse and followed the back-tracks. The black fellow then saw the dead man, and horrible to relate, the prostrate body was swarming with the small fierce ferruginous ants, as he had succumbed near to their stronghold.

The panic-stricken black did all he could, moved the
body some distance away, and then galloped madly to
the station for aid.

Henry Bergmann and he brought out the big horse
waggon, and the poor mutilated body was placed on a
mattress inside it.

A doctor was in attendance, having been brought from
the township by Wun Lung, the Chinese gardener.

'Poor young fellow,' was all that he said at the time.
But he added afterwards, 'Sad thing, very sad affair.
Made his fire at the base of a river-box, did he? I know
of two similar cases in my own experience. One dead,
the other crippled for life. It is not uncommon. Every
'jackeroo' should be told never to make a fire at the
base of any tree, and if he is lost, always to follow his
back tracks.' Thus said the worthy doctor.

When the picnic party returned, sooner than they
expected, the sad news was gradually broken to them,
and what with the awful story and the sight of the
mutilated form, no one thought it at all strange that
Lizzie Collins should have turned a ghastly white and
fallen in a dead swoon.

All of them were terribly affected.

'Poor young gentleman,' said Mrs Collins between
her sobs. 'He were always that affable with Lizzie and
me, it were no wonder that we feel it.' And the worthy
soul sobbed bitterly and refused to be comforted.

But the doctor's services were required at once for
Lizzie for her case became alarming, and brain fever
set in.

She hovered between life and death for weeks.

Her splendid constitution alone saved her, but when
she did begin to get about again, she was but a spectre
of her former self. All her pretty hair had been cut off.
Her face was thin and sunken, as was her whole body, and her weakness was so extreme that she was subject to hysterical fits of crying, giving way without apparent cause.

Her mother attended to her through all her delirium, never leaving her except to the care of her own sister, who had been sent for, and who was luckily living near the township.

What confidences passed between mother and daughter in that time of tribulation no one ever knew.

Her mother's heart ached for her in that long painful recovery, which in these sort of cases is a species of death in life. One's hope and love of life itself broken, and nothing but a dark wall of dull and deep despair and loneliness to face.

But the mother's love overcame all, and she was Lizzie's sole refuge and comforter in that terrible time.

It was a long while before Lizzie began or seemed to begin to mend.

Delacourt was buried in the station burial ground, a fine tombstone being erected to his memory by his uncle, who arrived, much troubled and cast down, after the funeral.

After many months there was a quiet wedding at the home-station, and Dick Conran was a happy man at last.

These two, Lizzie and Dick, never miss to place a garland of bush flowers on Delacourt's grave, on the anniversary of his terribly sudden and unexpected death, and it was not until after the birth of a little son to the pair, that Lizzie seemed to become in some slight degree, like what she used to be when her personal attractions had helped to cast the dark shadow over her own life.
L'ENVoi

The last whiff dies away, and I am dreaming
   Of days so long gone by.
Whilst Memory's pageant with bright banners streaming,
   Passes my mental eye.

I gaze on uplands with the mirage dancing,
   Below me lies the sea;
Gay birds are flying with their plumage glancing,
   In sunny liberty.

Breathing again the wattle-blossom fragrant,
   I hear the magpie's song.
Become once more a careless, happy vagrant,
   Borne by the tide along.

Still, in bright thought, the native rose's amour,
   With western breeze, again
Fills all my soul with soft Elysian glamour,
   And thraldom of sweet pain.

I mark the waratah's flamboyant flower,
   Epaecrid's drooping bell,
And wander through each shady verdant bower,
   Each glorious sounding dell.
The 'grass-tree's' incense sets my pulses bounding,
    And from the foaming strand,
In organ-note, the billows far resounding,
    Speak to my native land.

Australia, source of many a fond affection,
    To me thou art still the same,
And through my hours of quiet and reflection,
    Like music steals thy name.