CHAPTER VIII.

THE BLOODY SKIRT OF SETTLEMENT.

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

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

An August evening is sealing up in long red rows of clouds another day of the year of 1873. The scene before us is the heart of the weird "Never, Never Land," so called by the earliest pioneers from the small chance they anticipated, on reaching
it, of ever being able to return to southern civilization. Eight hundred miles in a direct line nor'-north-west from Sydney on the sea-board, and over fifteen hundred miles by the dreary ways a traveller must follow, the sand-hills, clay-paws, and low sandstone prominences of the district, now called the country of the Upper Mulligan, was still a terra incognita to Europeans on the aforementioned evening. It is true those ill-fated heroes, Burke and Wills, had passed through it twelve years before; but, poor fellows, they were hurrying southwards for the relief that came too late, and had no time to take much notice of the country. Night is coming on, with that gloamingless presumption that is mentioned as one of the oddities of the new land by most new chum visitors to tropic Australia, in their epistolary offerings to friends in the old country. The crimson clouds just above the horizon flash out brighter than before, as the sun sinks its lower edge behind the dim grey-blue line of dreary sand-hills. The earth grows darker suddenly, and the bosom of the piece of water in the foreground, isled and fringed with graceful lignum bushes, and backed by a picturesque outline of broken sandstone cliffs, becomes lighter by contrast as all else merges into purple shadows. Native companions (a large kind of crane) croak hoarsely high overhead, as they follow the sun westward, across the violet expanse of sky, to their feeding grounds by the salt lakes; large buzzards, called turkeys by the Australian settlers, come out to wrangle over grubs by the water's side; mosquitoes rise in shrill-voiced, murmuring clouds to address the night-feeding fauna of the locality, vice swarms of persistent house-flies retired, the latter having now
festooned themselves in countless myriads upon the zigzag branches of the Gidea scrub around; dingoes are slinking by, like the guilty shadows of departed thieves, to the dark, slippery mud-pools, where the overflow of the water-hole (a small lake left in an intermittent river's bed) has formed a broken, snake-haunted swamp; and all the life of the half-desert country around this part of the Parapee (now Mulligan) river gathers to enjoy the moisture, the comparative coolness, and the food-producing qualities of this Australian oasis.

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

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

On the sandy summit of a mass of brittle, broken sandstone, overlooking the water-hole, is the chief camp of the aboriginal inhabitants of the district. The father of this little hamlet—if we can honour the collection of beehive-like, mud-coiffured gunyahs by that name—belongs to the strong class-family, or totem, of the Mourkou (iguana-lizards); and, food being plentiful, enemies scarce, and no death-avenging troubles on hand, the little community is happy and contented on this winter evening, as the sun goes down. The smoke from the camp fires curls up fearlessly from the tree-studded flat below the village, setting the More-Porks (night-jars of Australasia) coughing in the branches; and the peaceful though monotonous chants of infant-suckling mothers come with a soft lullaby murmur upon the ear. There is something very soothing about these native Yikawimma (literally, milk songs), although we have heard them facetiously likened to the buzz of a meat-tin-imprisoned blow-fly; but, anyhow, their effect on a quiet evening like this is perfectly in sympathy with the spirit of the surroundings. Presently some twenty male natives, naked almost as the day they were born, collect round one of the fires, and proceed to discuss the merits of sundry lizards, fish, and
bandicoot which have been roasted on the embers. The menu also includes two varieties of potato-like roots,—Kylabra, a rather rare climbing plant, and that yellow-flowered "praty" of the interior, Tintina. The women sit patiently waiting for their turn to come, each watching her particular lord, much as a brown-eyed collie does his master, but scarcely ever ceasing their droning song. Now and then their patience is rewarded by a morsel being flung to them; and by-and-by, at a few words from the village-father—there is no real chief in these truly socialistic circles—the men gather round him to hold a consultation of some importance, the "ladies" immediately proceeding to do justice to what remains of the dinner. The men now gathered round the white-haired old native are mostly athletic-looking fellows, whose dark, naked skins, freshly polished with the fragrant fat—to an aboriginal's olfactory ideas—of the iguana, shine in the firelight like the dark oaken carvings of saints in an Antwerp cathedral during midnight mass. The younger men and the boys (derrere), who keep at a respectful distance, and have eaten their meal apart from the fully-initiated males, are far from bad-looking as a rule. Ceaseless fun and joking, with occasional tale-telling, is going on amongst the youths; and presently they skip off into the shadows of the wurleys (huts) on the hill, where one of their number tells the oft-repeated native yarn of the "Crow and the Parula Pigeon," amidst the shrieks of laughter of his delighted audience as they open their white-ivoried jaws in merriment at his imitations of the car-car, car-car, of the feathered rascal of the story.

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

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

Only two of the men have yet heard the important news brought by their red-ochre trader on his return home an hour before, so with the eagerness of children they wait open-eyed for the sage's answer. Gazing heavenwards, where the stars are fast appearing at their brightest, the old man sits blinking his cunning old whiteless eyes, without apparently having heard the question. Upon his shrivelled, old, monkey-like features, lit by the fitful, dancing glare of the flames,
nature has written a long history of privations, of weary trackings and watchings, and of savage battles. Yet there is something decidedly picturesque about him, and even admirable; for there is a certain air of dignity, command, and superior knowledge that makes itself manifest in all his movements.

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

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

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

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

"Their heads were ornamented with the white moongarwooroo of mourning, but worn differently to ours. Their skin is covered with hair like the Thulka
(native rodent), and they carry the fire-sticks of the southern people in their hands. Their women are large as sand-hills, and bent double with the weight of their loading,—their black hair sweeping the sand, and their resemblance to emus in the distance being great."

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

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

"Listen! I have learned a new Wanka (song)."

Then commencing to mark time with his nodding head, and tapping an accompaniment with two carved boomerangs, he commences to chant the following verse:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Slowly, at first, come the words; the old man's voice growing louder and more excited towards the end of his speech, which is a kind of address to his patron-, or birth-star, in this case that of the Evening, or Lizard's eye:—
"Amathoorocooroo, Star of approaching night,  
Kow wak, then risest, dilchiewurruna, from the sun’s  
camping-place.

"Boonkunana boolo, Thy shining head ornamented  
with gypsum,

"Is slowly ascending o’er Waieti, the sand-hills.

"Aumun thicamow, Remain and tell us, Purrurie,  
what see you, Ooyellala, beneath you?

"The red-ochre hunters, Wolkapurrie.

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

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

"Muracherpu-na, We are groping in the dark.

"Quiet is wathararkuna, the south wind; but gna-  
pou kouta.

"The noise of the waters reaches us.

"The kw-ning-chieri, the noisy gnats,

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

Chorus: "Muracherpu-na."

"Thou dancest as kintallo, the shrimp,

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

"Kouta, the waves, hoolkamuna, dance round you,

"Apoouna, Apoouna, bathing thy face.

"Muricami mungarina, farewell, thou silent one!

"Mungamarow mungara, let my soul speak!"

Chorus: "Mungamarow mungara!"

As the last vibrations of the chorus die away, the  
aged vocalist suddenly turns, and, filled with the  
spirit of prophecy, cries aloud in a different tone of  
voice, "The strangers are coming," and then proceeds
to march rapidly up and down beneath the Walke trees, his limbs quivering with excitement, and his staring eyeballs almost flashing with the wild madness of intoxication.

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

The old man goes on marching and gesticulating, as he continues his prophetic lament; and the frightened boys, huddling together near the women, have ceased to laugh, and can hardly breathe with terror. The mothers hug their fat little offspring closer to their breasts, and dismay is pictured on all faces save that of the travelled bearer of the dreadful news. He had already owned to feeling timid, when two days since he found himself alone in the proximity of the dreaded white-faced devils from the south, of whose cruelty and far-reaching lightnings he had heard account on his travels. But he is with his friends and brethren now, he thinks, and besides, the newcomers will not arrive at the village yet awhile, perhaps not at all. The white-faced ones were not always victorious either; he had heard of a party of them, who had been on a slave-making expedition,
being attacked, and their prisoners rescued, at Congabulla Creek, to the south-east. To-morrow the signal fires could be lighted, and the whole tribe collected for a grand consultation upon the subject of the invaders. Three hundred braves could surely defy the handful of approaching Purdie (locusts). The Pulara (women who collect the braves and hunters together) should start at day break. Just as the thinker's meditations gave birth to a more hopeful view of things, the old prophet of evil ends his harangue from sheer exhaustion, and sinks theatrically upon the sandy soil, lying there motionless in a state of coma.

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

"Chau'lyu Will'yu,
Walla a gnor'e.

7"
THE BLACK POLICE.

Chilla binua aa gna,
Kinunaza gnaiuraa jeenaa
Chiaba-a gnaiutaata."

Chorus: "Kirra girra, kirra girra Leeua gna .”

TRANSLATION.

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

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

A woman wearing the Bilpa forehead ornament of kangaroo teeth is sitting at the door of one of the gunyahs on the hill, with a child in her arms. The hut, which is exactly like all the others in the group,—and for the matter of that all within two or three hundred miles,—is built of sticks, which have been stuck into the ground at the radius of a common centre, and then bent over so as to form an egg-shaped
cage, which is substantially thatched on top and sides with herbage and mud. The door, on opening, faces the least windy quarter, namely, the north. Reclining against the portal is the satin-skinned native mother, who, dark as night, has the beautiful eyes, teeth, and hair of her race. She is gazing at the fat little man-animal on her lap by the light of an anti-mosquito fire-stick which she gracefully holds above her, and the group would form as beautiful a model as any artist could wish for to illustrate that affectionate adoration for their offspring which is the pleasing attribute of most mothers, civilized or uncivilized, all over the world. A slenderly formed boy, of about eight years of age, kneels by her side, amusing his baby brother with a toy boomerang that he has that day won as a prize, in the throwing game of Wue Whauitch, with his fellows. The woman is singing the chorus of the chant with which the villagers have that day welcomed the returning ochre-trader, her husband:—

"Mulka-a-a-a-vora-a-a,
Yoong-arra-a-a Oondoo-o-o
Ya Pillie-e-e-e Mulka-a-a-a
Angieie,
Kooriekirra-a-a ya-a-aya."

**TRANSLATION.**

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

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

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

Delighted with the Mitchell-grass and salt-bush country which the party had discovered a few days before, four of their number were now making a flying trip round in order to ascertain the extent of the "good country." Hearing from their trained native scouts of the village on the rocky water-hole, they have decided to disperse the dwellers therein after the usual fashion, that still obtains in Australia when land belonging to and inhabited by the weaker aboriginal race is being taken up.
A consultation is being held by the four whites in the shadow of a group of native plum-trees. The two scouts, both armed with Snider carbines, stand close by, and answer the questions put to them from time to time in the strange pigeon-English taught them by their masters. Each carries a tomahawk in the cartridge-belt that, fastened round his dark, oily waist, forms his only article of clothing.

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

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

Turning to one of his boys, he asks,—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The black "boy"—all aboriginal male servants of Australians are called "boys," regardless of the age to which they have attained—regards the overhanging branch, and, mentally gauging the time it will take for the stars indicated to reach it on their track westward ho! across the heavens, grunts "Me know," and slinks off as noiselessly as a cat after sparrows, and
presently reappears with another attendant sprite, both of them being mounted on wiry little horses, and leading the steeds of the rest of the party.

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

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

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

Let us return to the village. Whilst we have been away, two braves have arrived at the water-hole with a message-stick for the head man of the village from the Eta-booka branch of the tribe. This curious means of communication consists of a piece of wood about five inches long—the half of a split length of a small branch. On the flat side a number of transverse notches have been cut with some rather blunt tool,
probably a flint-knife. The larger cuts denote the names of men and places; the smaller are symbols of sentences. The message, which is soon read, is to the effect that Eta-booka people have seen the white strangers whose approach has alarmed the Paree-side villagers; and finishes by proposing a "meeting of the clans" for the next day. A reply message is determined on, manufactured, and despatched by the trusty runners, who start homewards with rapid feet, happy in the possession of a small piece of ochre each, with which they intend to beautify themselves at the "full dress" meeting to be held.

The thought of combination and safety on the morrow now sends the villagers, tired with the excitement of late events, to their gunyahs on the hill; and soon slumbering, they do not see the fateful fall of myriads of Ditchiecoom aworkoo, shooting stars, that takes place at one o'clock. Deder-re-re is restless, however, in his smoke-filled wurley; and, half awake, dreams he is on one of his distant expeditions, and that the southern night-owl is screeching to its mate, as it flits past him on its ghostly wings. Suddenly he wakes. He listens, with upraised head. Yes, there is no mistaking it; the cry he heard in his dreams comes to his ears once more. Creek-e-whie, creek-e-ichie, this time from the back of the hill. It is answered by a somewhat similar call from the water-hole below. A southern bird up here; and two of them. Trained hunter-warrior that he is, Deder-re-re takes in the situation in an instant. Foes are at hand, probably the dreaded white devils; and are surrounding the camp, signalling their position to each other, before the final attack, by imitating the
cries of a night-bird. Smiling to himself at the foolish mistake of the enemy in using the note of a bird foreign to the district, he prepares for action. A touch and a whispered word to the wife of his bosom, and he slinks out of the gunyah, crawling on noiseless hands and knees to warn his fellows in the other huts. His sharp sense of hearing, made doubly powerful now that all his savage heart holds dear is in peril, distinguishes the crushing of branches close by. Only white men could be the cause of that, he instinctively guesses. A passing dingo or emu would brush by the branches, and a black foe would make no noise whatever. It is too late for resistance. He must alarm the camp openly and effectively at once, and perhaps his loved ones may escape in the general excitement. A bright idea, heroic as ingenious, suddenly strikes him. If he can get the enemy down by the river-flat to chase him, and at the same time make noise enough to wake his brethren, perhaps the majority of the latter will be able to reach the water-hole, their only chance of escape, through the gap thus formed in the circle of foes. With a fearful yell, he therefore springs to his feet, and bounds down the rocky side of the hill, sending a rattling avalanche of stones all round him as he goes, and reaches the flat below. Here the white "boss," having arranged his men, is taking up his position for potting the black fellows as they make for the water, as his long experience in taking up "new country," and knocking down the inhabitants thereof, has taught him they are sure to do. The cool-headed white man hears Deder-re-re's yell, and can just see him as he bounds past the smouldering fire towards him. A snap-shot
rings through the air, and the black fellow, springing upwards, falls dead upon the red-hot embers, crushing and fanning them into a sudden blaze, that shows the dark, flying forms of the villagers rushing towards the water-hole. Now ring the short, sharp carbine shots through the still morning air! Now whistling swan-shot from fowling pieces buzz through the falling leaves! Wild shrieks, deep groans, the scream of frightened birds, the plunge of swimmers in the water, and all the fearful turmoil of a night surprise! Where lately the silent brushwood hooded over its dark image in the lake, the leaves blush ruddily with the sudden blaze of bursting stars of flame, as the white men fire upon the swimmers in the water-hole.

Then comparative quiet again. The opening scene in the act of bloodshed is almost as soon over as begun, and then the fearful work of despatching the wounded commences. The whites leave this job to their black accomplices, and retire to the gunyahs on the hill, to mount guard over those who are giving the coup de grâce to the unfortunate wretches writhing on the flat below. Well do they know that their "boys" will miss no opportunity of painting those already dripping tomahawks of a still deeper tint. Brought from a far-off district, and believing it to be perfectly legitimate for them to kill their black brethren if belonging to another tribe, their savage natures, moreover, trained to the awful work, they glory in a scene like this. The rapid and sickening thud, thud of their small axes, right and left, at last ceases as the early blush of dawn begins to break behind the weird hill to the eastward. The mangled
bodies of some thirty men, women, and children lie here and there amongst the broken bushes and half-burnt gunyahs; and the wild duck skimming down on to the once more placid bosom of the little lake, rise again with frightened squeaks on seeing the ghastly objects on its red-frothed banks.

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

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

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

"Yarraman (horses) come this way," suddenly cries one of the boys, and throwing himself upon the ground
to listen adds, “Two fellow Yarraman (two horses) come pretty quick.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"We camped here last night," replies the last speaker's partner, turning to avoid the keen eyes fixed upon him; "niggers attacked us, if you want to know."
“You camped here, leaving your horses and tucker (food) behind,” sneers Dyesart, disgusted with the palpable lie.

He continues after a moment,—

“Well, I'll find out for myself what's been your game. I'm afraid I can guess what has happened.”

He rides past without another word into the arena of death, where a few crows are already at work upon the bodies. Dyesart has seen many awful sights in his time, and is expecting one now, but the scene overpowers him for a minute with mingled feelings of horror, pity, and indignation.

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

“A night surprise,” he says to himself; “I thought as much. The third of the sort I have seen in two years, and yet those smiling squatters one meets down south swear through thick and thin these things occur only in the imagination of the missionaries. What cowardly devils!” he adds aloud, as he stands before the body of the pretty young mother of Deder-re-re's children. One dark, shapely arm still clasps the baby form; the other, crushed and mangled with attempting to ward off the blows of some weapon, rests upon the gory, horror-stricken face. Both the woman's skull and that of her child have been smashed in with axe blows. Over each body in turn the sinewy form of "Doctor" Dyesart bends, as he searches for any wounded that may still
be alive for him to succour. But the work has been too well done. Thirty yards away the boss’s black boys are peering over the rocks, wondering what he is doing. Dyesart is so different to the other white men that have come within their ken. On the road up, his curiosity with regard to rocks and stones, and his perennial kindness to them and all the other “boys,” has often much amused them. Presently one of these “boys” spies out a body amongst the rocks he has not noticed before. It is that of a young boy,—the one that played with his baby brother, as it lay in its mother’s arms, last night. The child’s thigh-bone has been broken by a snider-bullet, which has torn a frightful hole in the limb’s tender flesh. He is alive and conscious. But with the firm nerves that he has inherited from his hardy ancestors, he lies motionless, feigning death, though his soul is racked with agony and fear, and his mouth is dry and burning with a feverish thirst. Saul is helping his master in the search, and sees the movements of the other “boys,” as they proceed to despatch the victim they have hitherto overlooked. A hurried sign to “Massa Sam,” and the long barrel of a “Colt” rests for an instant on a steady left arm. Then the combined noise of a yell and a revolver shot breaks the silence, followed by the ping of a bullet and the whir of rising crows. Dyesart has shown his wonderful skill with small arms on many a gold-field, but he never felt more satisfied with his shooting powers than on this occasion. The bullet, hitting the black boy’s up-lifted tomahawk, hurls it from his half-dislocated wrist, and poor Deder-re-re’s son still breathes. The wounded boy is attended to, and then
the question of what to do with him arises. He can scarcely be left behind, for his friends will hardly venture back to the water-hole for many days. In the meantime the horrible dingoes, crows, and ants would leave little of the original youth. Dyesart, too, wants a "boy" (as his nephew did long afterwards), as he must return Saul to the little mission station before long. So, after fastening a long branch to the child’s side and injured limb as a splint, and fixing it securely with well-trained fingers by means of strips torn from his saddle-cloth and Saul’s gaudy head-gear, Dyesart makes the little black body look like a newly "set up" skin in a taxidermist’s laboratory. Little Deder-re-re, junior, who will figure in future in these pages as Dyesart’s "boy" Billy, is then placed upon the saddle in front of Saul; and the waterbags being filled and suspended from the horses’ necks, the two riders proceed across the dreary sand-hills towards the junction of two wet-season creeks, where the explorers’ camp and "station" preliminaries have been established. It is late in the evening when the two horsemen, having been delayed by their wounded burden, reach the white tents, where the "boss" and his subordinates have previously arrived; and after a silent meal of damper and duck, Dyesart says a few words to his partner, as the whites sit round the fire smoking.

"I am returning south to-morrow," he begins. "As it is no use, I suppose, telling fellows like you what I think of your cowardly last night’s work, all I’ll say is that I feel justified in withdrawing from the arrangement we made between us about taking up land. When a man finds he’s made a contract with
another fellow who doesn’t carry out his part of the arrangements, he’s right in getting out of it.”

“I don’t want to shirk my part of the agreements,” growls the “boss.”

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

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

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

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

* * *

And this was how Dyesart obtained his faithful henchman Billy. He had the little savage educated with white children in New Zealand, where the natives have equal rights with the Europeans, and he flourished into a bright, trustworthy young scholar,
like one of those that any of the half-dozen struggling mission stations of Australia can produce, in refutation of the popular Australian saying that the aborigines “are mere animals, and should be treated as such.”

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

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

MURDER, MADNESS, AND MELODY.

"On him attends the blue-eyed martial maid."
—Homer's Odyssey.

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

There is really no excuse for even the most susceptible sufferer from mal de mer on board to remain below. Consequently the whole "contingent" of passengers, saloon and steerage, are lolling about on deck in various easy attitudes, enjoying the ever-changing beauties of the glorious sunset picture before them, and revelling in the comparative coolness of the hour.
On the raised "first-class" end of the vessel the usual specimens of humanity one always sees on board a passenger-steamer, in whatever part of the world you travel, are present. The over-dressed, noisy bagmen of wine and spirit houses are there; the quiet, canny representative of a pushing "Glascy" soft-goods manufacturer; two or three Jewish mine-owners; a sprinkling of Scotch storekeepers; an Irish doctor; a German inn-keeper; and a select circle of long-limbed members of those upper circles who belong to the genus termed in Australian parlance "silver-tailed," in distinction to the "copper-tailed" democratic classes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Eager as he was to follow out the instructions of his dead uncle until the steamer reached Brisbane, he cannot disguise from himself the fact that since that day his enthusiasm has greatly cooled. Something happened during the few hours he spent on shore in the capital of Queensland which has disturbed his set
purposes considerably. Struggle as he may, he feels a longing he can hardly understand to return to Morecombe Bay,—a mysterious tugging at his heart strings that grows stronger as the steamer rattles its way northwards. Any lady readers who may honour these pages with their perusal will already have guessed correctly that young Angland has been attacked with the same sort of complaint that caused sorrowful young Werther to make such an egregious stupid of himself in Goethe's marvellous histoirette.

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

So Claude develops at first a simple desire to shield this forlorn maiden. He feels somehow that she must be forlorn, although he does not,—and he feels ashamed to own it, even to himself,—he does not even know her name. She may be engaged to marry a man who will not appreciate her. What a sickening feeling comes over him at the thought. What a pity the days of the duello are over, and all that kind of thing. Surely she could never have looked into anybody's soul before,
as she did into his, with those deep blue orbs,—those
eyes that have floated before him day and night since
his little Brisbane adventure; her little dimpled face,
flushed with excitement and pretty pursed-lipped anger,
as he first saw it; or that angel look of mute entreaty
as those glorious eyes shot burning arrows into his
brain as he turned to her assistance, that would have
spurred him to any rashness, much less knocking
down a clumsy lout of a drayman. Yes, permanently
nailed upon the wall of his mind’s photographic
studio is the sunlit picture of the neatly dressed
petite figure, with the halo of golden hair, that held
out a tiny, faultlessly-gloved hand to him as she said
good-bye, and, thanking him for his service, left
him half-stupefied with a last glance of those glorious
eyes.

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

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

The small dog evidently belonged to a young lady, who, alone and unprotected amongst the crowd of roughs, was courageously but injudiciously trying to save her tiny four-footed dependent by beating the big dog with her parasol. Hurrying up to her assistance,
Angland saw a burly, red-faced man, apparently
the owner of the large animal, step forward and
roughly snatch the fair one's weapon of attack from
her vigorous little hands, giving vent to his indignant
feelings at the same time by expressing his intentions
of "seein' fair play," and "lettin' no blessed gal hurt
'is dawg." Claude just saw the little figure with
clasped hands, and heard the faltering appeal for
help to the brutal bystanders, as he burst through
the crowd. To him, accustomed to wild-boar hunting
in the dark Hunua ranges near his home, the job of
making a fierce pig-dog "take off" from its quarry
had often been an every-day occurrence when training
his canine hunters. It was comparatively an easy
work to choke the big, over-fed cur, and make it let go
its hold of the little ball of palpitating floss beneath
it in the dust. To give the large dog a sounding kick
that lifted it half-a-dozen yards away, whence it slunk
off homewards, was the next act; and the whole thing
was done ere the disappearing mongrel's master could
recover from his open-mouthed surprise. Claude was
stooping to pick up the young lady's dishevelled pet,
when he saw the red-faced man "coming for him,"
and was just in time to receive that gentleman's most
prominent features upon his own large and rather
bony left fist. Angland knew that in a row with
those modern mohocks, Australian larrikins, you must
"hit to kill," as Dick, his old home chum and "tutor
in pugilism," used to call it. So, following his defen­sive blow with one of attack, he instantly brought
his right fist forward, so as to knock loudly on that
thinner portion of his adversary's skull which is situ­ated just above the approximation of the jaw and ear,
dropping him as neatly as the proverbial bullock. The crowd of rouges around, who would have half-killed and afterwards robbed our hero if he had been worsted in the encounter, drew back on seeing the big man fall, and respectfully made way for Claude, as, holding the little dog in his arms, he escorted the lady to whom he had been thus curiously introduced into the gardens, where she sank trembling on one of the seats.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Noticing immediately, with quick medical eye, from the slight flush of confusion that rises on Claude's face, that his carelessly thrown conversational fly has hooked the real cause of the young man's thoughts, he proceeds to cover his mistake by plunging at once into the theme that he knows will interest his friend. Dr. Junelle has travelled through a great deal of the little-known and less-populated districts of Australia.
called generally the "outside" country. Whilst moving amongst the frontier settlers of these parts, as the medical referee of one of the great assurance associations, he had ample opportunity for studying the effect of some of the wildest forms of bush-life upon the human mind and body, and has made an especial study of hereditary characters developed by the offspring of Australian backwoodsmen.

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

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

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

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

"Didn't the miners object?"

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

"What is that?" asks Claude.

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

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

"Not at all, me boy. The gentleman in charge, who is so anxious to save the Crown the expense of the trial, it's just himself that knows what he's about. His squad of 'boys' is composed of black fellows from various parts of Australia, who belong to different tribes, or factions, to tip it a rale Irish simile. On the top of a downright lovely, natural animosity for each other, which is only restrained by discipline,
these savages wearing the Government livery have been trained to commit every sort of atrocity at a word from their 'Marmee,' as they call the 'boss.' Should a 'boy' misbehave himself, turn rusty because he receives a flogging, or otherwise fail to please his master, that gentleman doesn't trouble to rason wid him; he has only to wink, as you may say, and it's a case of 'off wid his head,' for his black comrades are only too glad to be allowed to steal behind the bocauin of a boy and leave him pulseless, all alone wid himself behind a bush. These 'boys' are the only witnesses.

But to come home to me story. The prisoners were marched off in an iligent line, or tied to a line, it don't much matter, and three miles outside the town they were neatly despatched, and left to amuse the crows and ants."

"But what did the townsfolk do?"

"Oh, they waited till the boss of the place came back, the J.P. I've been telling of, and that was the same afternoon. They told him all about it. Holy poker! there was the divil to pay, an' no mistake. 'Dripping mother!' he cried, 'I've never had a single instance of throuble wid the darkies of the place.' And then he went on to say, and he was telling the truth, mind ye, that he had been there, off and on, ever since he came, the first white man, to the district.

And he told the miners how he feared the retaliation of the friends of the murthered creatures, and the consequent vendetta warfare that would ensue. And then the whole township, headed by the J.P., went out together by themselves, and found the place where the murtherers had left their victims; but divil a bit of them did they diskiver, barring their bodies stuffed
so full of bullets, I've bin told, that you couldn't see them but for the wounds outside.

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

"And with what result?" asks Claude.

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

"Well, this young friend of mine went and pleaded
that he could not tell if the bones were human remains or not, and the inquiry consequently dropped through."

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

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

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

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

"Yes, that's true for ye, but the older school of diggers were a mighty different lot to the rough lads that followed them. Many's the yarn I've had with
the old boys in the accident ward, for it's there they open their hearts as well as their mouths, for their medical attend' to pry into. But the species is growing scarce, the bhoy, and one may ask wid the swate poet,—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Yes, but what did he say to the deputation? He didn’t call them lunatics to their faces, did he?”

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

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

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

“No, not yet, Angland, but I’d bet a thrifle, if I had it, that he hates his work. At present he’s only a
‘sub,’ and if he’s wise he’ll not stick to it. No, he’s not got the cruel facial-lines yet on his ‘boyish front.’"

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

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

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

"My experience of children I have seen grow into men certainly points to that conclusion. But it is a somewhat difficult subject on which to gather reliable data, for in nine cases out of ten the child’s parents are inculcating their own ideas of right and
wrong into their youngster during the years its expanding brain is most sensitive to permanent impressions. What an ordinary observer might put down to hereditary characteristics of the individual, may thus merely be due to tuition and example."

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

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

"And does this murdering of natives still go on,
doctor? I can't really get my mind to believe it?"

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

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

"(From our Correspondents.)

"THE RECENT MURDER BY BLACKS.

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

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

"Well, they don't believe in Buddha's assurance that 'With mercy and forbearance shalt thou disarm every foe,' up here, evidently," says Claude, as the two men descend the companion ladder on their way to "turn in." Down below, an impromptu concert is being given by a cluster of young men round the piano at the end of the saloon, and the performers, who are mostly smoking, turn round constantly for refreshments to the interesting collection of bottles and
glasses on the table behind them. A grand finale chorus, composed of a conglomeration of "Ballyhooey" and "Finnegan's Wake," is just coming to a close, and the gifted accompanist, being only six bars behind the leading tenor, is hurrying up to be "in at the death" when Dr. Junelle's entrance is noticed.

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

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

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

"THE QUEER WAYS OF AUSTRALIA.

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

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

Chorus.

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

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

Chorus.

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

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

Chorus.

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

"A NIGHT'S RIDE.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MISS LILETH MUNDELLA AND MR. WILSON GILES.

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

It is a blazing winter day in Northern Queensland; a morning when it is quite a pleasure to turn one's eyes from the sun-scorched, shadowless "open country" outside to the cool, thatched verandah of "Government House" (head station-house), where Mr. Wilson Giles, the owner of Murdaro run, resides. It is particularly grateful to do so to-day, for in addition to the soft green shade of crimson-blossomed Bougainvillias and other northern floral favourites, the presence of a fair female form in a cool, light dress—that sight so dear to men imprisoned in up-country, societyless wilds—
lends a double charm to the already attractive shelter from the sun's rays. The young lady who is now to engage our attention for a brief period is Miss Lileth Mundella, to whose future hopes and ambitions we have already alluded in Chapter V. On the day in question she sits in the shelter of the verandah, slowly rocking herself in a great cane-chair, the embroidery of light and shadow cast by the motionless leaves falling in picturesque chiaroscuro effect upon her handsome, artistically-draped figure.

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

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

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

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

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

Miss Mundella was glad to find herself in this position of trust, for it afforded her the means she sought of strengthening her hands for the ambitious coup d'état, that she intended to put into practice.
some day. Already Giles's niece had profited by the opportunities her secretaryship gave her, by learning far more of her uncle's past career than that jolly-looking, selfishly-cunning, middle-aged gentleman had any idea.

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

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

That her uncle was indebted to a large amount to the late Dr. Dyesart she knew well; she believed the two men, also, to be partners in the run. But this was one of the few things she found herself unable to pry fully into. Miss Mundella had taken charge of the letter from the dead explorer, which faithful Billy had curiously brought to the very station his late master had been so much interested in. She had, moreover, carefully opened the packet which contained the message from the dead; not from idle curiosity, but with the idea that it probably contained something
that would assist her in her plans. The words of the
letter she saw at once clearly pointed to three things:
firstly, a reparation or gift to be made to some one
through the nephew; secondly, a command to this
nephew to visit the grave of the writer; thirdly, a
suspicion of the honesty of squatters,—possibly a
concealed distrust of her uncle Wilson Giles him-
self.

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

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

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

It is Dina, Miss Lileth’s special handmaiden.
Caught as a child, she is the sole surviving member
of a once great Otero, or tribal-family, which was
annihilated by the Black Police some eight years
before, at a “rounding up” of the natives in the
neighbourhood.
It is she alone, as we see her, of all the house-gins, or unpaid native women, who are employed about "Government House," that is decorated with that insignia of civilized female servitude,—a white lace cap; and though Dina looks to-day slightly untidy, one generally sees her glossy, luxuriant locks of jetty hair as neatly stowed away beneath the natty ornament before mentioned as Phyllis of old herself could have desired.

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

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

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

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

"Dina, what are you doing there?" comes the clear, contralto voice of Miss Mundella.
The culprit stands before "missie" with downcast eyes and trembling figure.

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

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

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

She stands in the passage giggling with all her might at the sight of the youngest house-gin, Lucy, ætat ten summers, who out in the quadrangle at the back is up to one of her favourite tricks. This consists of imitating the ungraceful waddle of that head of the culinary department, "Terrible Billy," the old man-cook.
Poor little, large-mouthed, wriggling Lucy loves
to get behind the spare, hardship-twisted, little old
man as he crosses the yard, and burlesque his every
action, to the delight of the black heads that appear
at the doors and windows, and grin white-teethed
plaudits at the little actress’s histrionic powers.

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

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

Lileth says nothing, but rebukes the laggard Dina
with a look so fraught with cruel meaning that the
black girl melts into real tears this time, as her mistress returns to her seat on the verandah.

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

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

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

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

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

The speaker, who is Mr. Wilson Giles, now gets out of the trap, and taking his whip in one hand and a revolver that he always has with him in the buggy
in the other, he toddles with the usual short steps of a bushman to the house, just nodding a brief "good-morning" to his niece as he crosses the verandah.

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

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

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

"I will be with you shortly, uncle," Miss Mundella replies, and proceeds to enter into a conversation upon
music and art with the polished storekeeper, who is
the very opposite of his highly inflamed "boss."

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

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

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

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

"Oh, I don't really think that it is worth while
my going into the long exposition of household
arrangements that an explanation would necessitate."

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

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

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

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

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

Both uncle and niece sit in silence till the girls arrive, the two miserable creatures having been found
at the collection of huts close by, known as the native-camp, where they had run to hide on seeing Carlo take the whip to the "boss."

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

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

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

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

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

"If you think I can advise you, uncle, the more I know about the matter the easier can I come to a
decision. That is your excuse for telling me and mine for listening to what would otherwise not interest me."

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

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

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

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

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

"He told me," continued Mr. Giles, "and I will just cut what he said as short as I can, that he was a wealthy man and a bachelor; that his agents in Sydney had told him Murdaro station would probably be in the market before long; also that he had discovered that the lady to whom he had once been engaged in England had married me, the proprietor
of Murdaro, and was dead. He had come up to see the place, as it was interesting to him. Well, the doctor went into a rapture over Glory,—who’s neat enough, I believe, but wasn’t a patch on little Georgie. ‘She’s like your late missus,’ he said; and then before I knew it he offered me money on loan without interest, enough to put me on my feet again.”

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

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

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

“Well, yes, uncle; first, how are you situated as regards funds—money matters—now? I should like to know particularly before I ask any more questions.”

As she ceases speaking Miss Mundella cannot help glancing scornfully at her relative, for she sees he is afraid to ask her advice, although his object in opening up the conversation was to do this. But her look changes as the thought enters her brain, “Is this story of the money the real and sole reason of his anxiety?”

“Well, I’m tight pressed,” replies Mr. Giles, looking nervously at his niece; “that confounded spec. of
his executors,”—the young lady watches her uncle as she speaks, and sees that gentleman’s rather washy eyes open a little bit wider and become fixed, a sign that expresses in his physiognomy what turning pale would in most other men,—“could you refund this money if his executors were to press you to do so?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Why, of course. They’d ruin the whole bilin’ of us.” Mr. Giles’s answer, coming as it does from a
mouth whose chin is sunk upon a desponding breast, is scarcely audible.

"With the exception of Glory?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Can either of these things be done?"

"Yes, the latter."

"How can it be done?"

"By means of money."

"Who will do it?"

"I will."

Mr. Giles cogitates for a minute or two.

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

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

"Well, then, than you have told me, if you like that way of putting it better. You're a clever gal, and have more 'savez' than I have in a matter like this."

The speaker's eyes withdraw into his head, and he feels more cheerful and hopeful as he goes on speaking.
He ends by placing the whole affair in his niece's hands for her to fight out for him. Lileth has her fish in the shallows now, but she knows she must not startle him till her landing net is safely under and around the prize. So putting a little softer intonation into her voice, and rising from her seat, she goes to her uncle's side.

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

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

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

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

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

"I have thought out a plan of releasing you entirely from your indebtedness, but both myself and my future husband will have to risk everything in doing
it. Will you promise to give me a quarter share in
the run if I succeed?"

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

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

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

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

This last bit of news was just what was wanted
to complete the subjugation of Mr. Giles to his niece's
will. How did she know of this news about Angland?
Why, of course, from that young devil of a nephew
of his, whom he had bribed to intercept the dead
explorer's approaching relative. His own rough-and-
ready plan had failed; perhaps his niece's scheme
would succeed. Anyhow, it was best to have her
on his side, for otherwise she might consider it best for herself to make young Angland fall in love with her. She could do that, if she liked, Giles felt certain. The squatter rises and paces up and down the creaking floor of the verandah restlessly at the thought.

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

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

THE BLACK POLICE.

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

PETRARCH.

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

"Just my confounded luck. Just at this time too, of all others, when my application to be appointed Protector of Aboriginals for the district must just have reached the chief. Now I wonder what Mrs. Bigger will say if I don't
get this extra salary as Protector, for I can’t send Jane down south to school, as I promised, if I don’t get more than my present pay, that’s certain.”

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

"June 4th, 1889.

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

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

I am, sir,

P. P. Commissioner of Police,

Harry Stocrat."

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

"ANOTHER N. M. P. ATROCITY.

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

At a mining camp where nothing had been stolen by the natives for months, three natives ran by a miner’s tent
one evening. Going into town next day, the said miner mentioned this, but did not ask for assistance. The neighbouring sergeant of Black Police with four boys, however, appears at the camp in a few days. As night falls the light of a native camp fire is sparkling away on a mountain range some four miles off. No one knows or cares if these particular natives had committed the crime of running by a miner’s tent. Taking a ‘boy’ by the shoulder, the sergeant points out the fire, and soon after the four troopers steal off into the gloom, armed to the teeth, and naked save for their cartridge-belts. The sergeant remains behind, and in about an hour and a half the sound of nine shots coming rapidly one after another is heard. Presently the ‘boys’ again appear with spears and dilly-bags, and tell, amongst other horrid details, that they have despatched ‘plenty fellow pickaninnie’ with their tomahawks.”

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

On either side of the single window of the apartment hangs a cat-o’-nine-tails,—one for the use of the refractory “boys” of the corps, and manufactured of plain leather thongs; the other having the narrow lengths of hide decorated with swan-shot artistically fastened to the cruel tongues with whipcord. This more com-
plicated instrument is used for such cases as refractory native witnesses, when a murderer has to be discovered, and has also visited many of the stations round on loan to squatters who are anxious to instil the beauties of civilization into the bosoms (and backs) of those of their native slaves who are desirous of escaping from their bondage. A number of handcuffs and leg-irons, and a few racing pictures, spotted to indistinctness by the last summer’s plague of flies, decorate the walls; and behind Inspector Bigger’s chair is a rack of Snider carbines, whilst a pair of loaded, long-barrelled “Colts” lie on the pigeon-holed letter rack before him on the table, which occupies the centre of the room.

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

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

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

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

The "boy" who arrived with the Inspector, and who, in company with several other natives, is now leading the two horses to the stockyard down by the heavily-timbered water-hole, is in the well-known uniform of the Black Police. This consists of a linen-covered shako, blue-jacket garnished with red braid, and white duck trousers; brown leather gaiters reach to the "boy's" knees, and he wears an old pair of his master's enormously long spurs on his "Blucher"
boots. As he is "in marching order," a brass cartridge belt, containing Snider cartridges, is slung, after the fashion of a sergeant's scarf, around his body. To complete this somewhat lengthy description of a uniform to be seen only in "up-country" Australia, we may add that a Snider carbine hangs in its "busket" and strap from the "off" side of the "boy's" saddle.

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

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

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

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

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

"Humph," observes Inspector Puttis.

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

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

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

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

"Ah! a nigger?"

"Yes; perhaps you can help me."

"With pleasure, if I can," replied the elder Inspector, adding, "Especially, my dear fellow, as I sha'n't feel so diffident about asking your assistance, in that case, in a little affair of my own."
The host has by this time had six "nips" to his guest's abstemious one, so turning his head towards Puttis he rattles on: "But won't you alter your mind and have another? Or, if you prefer it, I've some real, genuine 'potheen.' Queensland make, of course, but just like the real stuff. One of my old constituents on the Barron river, ha! ha! sent it to me." The two men smile and wink knowingly at each other. "Chinamen never forget a generous action, ha! ha!"

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

"In consequence of information received from one of my 'boys,' I rode up to the chinky's little scrub farm one day, two years ago. 'John,' said I, 'how many bushels of corn you get off this piece of ground?'

'Welly bad crop, Missie Bigger,' answered the yellow devil, with a sly look at me to see how I took the lie he'd just uttered. 'No goody Chinaman makey garden here. Twenty bushels me sell to Missie Brown. That all,' and the cursed spawn of Confucius kicked some of the rich soil contemptuously over with his sandal. Any one could see there'd been a big crop, perhaps three hundred bushels off the land, by the heaps of husks off the heads of maize lying about the clearing. 'Well, John,' said I, leaning over in my saddle so that some friends who were with me shouldn't hear, 'well, John, you can send me a little of the 'real stuff' you sold MacDuff on Saturday, and then, whether you get twenty or five hundred bushels here, I sha'n't trouble to ask you what you use
it for next time.' Ha! ha! how Li Ching (that was his name) stared! He grew green, but he never opened his lips. But what's more to the purpose, he's sent me a box of potatoes, regularly, every few months since, which I have carried carefully into my bedroom. I'm sure you'd like it. Take a bottle or two with you for Giles. He's a good judge. What?'"


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

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

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

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

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

"Oh! same old style: 'Having received repeated complaints from the Mulberry Scrub settlers of the wholesale destruction caused by a ferocious tribe of
dangerous Myall blacks,'—and that kind of thing, you know."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Sure, sorr, it's yourself has guessed the right words they spake, sorr. They was sulky as bandicootes, an' never said a word till I amused 'em with me arthful stories,—the 'bhoys' having started after the fire
on the hill. ‘We’re not afraid of the niggers,’ said one,—who I’ll kape me eyes on when he’s in town for a bit of a spree,—‘we hain’t afraid of niggers; let ’em bide.’”

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

“It’s Thompson, sorr, the only settler, yer honours, on that side of the Cliffs; he kills fur ‘em.”

“Is that Thompson who trained the bloodhounds for Inspector Versley?”

“The same, sorr.”

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

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

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

“Ah! that’s a pity. Fact is, I want a ‘boy’ who knows the western lingo. Also knows scrub. Got one?”

“Yes; Teapot’s a good ‘boy.’”

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

“Oh, you mean that fellow Billy. Why, I thought
he brought a letter or something to Murdaro from Dyesart. Should not be surprised if the nigger wrote it himself though. Those civilized blacks are up to anything."

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

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

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

"Ha! ha!" laughs Puttis grimly, looking straight in front of him, his left hand unconsciously fingerling the revolver pouch on his hip. "These mission stations. Good preserves for us sometimes. Besides missionaries prevent squatters doing our work themselves. No missionaries, no Black Police very soon.
A Black War, like they had in Tasmania, would soon result. No more niggers for us to disperse."

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

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

DEPREDATIONS BY BLACKS.

SWEEPING CHARGES AGAINST THE MISSIONS.

(ADLAIDE, Wednesday.

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

"Yes," murmurs the inspector, when he has got the gist of the article fairly into his slightly muddled brain. "That's comforting. Right man in right place. Education's the thing. He knows what he's
talking about. As long as we've squatters in the ministry and on the bench we're all right, eh?"

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

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

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

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

Puttis, although a perfectly fearless man, is one of those persons who never throws a chance away, and, knowing what good cause the aborigines of the district have to wish for his destruction, always carries a revolver in his hand when out late in the
Almost before the spear has touched the ground, certainly before it is motionless, the active little man has swung round in his saddle, and fired a snap-shot at his cowardly assailant, whose dusky form can just be seen, as he stands, paralyzed for an instant at the escape of his victim, upon a fallen tree trunk by the wayside. A sparkling burst of flame, a crashing echo, half drowned with a yell of agony, and the inspector's horse becomes unmanageable, and bolts with him down the track into the open land beyond.

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

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

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

"Any more black fellows about?"

"No more black beggar, Marmie. This one sit down long his self," replies the trained black, in
whose wonderful powers of hearing, seeing, and deduc­tion his officer has perfect confidence.

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

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

"Monta karaan!" (curse you!) hisses the feeble voice, "you white devil. You kill um lubra (wife); you kill um pickaninnie; you."—he pauses to gasp for breath,—"you kill um all about black fellow. No more brudder long a me. Ah! no more brudder long a me. Monta karaan! !"

The sufferer's head drops down towards the ground, and he literally bites the dust, or rather mud, in a frenzy of passion and agony. Then he becomes unconscious apparently, and murmurs a few unintelligible words, followed by a groaning request for—

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

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

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