THE ADVENTURES
of
George Washington Pratt,
by
VINCENT PYKE,
AUTHOR OF "WILD WILL Enderby."

PRICE TWO SHILLINGS & SIXPENCE.

Published by
GEORGE ROBERTSON, MELBOURNE; R. T. WHEELER,
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THE ADVENTURES
OF
GEORGE WASHINGTON PRATT.

BOOK I.—WHOM HE BEFRIENDED.

PREFATORY.

So numerous and so tender have been the inquiries made about the Senior Partner, that I have been induced to prepare this history of his further Adventures, subsequent to his enforced parting with Mr. William Embery; wherein the Reader will learn what befel him and what became of him; who befriended him, and whom he befriended; whither he wandered, and where and how he rested; with other and divers matters, which this Chronicler would fain hope may prove both entertaining and instructive. V. P.

CHAPTER I

BY THE SIDE OF "BOARING MEG."

It was only a feeble cry—a faint wail as of a creature newly ushered into the world.

Yet it sounded strangely there.—There, in that wild gorge, closely hemmed in by steep mountains, all bleak and bare and brown, where the wind howled fiercely amongst the rugged crags above, and the turbid river surged boarishly in its rock-bound channel below, and a boisterous torrent came rushing down a deep glen—foaming, roaring, resistless—leaping over and around the mighty boulders which thickly bestrewed its bed. There—in that cheerless solitude, where desolation reigned with undisputed sover-
The traveller threw down his swag, and considered the matter; and the better to aid the mental digestion of the problem thus presented for his solution, he refreshed himself with a plug of fragrant “honeydew” tobacco.

The position was a difficult one. Here was a child—a tender suckling—an Ishmael—cast out, apparently to perish in the wilderness, by a cruel Hagar; and here also was a stranger—a stalwart bearded man, rough as to exterior, but tender at the core—whose big heart would not suffer him to go on his way and leave the unconscious human waif to its fate. Decidedly the position was difficult.

“Some unnatural hell-cat has left it here, I reckon”—thus did he ruminate—“not long ago either. The folks as own to it must be ahead, for nobody hasn’t passed down the other way. What on earth am I to do with the darned little thing? There might be a shanty at the creek below; mostly is at such places. Guess I’ll travel that way, and explore.”

With a scientific Nicotian shot he projected a blinking lizard off a contiguous block of stone, which fact seemed to afford him a considerable degree of satisfaction. Then he strode down to the creek.

There was something in the very pace that told of the character of the man. There was no unseemly hurry, neither was there any hesitation in it. It was the firm, confident, steadfast tread of a man who goes straight to his object, and may not easily be turned aside therefrom.

The mountain torrent whereunto allusion has been made, was the stream named by surveyors the “Kittle-burn,” but which is best known by the fantastic appellation conferred on it by the miners—“Roaring Meg.” There are three creeks in succession on this line of road—tributaries of the Kawarau river. The first is very small, and in a dry season merely drips from the rocks, and is called “Crying Jenny.” The second, which tumbles down from the mountains impetuously and with great noise, is “Roaring Meg.” The third, being a sluggish stream, has received, by popular assent, the designation of “Gentle Annie.”

In the early days of gold-mining—before the present bridge was erected—Roaring Meg was a very dangerous creek for foot passengers to cross. Nay, it was by no means safe even for travellers on horseback. The boulder-strewn channel was exceedingly steep; the fording place was near to the river, and the water rushed down with incredible violence and swiftness, so that a single false step of man or beast would have been positive destruction. Added to which, the foam and spray of the boiling waters were eminently calculated to intimidate the nervous and faint-hearted.

When the traveller arrived at this creek, his anticipations as to the possible existence of a shanty thereon were not realised, and he was about to retrace his steps in vexation, when, looking up the ravine wherein lay the bed of the stream, he saw a human figure, standing on a boulder in mid-channel, and apparently making signals to him.

Up the creek he went, and presently he stood on the bank opposite the figure.

It was a young woman, apparently about eighteen years old, fresh-colored and passably good-looking. By the motion of her lips he could see that she was speaking, but her words were lost in the din of the rushing water.

It was evident, however, that she was in a position of difficulty and danger. By some means she had got on to the boulder, and now she was unable either to retreat or advance. In fact, she was in what the traveller denominated “a pretty bad fix.”

That which to the woman was an impassable gulf, was but an easy stride to the man. In a moment he was by her side.

“I will carry you over,” he said. “Only take a firm grip.”

She looked into his face, and her womanly instinct told her at once that he was to be entirely trusted. So he took her up in his strong arms, and she
clapped him round the neck, then with a vigorous bound he landed safely on the bank with his burden.

"Thank you! oh, thank you!" she exclaimed, somewhat hysterically. "I was trying to find a way over the creek, and the water made such a noise that it frightened me. I feel quite giddy yet."

And, indeed, she was in a visible tremor.

"Take your time, ma'am," said the traveller, looking down pityingly at the girlish face. "There ain't no special hurry that I know of. Reckon that's your babe under the rock yonder."

"My child! Yes. Oh, let me go to my child!" Gently he conducted her to the stony cradle where lay the infant. The woman seized it eagerly and stilled its cries as only mothers can; the traveller meanwhile standing aloof patiently awaiting the subsidence of maternal emotion. To go away and leave her there never occurred to him. In the true spirit of chivalry, he remained further to succour the distressed, if need there should be.

Presently the woman arose, and taking the child in her arms, prepared to resume her journey.

"Would you kindly help me over the creek?" she asked.

"Certainly, ma'am!" he answered. "That's just the move I was waiting for. Guess you had best hand over that mite to me."

And saying so he took the baby into his arms.

It was a pleasant picture to see the bearded man bearing that living bundle, and the young mother following as they went on down to the noisy creek. Safely, though not without some difficulty, he fended the current and deposited his charge on the farther bank. Then he returned for the woman.

She was but a feather's weight in his powerful grasp, and he could not forbear cogitating on the strange chance that had brought her and her child thus far into the wilderness. So he said to her—

"You'll excuse me, ma'am; but it strikes me that this ain't quite the correct sort of place for such as you. I don't want to know anything you don't elect to communicate; but I'm mighty curious to know what brought you here and where you're bound to. I am George Washington Pratt, I am; of Iowa, U.S. That is always the brand on my calico, ma'am."

She gave a sudden start, and her eyes dilated with terror and her face became very pale as she cried—

"Pratt! That's the name of the Yankee who was tried for murder at the Dunstan."

"And acquitted, ma'am. Couldn't be nohow else, seeing as how the dead man walked into court and gave evidence in my behalf. Fact, ma'am, I assure you."

"Then you are 'Yankee Joe.' Oh! give me the baby."

And she took it from his arms, wherein it had been again enfolded, as they walked along the track.

A dark shadow—a shadow of annoyance, not of anger—passed over the American's face.

"Why you don't suppose that I'd hurt the little thing?" he said.

But her maternal alarm was not easily set at rest. For herself she feared nought. But all the mother was aroused in her, and she stood there pressing the child to her panting breast, her cheek glowing and blanching by turns, ready to do battle to the death for that dearer life to which she desperately clung.

"No! no! no!" she cried, "go on, sir, or let me go on; I thank you, I do indeed for your kindness, I thank you very much. But do pray go on, and leave us."

Her dress was that of a laborer's wife, her speech was that of a lady; her face and hands were emblazoned by exposure to the sun and the wind; but her fingers were long and taper, and her coarse leather boots could not conceal the beauty of her feet.

Said George W. Pratt, "I feel a little hurt, ma'am, that you should have such
Mr George W. Pratt said he thought so too. “But you don’t mean to tell me, ma’am, that your husband expected you to make your way all alone from Dunstan to Fox’s, with this little midge to carry around too?”

“Oh, no!” she said; “Tom—that’s my husband—sent one of his mates down to accompany me, but the silly fellow got drinking at the Junction shanty, so I came away and left him, expecting he would soon overtake me.”

“Yes! Might I ask what kind of picture your husband’s mate would represent?”

“He is a young man with sandy hair and very light beard and eyebrows.”

“Was his manly form arrayed in a plaid jumper?”

“He wore a plaid jumper. Have you seen him?”

“Had he a Scotch bonnet on his noble brow?”

“Yes.”

“And a red sash round his elegant waist, and splendid silver enamelled boots on his silly understandings. Yes, ma’am, I reckon I just have seen the gent.”

The woman looked up wonderingly. “Sir—Mr Pratt,” she said, “you are laughing at me. What is the meaning of all this?”

“No, ma’am, I ain’t laughing much at you. I was only just thinking how careless some folks seem to be of their personal property.”

In truth, he was thinking how little he would like his Ruth to be wandering about as this poor child was doing; although—as with Spencer’s Una—her weakness was her strength, and unconsciousness of danger her surest protection.

“Yes, Mrs Kenway,” he resumed, “I did see that young gent as I went along, and when I spotted him he was in about as bad company as any泼-headed youngster could select. Judged he was a fool when I saw the way he was tricked out, I guess you ain’t likely to see him any more tonight. So with your leave, ma’am, I’ll take his place till you get to Fox’s.”
Then all at once a sense of her position burst upon the woman. Till then she had been sustained by the expectation of being overtaken by the man appointed by her husband to guide her to him. And it seemed that by her own action she had deprived herself of his companionship. She had left him, he had not deserted her. And she was now in the company of an utter stranger—may! a worse than stranger—for had he not admitted himself to be the "Yankee Joe," regarding whom such terrible stories had lately been in circulation? What would Tom think of it all? She blushed violently as she mentally asked herself the question. Then, "pale as any lily," she both thought of her own possible danger, of the long way before her, and of the coming night. And Fancy conjured up a thousand horrors, and her poor little soul flattered as if it would gain escape from its frail tenement.

"Oh, sir!" she panted forth. "I have done wrong. I should not have come on without him. Tom will be so angry with me."

And her tears began to flow.

"Don't like to see that," thought George Washington Pratt. "It ain't a good sign, that's a fact. Guess Mister Tom is a sovereign people in his own territory, and not over nice in his ways neither."

Then aloud. "What do you conclude to do, ma'am?"

"I must return to the Junction. Let me have the baby, sir." And again, as he withheld it from her—"Oh, please let me have baby!"

"No, ma'am—Mrs Kenway—not if I am aware of it. Not just now any way. Guess you had better progress. Likely there'll be a hut or a shanty at the next creek where you can locate yourself for a spell and wait for the jay-bird that your husband thinks fit to protect his dove, though the goney ain't able to keep his own feathers from the damned hawks."

The resolute will conquered. But the terror of possible consequences remained, and so with tearful eye, and clouded countenance, the young mother went patiently on her way with her self-constituted guide and protector.

"What would Tom say? Oh, dear! oh, dear! what would he say?"

Such was the ever-recurring burden of her thoughts.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT GEORGE W. PRATT SAW AT THE JUNCTION.

In the Colonies, and more especially on the Goldfields, any place where two streams unite, is called indifferently "the Junction." So, where the dirty green flood of the Kawaru river joins company with and discolors the pelucid waters of the Clutha, the point of land abutting on both rivers was known as the Junction. In those days there was but a single store or shanty, but the favorable position of the locality early attracted attention, and the township of Kawaru sprang into existence. Then the Government took it under its patronage, and regulated the width and prescribed the number of its streets. An official of puritanical proclivities bestowed upon the town the name of Cromwell, and by way of antithesis some waggish surveyor conferred most inappropriate Milesean appellations on the streets.

The only means of transit from the right to the left bank of the Kawaru, whereon the shanty stood and the township now stands, was by means of a packing-case,—literally and positively a common deal packing case, which did duty as a ferry-boat. By the aid of this frail conveyance passengers crossed the river in great numbers. In their haste to be rich they crowded into it, heedless of danger—even clung to its sides to get across. And the river, of great velocity and full of whirlpools, had its occasional victim—the only wonder was that they were so few. Sometimes, rash men—full of life and vigorous—essay to swim across the treacherous current, and paid the
penalty of their lives for the attempt. For none ever ventured with impunity into the circle of those cold bubbling caddies.

Now as George W. Pratt was crossing the river in this fragile vessel, he espied amongst the spectators who stood looking on from the further bank, a face not altogether unfamiliar—an evil face, whereon was legibly imprinted the brand of Cain. This face, shining with diabolical gleam, suddenly underwent a change; for as the eyes met those of the American, the light faded out of them, giving place to a vacant side-glance, which again quickly changed to a steady, watchful glance, such as a wounded tiger might cast on the hunter; and (rendering the comparison more complete), the thin, souring lips were drawn back, exposing to view a row of very fang-like molars gleaming between the ragged tufts of red hair which grew over the chin and upper lip.

When Pratt had achieved the ascent of the river-bank leading up to the plateau whereon stood the shanty, he looked around for the owner of this unpleasant countenance. But he was not anywhere visible.

"Guess the shanty has retired from public inspection," quoth Mr Pratt.

With the word he walked across to the shanty, and at the door, as he had anticipated, he was confronted by the man of the evil countenance, who was no other, indeed, than the redoubtable "Ginger."

The American smiled, the ruffian scowled. After this interchange of facial compliments they spoke.

"Fine day, Mister," said the American. "Bound for Fox's?"

"No, it ain't;" growled Ginger. "It's a beastly dirty day. So you can stow that gammon. And as to where we're bound, what the odds is that to you?"

("Oho!" thought Mr George W. Pratt, "we're bound, are we? Then the whole mob is here. Wonder what devil's work they're after now?")

"Well, Sir," he said, "I don't see with your eyes, I give thanks; and of course you can't see with nine. No, Sirree! Guess there ain't over-much reciprocity betwixt you and me any-way."

In the shanty there was an inner room or space, curtained off from the "store," as the main apartment was termed. From this direction there suddenly came a great sound of angry voices, a very tempest of oaths and grim ejaculations. Ginger looked towards the partition uneasily, and Mr George W. Pratt, noticing the gesture, made a step in that direction. Ginger threw himself in the road.

"Keep out," he roared, and the vicious glare in his eyes became intensified. — "Keep out of this, curse you! You shan't come in here, you blasted Yankee hound!"

Ginger surveyed the fellow curiously, with a half smile on his sedate countenance: "Yes," he said, "I'm a 'Yankee hound,' no doubt. Jest the sort of animal to learn such miserable varmintas as you good manners. Git out!"

And he seized the carraity ruffian in such fashion as to render his arms powerless, and so carried him in most deliberate manner to the outer door. Then he cast him forth as you might throw out a bag of rubbish.

"Ginger" rolled over in the dust, and picked himself up, and belched forth loud-resounding oaths and threatenings of dire import. The crowd, sympathetically exultant at the strong man's victory, laughed and jeered at the victim. The victor made a long shot at a tent-pins, missed the mark, tried again, and hit it. Then he returned to the shanty.

This time he went straight to the inner apartment. The shanty-keeper interposed: "You can't go in there, mate," he said. "That room is private."

Never a word answered George W. Pratt. But with his right arm he kept the shanty-keeper at bay, and with his left he parted the curtains sufficiently to enable him to command a view of the interior.
Around a rudely-constructed table three men were seated—two on empty brandy cases, and the third on a small keg. In their hands were some greasy cards, wherewith they were playing the exhilarating and lucrative game of “poker.” Before them stood a half-emptied bottle of brandy, and some glasses; and a heap of coins and bank-notes attested the severity of the game.

Pratt saw at a glance how matters stood. It was the old, ever-new story of the hawks and the pigeon. In the squinting, bullet-headed, beardless man with greasy locks who faced the doorway, he recognised “Flash Jimmy.” The back of the fellow who sat opposite to him was the back of the quandam artist in trape. The “pigeon” was a gaily attired young man of the lucky-digger species, with a flabby moustache and weak sandy hair, and weak eyes, and weak aspect generally. The Highland bound on his head was cocked jauntily on one side, and an ugly misshapen nugget ring glistened on his finger. A cigar of ill flavor was stuck in his mouth, and a glass of poisonous spirits, miscalled “brandy,” stood by his side. Evidently he was being plucked to some purpose, and knew it not.

“It’s all my infernal bad luck,” he cried, as he threw down the cards, after having again been successfully swindled by the confederates, one of whom, with greedy hand raked in the stakes.

George W. Pratt dropped the curtain and walked away.

“It ain’t no business of mine,” he said to the shanty keeper. “But it’s a damned wrong thing to allow in your caboose, Mister. Where did that young fellow come from?”

“Oh! he’s all right. He’s been to Fox’s, and got a sight of gold. A fifty or two ain’t nothing to that chap, I can tell you.”

And this was the guide injudiciously selected by Mr Tom Kenway as a convey for his young wife! Truly, as Mr George W. Pratt put it, “Some folk are mighty careless of valuable personal property.”

CHAPTER IV.

FROM GENTLE ANNIE.

The Traveller who visits Watakapi now finds the road sufficiently weary and savagely monotonous. For it traverses a low-lying country bordering the Kawaran river, which is twice crossed on punts, so that one is some times on the east, sometimes on the west bank, but ever in a narrow gorge, once the bed of the stream which now rushes through an iron-bound channel eighty—a hundred—two hundred feet below.

So much has been conceded to the exigent demands of commerce, that drays and wagons and coaches may pass along the way. But in the early day of “Fox’s rush” there were no roads. People of much wisdom, learned in engineering, and skilful, declared with many words of weight and technical phrases of import, that it was not possible to make a road in such a terrible country, and whose dared to dispute their dictum was regarded as irreverent and presumptuous. Patiently the miners chambered over the hills—they would be regarded as mountains in any other part of the world—carrying provisions on their backs, or at best pressing the patient mule or the much-enduring pack-horse into their service. The first track led up the valley of the Cartoula and over the Crown Range; but as this involved an ascent of more than four thousand feet, there was naturally a desire to find a somewhat easier path, and so what was known as the “Gentle Annie” track came into use and fashion.

By this latter route, then, on a fine breezy morning in the month of November, went our travelling friends George W. Pratt and Mary Kenway. For Tom’s mate had not appeared upon the scene; and in her dilemma, Mary chose, wisely enough, to go on to her husband. Only she did not know where to find him that was the difficulty. He was at the Arrow, somewhere. But she was a brave, trusting little woman. She had not lived long
enough to be otherwise; the bitter experience that comes of long conflict with the world—its hollowness and frivolities—had not yet defiled her spirit nor sullied her heart.

There was a woman at the shanty where our travellers stopped for the night. Not a handsome woman assuredly—not even a prepossessing woman, for the matter of that; but, nevertheless—a woman. Her grizzled and unkempt locks were confined in a pudding-bag sort of network in ludicrous parody of the then prevailing fashion. Her attire was tawdry. Her unmanageable skirts, of brodignadian proportions, swayed stiffly and ungracefully to and fro as she bustled about the little tent. Her face, sewed with a hundred wrinkles, and scarred with one notable cicatrice—memento of a long past combat—was further disfigured by the total absence of one eye, lost in God knows what hour of man's brutality. Judging from the appearance of its lovely partner, the loss had not been greatly detrimental to her personal appearance. Her face was wrinkled and grumpy. Her hands were large and red and dirty; her speech was coarse and stent; her manners were decidedly unpleasant. But, notwithstanding all,—she was a woman, of the same sex as our mothers.

And, so being a woman, George W. Pratt treated her with respect, and Mary Kenway found comfort in her, where otherwise none would have been. For this poor, good, unembellished soul tended her and her babe with all motherliness—the more so perchance for that she had no babies of her own. And when morning came, and Mary prepared to resume her weary march—acting on Pratt's advice to start in the cool of the morning—she found a comfortable breakfast awaiting her, set forth by her ungraceful, tender-hearted, disfigured sister-woman.

When the tiresome ascent of the Gentle Annie hill had been accomplished, and the travellers stood upon the brow, the whole expanse of the Wakatipu country lay before them like a vast panoramic picture. No effort of pen or pencil could do justice to that scene. Pardon me, therefore, oh reader! if I fail to present to your mind's eye an adequate representation thereof.

Immediately below, a broad basin-like plain hemmed in by mountains of lofty altitude, and diversified by isolated stone-enrosted hills, dispersed in pleasing irregularity. Rivers glistening in the sunshine showed here and there like ribbons of silver, winding between dark grey bands of primitive rock. Underneath the lordly Double Cone—rising eight thousand feet aloft—the Kawarau pursued its snake-like course. At right angles to it, the Arrow and the Shotover partially presented their glistening floods to the dappled gaze. And over a cluster of rugged mound-like elevations shone forth the blue surface of Lake Hayes—a miniature aquarian beauty, nestling cosily and unruffled in the bosom of a sheltered nook, which claps the gleaming waters in a soft embrace as if reluctant to part with the gentle flood; and the flood dreamily baskin in the warm sunlight—evidces no haste to quit its pleasant resting-place. Beyond, an arm of the great lake—of Wakatipu—calm, solemn, grand, appeared above the terraced bank of the Shotover, garnished by Alpine heights, which rising tier above tier, penetrated the clouds which floated midway around them, bathing their lofty summits in the blue ether. Right ahead, in bold majestic outline towered the broad bosom and pyramidal peak of Mount Larrakus, clothed in its vesture of virgin snow. Beside it loomed a huge mountain, to which some surveyor, gifted with prophetic instinct, gave the name of Mount Aurora—an aggregation of metallic lodes—numerous quartz predominating, which will some day be heard of on the Otago gold-field, and in marts "where merchants most do congregate." Below these the sombre crests of Ben More and Ben Lomond, and a countless legion of mountains, any one of which would be accounted a giant in
Europe, but the magnitude of which is not apparent to the eye amidst their loftier surroundings. On the southern margin of the Lake appeared the fantastic pinnacles of Mount Cecil and Walter Peak, resplendent in the early sunshine, and glowing with a soft rosegate hue, whilst fleecy white clouds, slow rising from the plain, hovered around the dusky crags, throwing their summits into bold bright relief, enchanted by the shadows which rippled and surged over their cold grey bases. Beyond, Mount Nicholas reared its stately head aloft, bounding the horizon Everywhere glittering snow—patches of snow, broad fields of snow—relieved the dull brown outlines of the mountains, so that this sublime prospect showed like the huge waves of a vast ocean foaming, suddenly arrested by the Creator’s hat, and transformed into billows of eternal stone.

Such was the scene whereupon our travellers gazed. Nowhere did there appear any trace of life—of human or animal existence. A silence as of very death prevailed. Neither upon the hill sides nor on the plains were sheep or cattle seen to browse, though thousands roamed around. Man’s insignificant presence was utterly unfelt in that tremendous immensity. All was as Nature had left it a cycle of ages since, long ere the foot of the adventurous Maori even had invaded the primeval solitude. Yet within brief distance a host of men were wrestling with the rocks and rivers for the golden stores, garnered in their secret repositories—wrestling for the old, old gold—the much coveted gold, that had so long lain buried at the far end of the earth, till, in the fulness of Time, the children of the Present had traversed the ocean, coming even from the uttermost parts of the world to reap the rich harvest of the Past, and thereby, all unwitting of their destiny, assisting to lay the foundation of Future Empire.

All is changed now. On the fertile plains where once dingy tussock-grass struggled for supremacy with rank tufts of spear-grass and dense clumps of Tumataku bushes, the plough has done its work, and done it well, and man has made the desert to blossom as the rose. Corn fields and meadows, hedge-rows and forest trees, smiling homesteads and trim gardens abounding with fruit and flowers, have replaced the dreariness that was of old. And the hills are stocked with countless flocks of sheep and herds of cattle—

the acquired wealth of the industrious settlers who have there set up their tents in peace and plenty, such as no amount of toil could ever have secured for them in the far away land of their birth.

CHAPTER V.

MR. THOMAS KENWAY.

A deep dark gorge lying in the cold shadow of tilted rocks—the bed of the swift but shallow Arrow stream—numberless cedars rocking with deafening din to a golden lullaby—men thick as bees in a hive, passing to and fro, toiling with pick and shovel, winding up windlasses freighted with golden earth—a few canvas tents and huts of a hybrid description compounded of calico, old sacks, gin cases, and any odds and ends capable of being pressed into service for the purposes of shelter; stores of unambitious design and mixed character, wherein gin and pickles, sardines and calicoes, picks and potted blotters, blankets and tea, tobacco and treacle, shovels and sugar, were jumbled together in admiral confusion; this was Fox’s rush and the inevitable township which had already sprung up on its borders.

By luck or accident it chanced that Mary found her husband without much difficulty. For us, still accompanied by the American, she pressed up the one “street,” as a narrow avenue between the stores was commonly called, she spied him far away amongst the crowd of delvers and diggers.

She would have flown to him, by love’s own wings impelled, but the river stayed her advance.
"There he is!" she cried. "Look, Mr Pratt, he is there by the side of that shaft, with a brown felt hat and scarlet jumper on. Do you think you could bring him to me?"

"Guess I could, ma'am; and what is more, I guess I will. Stop here and hold this slippery little nit, and I'll travel around till I collide with your owner."

So the little woman sat down on the bank, but making signals with her handkerchief to the man. The man evidently saw her, and knew her, but never a step moved he. Her heart sank within her. "Tom is angry with me," she murmured; "Tom is angry—I know he is."

Soon George W. Pratt approached him.

"Do you own to the name of Thomas Kenway?" he asked.

"Yes!"—The answer was surly given, and the look which accompanied it was a full commentary thereon.

"I've brought your wife to you, sir," said Pratt. "There she is. sir—that lady sitting on the bank with a premature angel in her lap."

"So I see." He added nothing to that curt reply, nor did he make any manifestation indicative of proceeding withstands.

He was a short, well-built young fellow—lithe, agile, and tolerably good-looking, as the phrase is ordinarily applied; indeed there was a certain style of beauty about him, and his forehead and eyes and the upper portion of his face were of the order most admired by women generally. Yet in his young handsome face there was an indefinable expression which more than counteracted the effect of these physical qualities, and evoked an uneasy feeling in the beholder's mind. The lines of the mouth were harsh, and the cruel thin lips told of hardness and coldness of heart, and so gave the lie to the laughing eyes.

George W. Pratt noted all these things, and came to a conclusion accordingly.

"Won't you go forth to the lady?" he inquired.

"No, I shall not go forth, as you call. Why is she here with you? Where is Dick Simmons, who went down for her? Who are you, and what right have you to interfere between us?"

"Well, now, that's a mighty big heap of questions all to once. I ain't a printed book. No, sirree! and I didn't take over kindly to catechisms in the days of my infant joyousness. Rather calculate I hived a considerable swarm of prejudice against them sort of things then. And now I'm a full-blown man I haven't got over it yet. I don't know no Dick Simmons, and if he's the boy I take him to be, I don't require to. As to the rest, I found your babe a-crying in the wilderness, and your wife stranded in the Roaring Meg, and I just helped them along the road. That's all, sir."

Tom Kenway threw down his shovel with a suppressed growl, and then, somewhat sulkyly and very sheepishly, went over to the bank, where Mary was awaiting his coming.

"Don't be angry with me, dear Tom!" she cried; and she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him—visibly and audibly—in the presence of all the assembled miners. "Don't be angry with me. Dick stopped at the Junction shanty, and this gentleman was good enough to assist me at that dreadful creek."

He did not return her caresses. He disengaged himself from her loving embrace, and thrust her not over-tenderly away from him.

"There, there; that will do. All the fellows are looking at us, Mary. Come away till I show you the hut I am getting ready for you. You can tell me all about it presently."

And with brief adieu, intermingled with many thanks from Mary Kenway, they walked away up the Bush Creek, leaving George Washington Pratt alone and lonely in the road. As he gazed after them, he noticed that as they went the woman seemed to cling to the man, and that there was no responsive action on the other side. Nor did he offer to relieve her of the
toil of carrying the baby, but, strong
and stalwart, strode at her side with
his hands in his pockets, and suffered
his child-wife to bear the burden un-
aided.

"Guess she's a fond little fool, and
he's a damned mean cuss. That's so, I
bet."

And scattering a nicotine shower all
around, he proceeded to select a loca-
tion.

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CHAPTER VI.

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THE THIRD MATE.

Very little difficulty had Mr George
W. Pratt in obtaining fresh partners.
His physique and general appearance
were powerful letters of recommenda-
tion; and more than one party would
have been glad to have added him to
their number. But George had pecu-
lar views of his own in the matter,
and after refusing some very good offers
he at last came to terms with two
miners, whom he fell in with as they
came up the river on their way to the
diggings.

The younger of these was a likely
young fellow, with an earnest expres-
sion of countenance and a look of fixed
purposes, which first attracted
George's attention. So after his cus-
tomary fashion he got into conversation
with him.

The encounter happened thus. On
the shore of Lake Hayes, standing
amidst a thick bed of manuka scrub,
there was a shepherd's hut, where the
miners were supplied with mutton.
Thitherward bound, on prudential
thoughts intent, was George, when he
met the young fellow all alone coming
over a terrace.

"Good morning, stranger!" said
Pratt. "Where might you be bound
for, sir?"

"Well, mate," said the other, "I
am trying to find Fox's rush; it don't
seem easy to do it. I have been round
by the Lake there and across among
the rocks, and I am precious tired, I
can tell you. Maybe you can put me
on the right track.
When we were able to get to it again we baled it out, and then there was a doubt about going down, as the ground was very rotten, and we could hear stuff falling from the roof of the drives, so that we knew it wasn’t oversafe to venture down. First one didn’t like to go, and then another, till we came to a standstill. There were four of us in all, and we weren’t too well off at that time, any of us. We had been sinking duffer after duffer, and our credit at the store was getting shaky. And we knew there was some good stuff in the drive if we could manage to get at it. So poor Dick—that’s Pegleg—he says, says he, ‘I’ll chance it; stand by to lower the bucket, and be about so as to haul up smart if anything goes wrong below.’

“Well, he went down and cleared out the drive, and the first bucket of stuff he sent up there were five ounces of gold in it—more than we had got for months. The dirt and gravel were falling about his ears, and he called to me to look sharp and send down the bucket quick, for he was afraid it would cave in. I begged him to come up, but he said, ‘No, somebody must do it.’ So he went to work at it, and he was just hitching on the bucket, when one side of the shaft gave way and covered him up to the middle. The boys around came up then, and gave us a hand to remove the earth, and we had just got him pretty well clear when the drive came in with a crash, and some of the stuff caught him by the legs and he was in a worse fix than ever. I thought it was all up with him; but we wouldn’t give it up, and after about an hour’s hard work, we got Dick out at last. He was in a dead faint when he was brought up, and his leg was broke right short off like a carrot. The other two only said he was a fool to risk his life—that was all the thanks he got from them. They took their share of the gold, and hooked it off. But I couldn’t leave poor Dick like that. I tended him as well as I could till he could get about a bit. Then he got his peg-leg on; and one day he says to me, ‘Jim,’ says he, ‘it’s no use thy sticking to a poor cripple like I be now. I shall never be much good again,’ said he, ‘so do thou take what gold there is, and get another mate. There’s plenty of folk will be glad to have thou for a mate,’ he says. But I couldn’t do that. ‘Dick, old fellow,’ I said, ‘we’ll never part any more. Mates we’ve been in fair weather and foul alike, and mates I mean us to be, come good luck or bad, so long as I can knock out tucker enough for the pair of us. And that’s how it’s been ever since.’

Mr George W. Pratt said nothing while Jim was narrating his little story; but when he had finished George spoke. And this is what he said—

‘Give me your hand, Mister. When I see a right-down, first-class, A1 sort of man, I like to shake hands with that man. It makes me feel good. It does so.’

‘Come now,’ cried Jim, ‘don’t be pouring grease down my back. I don’t like it any more than yourself.’

‘Guess you had me there, stranger. I ain’t the only one that finds preaching easier than practice. Well, sir, I should like to see your partner, Mr Pegleg, very much. Think you said you had only one?’

“Well,” said Jim, hesitatingly, “I have and I haven’t. We’ve got a kind of mate, Old Jack we call him, but he ain’t a bit of trouble to us,—not he.”

“Is this ancient gent—Old Jack—with you now?”

“Oh, yes; he and Pegleg are down at the crossing. Anyway, that’s where I left them. You’ll see them presently. My word, ain’t they a pair?—That’s all.”

Something seemed to amuse Jim mightily, for he chuckled loud and long at his own conceit.

Presently they came to the Crossing—of the Arrow river that is. Cosily coiled up in the shade of a lichen-stained rock sat Mr Pegleg awaiting the return of his comrade, and pulling tiny wreaths of blue smoke from a
George Washington Pratt.

well-seasoned old cutty pipe, by way of diversion.

"Ha, Jim!" he cried in a hoarse bass voice—a sort of vocal growl—"Ha, Jim! thou young dog! Where hast thee been, lad? I thought thee was going to sheer off at last, and give old Pegleg the go-by."

Then he added, *sotto voce*, "What a thundering lie you're telling, you old sinner!"—This flattering remark was addressed to himself, and was not at all intended for the ears of the auditor. It was a habit which he had acquired, and one often productive of most ludicrous results.

Of course, from long association, Jim thoroughly understood his mate's humor. "And so I will some day," he answered. "I had a mind to to-day, but I thought I'd just give you another chance."

"Ho! ho! ho!" (and the laugh was as the barking of a mastiff with a cold in his head) "Hadst a mind—hadst lad! Ho! ho! That's news to Old Dick. But who hast thou got with thee, Jim? (Some blessed fool, I'll warrant, by the cut of his jib)."

George W. Pratt pricked up his ears at this polite reference to himself. "Say, old cock," he cried, "your conversation may be very improving, but I'm darned if it's infected. No, sir."

"Don't mind him," whispered Jim, "it's only a way he's got of talking to himself."

"Oh! its only a way the old party has got, is it? Well, it ain't a nice way, that's a fact. People that ain't so peaceable as this chold might feel their dander rise considerable at such ways. However, we won't discuss that point just now. I thought, perhaps, he was joking, and naturally felt wrathly at his foolishness. Seems the ancient gent was in earnest, which alters the case, and makes things pleasant and homely-like."

Then Jim explained to his mate how he had gone astray on the "terrace" and missed the track, and how George had been at the trouble to set him right and show him the road. Whereupon Pegleg stamped up to the American and proffered his great brown hairy hand for George's reception.

"Thank ye, mate, for looking after my little Jim. (Little Jim stood five feet ten in his boots.) He's a sad dog, always getting into scrapes, but I take care of him. Ho! ho! I take care of the lad. Pegleg couldn't do without his lad."

"Come, lad," he continued, addressing Jim, "its eight bells by the sun. Rouse out the tucker, lad, and let us eat before we jog on. Thou'lt stop and join us too (this to George). What has thou got in thy wallet, Jim?"

"Salmon and soft tack," shouted Jim.

"What?" cried Pegleg. "Why, thou extravagant young dog. Why, salmon—fresh salmon—five shillings a tin, I'll be bound. And soft tack! Ho! ho! ho! Thou'lt ruin us, lad. (Not while Pegleg can stir his stumps.) Well, out with it, and swing the billy for tea."

The simple repast was quickly prepared, and the three, squatting on the grass, did ample justice to the viands. George wondered somewhat that no reference was made to the third mate—Old Jack, as Jim had called him, but the meal was dispatched, and he had not put in an appearance, nor had the others once spoken of him.

At last curiosity outgrew his powers of reticence—

"Is your other mate anywhere about, sir?" he asked.

If he had made the most sublime joke—uttered the most excellent jest, it would not have caused more surprising effects than did this apparently simple question.

Jim nearly choked with the tea which he was drinking just then, and only recovered from a coughing fit to roll over on the grass and laugh vehemently and continuously.

"Ho! ho! ho!" roared old Pegleg. "This is some of thy mischief, Jim, I'll be bound. Thou rascal, thou hast been telling lies, hast thou? Mate, the lad hath killed thee! He calls Old Jack, our Third Mate—the dog! Ho! ho!
ho! Thon't be the death of me some day, lad. I know thou wilt. Ho! ho! ho! ho!"

"Well, sir," said George, "seems there's a joke knocking around somewhere. What's it all about? Can't you let me have a share in the laugh, or do you require it all for your own consumption?"

"Ho! ho! ho! Jim, you villain, stop laughing or I'll leave the billy at thy head. Wouldst like to see our Third Mate, friend? Ho! ho! Hold on, now, and I'll show him to thee."

He put his finger to his mouth, and gave a loud, prolonged whistle, shrill as the whistling of wind amongst a ship's rigging. And in a few minutes, from behind a projecting cliff, there came trotting along—a donkey!—a brown, hairy, long-eared donkey.

This was the Third Mate!

CHAPTER VII.

GEORGE IS PROMOTED.

A clever and intelligent beast was Old Jack. At the word of command he would kneel down and rise again, stand on his hind legs and beg, put out his hoof to be shaken—in short, perform a scene of tricks all more or less well and deftly.

"You see," Jim explained, "when Dick here has got to travel he finds his pegleg rather awkward, so we got him this animal to ride upon."

"Fibs, Jim; all fibs, thou knowest they be, rogue. Why, thou got'st Old Jack to save thy lazy bones, and carry the swag. (I hope this long-legged stranger don't believe me.) Come, lad, confess now. Was't not to save thy back thou spent'st the money in this ugly old brute. (Ah, Old Jack; there's two of us, Jack)"

"That's the way he always goes on, the hoary vagabond," said Jim. "But we understand one another, all of us—don't we, old Dot-and-carry-one?"

"I presume you include Mr Jack in the Co.," speculated George W. Pratt. "Guess he's a feature—a circumstance, I should say. Gentlemen of his persuasion are rather scarce in these parts."

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed Pegleg.

"Thon't a cure, surely. Hey, Jim, lad, be'nt he a cure? Wilt join in, mate, and make a fourth in the mess. What dost thou say, Jim? Shan't he pull along with us? Hey, my friend, is't a bargain?"

"Well, I don't mind if I do join you for a spell," said George. "I rather conceed your style, Mr Pegleg, and Jim here is a clipper all round—not forgetting your Third Mate, who is one of the most honest and respectable persons I have seen for some time."

Whereupon they all shook hands upon it, and the Third Mate, as if perfectly understanding the proceedings, expressed his concurrence and satisfaction by braving lustily. Which operation being ended, he walked up to George, and after some cautious sniffing, he rubbed his head against his new comrade's hand, inviting the fondling to which he had been accustomed from his older associates.

And thus was the compact sealed.

Then they held a council of war to plan the operations for the coming campaign, whereas the younger man suggested that George should be leader, and Pegleg ratified the proposition with a prodigious—"Ho! ho! ho! the very thing, by gum! Call him Cap'n Jim. Hey lad? Shan't we call him cap'en? There's a sight of mining cap'ns in Cornwall."

So it happened that after this fashion was George promoted to the rank of captain, with all the rights and privileges appertaining thereto.

CHAPTER VIII.

WAITING FOR THE BOAT.

The sudden influx of many thousand miners into the hitherto unexplored regions of Wakatipu was attended with many inconveniences. Mutton there was plenty, a little beef also, but stores of all kinds were difficult to obtain. Flour, especially, was very scarce, and, consequently, very
dear—from three to four shillings a pound in fact. Even at this rate the
main dependence of the population was on supplies brought by water from the
foot of the great Lake of Wakatipu to a small bay adjacent to the goldfields
—the bay where Queenstown now stands.

So much of explanation is necessary to enable the reader to understand the
narrative.

As every day brought tidings of new discoveries, the feverish restlessness of the
gold-seekers heightened, until no inducement was sufficient to prevent men from quitting good claims in
search of better elsewhere. The more remote, the greater the attraction.
George and his mates did not escape the infection. Not content to work on
in tried and proved ground, they resolved to prospect for themselves, and
set forth accordingly.

Late one afternoon, then, behold the
party en route for some hoped-for Eldorado—George and Jim, the one red-
shirted, the other blue-shirted—a little in advance, and old Pegleg and the
Third Mate bringing up the rear.

Their course led them along a flat so
thickly covered with "spear-grass" that Old Jack recoiled therefrom in dismay,
landing Pegleg on the broad of his back amongst the unfriendly plants.
The old man reared with pain. "Ha,
Jack!" he exclaimed, "Old Jack, thou
rubbery old beast. Why hast thou
played me such a cursed trick? (Lord
forgive me for swearing!) By gum!
I've mind to un buckle my timber leg
and thrash thee within an inch of thy
jackass life. Here Jim, lad, thou
wicked rascal, why dost laugh at me,
thou two-year-old puppy? Bear a hand
to lift me out of this mess, lad."

"Give me good words, then, you old
sinner; or no hand of mine do you
get."

"Good lad! sweet lad! pleasant lad!
What wilt? Oh, Lord, thou infernal
young cheat the galloway, stop thy
grinning and help me up, or I'll be the
death of thee, Jim."

Pegleg, still growling, was dragged
from his position and again seated on
the donkey; and, to prevent further
disasters, Jim led the animal by a
halter. In this trim they reached the
Shotover—a wide, shallow river, full of
shifting shoals and saundbergs, which
rendered it perilous to ford. It was
getting dark, too, which increased the
peril. However, they plunged boldly
in, and were making fair way across
when Old Jack suddenly disappeared—
all but his prolonged ears—in a
treacherous quicksand.

The two young men quickly got out
Pegleg, and carried him through the
remainder of the river to the shore,
trusting to the sagacity of the quadru-
ped for its own safety. But when they
turned to look for the poor animal no
trace of him could they see.

"Well," said Jim, "I don't let Old
Jack get drowned if I can help it." And he plunged into the stream.

"Just so!" answered George. "I'm
on for another in that line, you bet."
And he followed Jim.

"Ho, lads," cried Pegleg, "why
trust yourselves to that confounded
river? Hey! let him alone. The
brute ben't worth the trouble. The
willful dogs! By gum! I'd go in myself
to save poor Old Jack, good Old Jack, if twern't for this blessed
quick'un!"

But although they carefully searched
around the spot where Jack had been
left behind, there was no sign of him
anywhere to be found. The darkness
was fast increasing; the water was icy
cold; a keen, cold wind was coming
down from the frozen mountain-tops.
They abandoned the search in despair,
and prepared to resume their journey
in a melancholy frame of mind, induced
by the misfortune which had befallen
the Third Mate.

Their progress thereafter was neces-
sarily slow, and by the time they
reached the Lake night had fallen.
Still they determined to press on to the
"Station," as the site of what is now
Queenstown was then termed, from the
circumstance of its being the residence
of the landlord.
It was not pleasant scrambling amongst stunted bush and stray rocks and boulders, along a bank sloping to the water, and intersected by numerous small gullies, the existence of which was only revealed when the traveller plumped down into one of them. I say it was not pleasant, especially to Pegleg, but they went on nevertheless. A distant bush fire somewhat lighted up the scene, casting a lurid glow on the snow-covered peaks, and reflecting itself in the blue waters—giving to the whole scene a weird and wild appearance. But regarded from a utilitarian point of view, this light was valuable, for it enabled our friends to escape many of the dangers which beset their path.

CHAPTER IX.

A MODERN ORPHEUS.

The order of march was as follows: George led the way, and Jim brought up the rear, while Pegleg stumped along in the centre for greater safety. They had proceeded thus for about half-an-hour, when a singular misadventure occurred. They had arrived at a spot where the bush, nurtured by the waters of a small creek that welled out from the mountain, attained to the dignity of trees, in the shade of which the narrow track was quite indistinguishable. Suddenly George disappeared from view, and the next moment Pegleg also vanished from sight, to the great amazement of Jim Darley, who, confounded at the event, came to a dead halt. It was as if the earth had opened and swallowed them up.

"Hallo, mates," he cried, "where on earth have you got to?"

There arose from beneath his feet a confused discord of crackling branches and rattling stones, intermixed with human voices—with groans, and growls, and stifled laughter.

Then he heard George say (and the words came with a dull, smothered sound to his ear)—

"Guess you'd better not come down, Jim. There ain't no room to spare jest here. We're rather mixed already, and if you come we'll be crowded out, I reckon!"

"Aye! aye, mate!" growled the old man, "hold on and keep aloft, lad, till we find out the bearings of this plaguey hole. Ho! ho! Cap'en, what dost make o' t? Ho! ho! Thou be'st a bad pilot surely to run us into such a Bedlamite pit as this be."

"Well," quoth George, "I guess this here place ain't laid down on no chart. However, Sir, if you'll kindly have done sitting on my chest and take your timber prop-stick out of my left-hand trouser's pocket, I'll try to navigate you out of this."

In truth, George had fallen down the precipitous bank of the creek, which thickly matted masses of overhanging creepers, native convolvulus, and bush lawyers had concealed from observation. Pegleg, following too hastily, had shared his fate, but being last, he had found a softer resting place on George's prostrate body.

When the old man attempted to rise however it was found that his injuries were greater than had been supposed. For he had broken his leg! True, it was the wooden member that had been sacrificed in the fall; but none the less was he thereby incapacitated from pursuing the journey.

George and Jim Darley helped him out of the creek, and set him on the bank.

"Ha, lads," he said; "this be a baddish job, this be. Old Dick'll be of no more use now. Jim, lad, go thy ways, and let the old hulk be. (What will the young dog do without his Pegleg to take care of him?) Why, Cap'en, thou must see to the lad. Go with the Cap'en, lad. He'll look after thee, won't thou, Cap'en?"

"I'll see you hanged first," cried Jim. "Why, you selfish old beast, you want to get rid of me, do you? I shouldn't wonder if you broke your leg on purpose, you deceitful villain."

"No, Mr Pegleg," echoed George, "we don't mean to let you off in that way. No, sirres! You can bet an ounce to a red on that!"
"Good lads! Brave lads! Blame their hearts! the dogs'll make old Pegleg pipe his eye."") Thus to himself, then aloud:

"Come, now! no nonsense, lads! Pegleg won't have it. Dash my buttons if I do have it. I haven't going to be bothered with thee, Jim, any more. I be tired of thee and thy ways. Get along with thee, and leave me, thou sancy whoelp."

"Well, mister, if it ain't too great a liberty, I'd like to know what line of business you propose operating in, if we dissolve partnershhip?"

"Ho! ho! ho! That be a good'un, that be. I said thou wast a cure. Didn't I say the Cap'yn was a cure, Jim? Ho! ho! What line o' business?"

And he roared out the words of the old song:

"The bullets and the gout have so knocked his ball about,\nThat he'll never more be fit for sea."

To everybody's surprise there came an answer to the house chant. An answer—not an echo merely. Nor was the answer in a human voice. For from over their heads, loud, and long, and clear, came the resonant bray of a jackass.

"By gum!" shouted Pegleg, "that be Old Jack. I'll swear to his voice among ten thousand angels. Stand by, lads, till I whistle for the wicked old brute."

He uttered the well-known signal, and again from the heights above came a bray responsive. Then the hoofs beats of the animal were heard, as it cautiously picked its way down the steep face of the mountain. Presently it appeared on a ridge near at hand. There it stood snuffling the air, as if reconnoitring the party. Another whistle brought it to its master's side; and it was hard to say which was most delighted at the rencontre—the man or the brute.

"Ha, Jack!" cried the man, throwing his arms round the animal's neck. "Jack, my pet! Hast followed thy master all the way from you river? Why, what a black-a-vised sinner was Pegleg to quit thee. Good old Jack! Thou shalt not get away again, I warrant thee."

And the brute replied to his master's caresses by rubbing his nose against the old man's breast, and braying loud-voiced satisfaction.

CHAPTER X.

QUEENSTOWN.

Eleven hundred feet above the ocean level is the great Lake Wakatipu—sixty miles in length and from two to five miles in width. In form it is somewhat like the letter Z—the upper and lower arms stretching from south to north, and the central arm from east to west. All around, are lofty mountains rising from five to eight thousand feet above its waters, with many small bays in their sombre recesses. Below, its waters are in some parts of unknown depth, for the skill of man has not yet availed to plumb the dark pools that lie under the rocky precipices familiarly known as "The Devil's Staircase" and the "S眨眼-Box." Official reports tell of twelve hundred feet of line having been paid out without reaching the bottom. Five considerable rivers and numberless creeks pour their flood into this capacious reservoir, yet only one river, of comparatively small capacity, emerges therefrom. Where the balance of its water finds exit is an undeveloped mystery. Many ages ago a larger and a broader channel carried away the mighty flood at an elevation of two hundred and fifty feet above the present lake-level. Agas before that, they passed through a yet more capacious outfall, now four hundred and fifty feet overhead. Who shall dare to say how many cycles of time have been completed during the period interesting between the date of the existence of the old levels and that of their puny modern substitute?

In a small bay, shaped like a horseshoe, lying at the base of Ben Lomond, and protected by a peninsular projec-
tion from the violent southerly winds—a bay where the clear blue waters ripple over the white shingle beach with an indolent, musical motion—is the picturesque settlement of Queenstown. Man has seized upon this spot, and shops and warehouses, filled with the products of every clime, and of all industries; hotels worthy of the name, and banks profuse in architectural adornment, now line the borders of the lake. On the slopes and terraces at the rear are scattered many trim villas and garden-surrounded cottages, suggestive of ease and comfort. Steamer are moored to the jetty, and white-sailed boats skim like swallows to and fro. Bells ring to prayers, and songs of praise resound from sacred fanes. Nor are other evidences of modern civilization wanting. For there too are the court-house and the gaol—the hall of justice, and the receptacle of crime.

Such is Queenstown now. Let us take a backward glance, and view it as it was.

Fourteen years ago—no more—two young men pushed through a very forest of bush till they stood upon the margin of those then unknown waters. I say “unknown,” because, although the southern arm of the lake had been visited, the existence of the westerly and northern arms was as yet unsuspected. On the maps of the day this district was indicated by a blank space only. They made a rude kind of raft, and with much toil navigated that mysterious inland sea. They viewed the land, and behold it was good. So they settled there in that remote solitude, the one on the Von River, the other on the bay where Queenstown now stands. They brought flocks and herds from afar, and set themselves manfully to subdue the wilderness. So far were they from the ordinary track of agricultural settlement that it seemed as if a century must elapse ere they would be driven from their holdings.

But in the case of one of these adventurers (and I use the phrase in its true, honest sense) it was not so to be. Scarcely was he seated in his new abode when from afar off came the sound of the gold discoveries. Nearer and yet nearer the wave approached; and one day a Maori employed about the station entered the squatter’s presence bearing in his hand—gold. Yes—real, veritable gold—bright, yellow, pure. He had found it by chance—this Maori—in the sands of the Arrow river, and had brought it triumphantly to his master in expectancy of reward and approval.

But the discovery brought no pleasure to the squatter. He knew that the advent of the miners would ensure the destruction of his pastoral prospects. His hopes of a successful career, of increasing flock, multiplying wealth, faded like an unsubstantial dream, and his heart sank within him. For a while—a brief interval—he might keep the discovery secret, but, sooner or later, it would assuredly be divulged; and then farewell to all his fondly cherished visions of the future.

And so indeed it fell out. Soon prospectors came around the Lake, searching for the all-attracting metal. At first they were unsuccessful. But the squatter made known to one or two friends the locality where the Maori had picked up the golden specimens; the smote of their fire revealed to others their whereabouts, and thus was the dreaded event precipitated. The auriferous fame of “Fox’s,” as it was termed, induced men to traverse the country in search thereof; and one fine day a score of miners suddenly appeared on the terrace above the first workings at the Arrow Gorge, and announced with lusty cheers that thenceforth concealment was impossible.

Then the miners poured in from all ports of the Province, from the farthest corners of the Colony, from the older goldfields of Victoria and New South Wales: everywhere men felt their pulses quicken as the tale went round of wondrous “finds,” and they hastened to share in the golden spoils.

For a little while the homestead of
the squatter, being out of the route to any of the workings, remained un molested, in its pristine loneliness, so that when George W. Pratt and his mates first visited the place, there was as yet no sign of the township which now occupies its site. A hut of limited dimensions, with walls of clay and grass-thatched roof—the private residence of the squatter; an out-house, constructed of similar materials, for the use of the station hands; a wool-shed built of timber, and a boat-shed, were then the only edifices.

It was night when George and his mates arrived. On the shores of the lake some fifty or sixty miners had encamped, each party with a fire burning brightly in front of its location. These men were waiting for a flour-boat which was hourly expected to arrive. Every man represented five or six others—by whom he had been dispatched to the station to purchase a portion of the staff of life. Long and patiently they had waited there—all the previous day and through the night, and still they waited on.

About four o'clock some one more wakeful or more vigilant than the others aroused the watchers with a loud cry, "The boat is coming!" Instantly every man sprang to his feet. The splash of oars was heard in the water—the cheerful rattle of oars, in the rowlocks kept tune. On came the flour-laden bark, she neared the shore; her keel grated on the beach,—the anxiously looked-for cargo had arrived at last.

Then, early as it was, the squatter and his men came forth, and the process of weighing out the flour commenced. To every man of a party a certain proportion—no more—was allotted, till all was served out. Then those who remained behind unserved were called forward, and their names and the number of their mates carefully recorded as being entitled to priority in the distribution of the next boat-load. George and party being late of arrival came into this latter category, whereby they were compelled to remain another day at the Station. From which circumstance arose other events which mightly influenced the fortunes of Mr George W. Pratt.

It was painful to note the avidity wherewith some of the men devoured the flour. Many of them had no sooner secured the coveted food than they converted some of it into "skilligalee" (i.e. flour and water thinly mixed), and swallowed it without cooking. "Why, I haven't had a bite of anything but tough mutton for a month," said one of them, "and I can't stop to make damper, for I must be away over the ranges to my mates, who are just as badly off."

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW LEG AND AN OLD HAND.

There was a "banty man" about the Station, a man who could muster cattle on the ranges, shear a sheep in the shed, pull an ear in the boat, build a hut, make an axe-handle, cook, sew, wash—in fact, do anything that any other man could do in any department of laboi. There are plenty of such fellows to be found in the Colonies, and it is to be remarked that they are generally men of toilably good—sometimes of superior education.

This "banty man" came very seasonably to the relief of Pegleg. In a trice he took the old man's measure, and fitted him with a new leg—roughly hewn and ungainly of outline, it is true, but strong and durable.

"Ho! ho!" shouted old Pegleg, as he tried the new member, "there's a knowing chap, surely. Why, lads, I be a made man again. I'll not leave thee now, Jim; do thou be sure o'd that. Old Jack and his master be worth any two in the land."

Next day towards evening another boat-load of flour came in, and having secured their supplies they packed up their swags and proceeded up the Gorge in the direction of the Shotover.

As they passed along, some men came over the low hill that overlooks the bay. The donkey—an animal
rarely seen in New Zealand—attracted their attention.

“T’ain’t a real live moke.”

And he laughed loud and long.

They were standing at the junction of two small creeks, in a narrow ravine, where the piled-up mountains shut out the horizon and limited the view skywards to a narrow strip of blue ether, rendered more brilliant by contrast with the dun-colored rocks, the brown herbage, and the sombre-lined patches of bush, which luxuriated in the deep, dark gullies. The mountains slanting steeply downwards—slide below slide—in confused masses, bore testimony to the violence of the convulsions which in ages past had rent their stubborn ribs asunder, throwing down their lofty crests, and shaking their bases to the centre. Here and there a perpendicular wall of rock, smooth and bare, revealed the track ground down by the mighty glaciers of pre-historic days. High over the "terraces" indicated the successive levels of the ancient river, whereof the puny rivulet that battled noisily through the ravine was the insignificant modern representative. Far above all, vast patches of sunless gloom alternated with snow-clad cones glittering in the bright sunlight with eye-dazzling radiance.

Near at hand, a silvery stream leaped forth into mid-air, robbing itself in prismatic hues as it fell—a liquid rainbow—from ledge to ledge, till it gained the bottom of the ravine, and there mingled with its earth-born sister. Fostered by the cool moisture, long coarse grasses and flowering veronicas, and ferns of many kinds fringed the margin of the creek, and dwarf mannikas and tea-tree scrub gently waved their feathery branches in the morning breeze. Amidst the overhanging crags a few stunted birches* and scrubby fuchsia bushes, found scant sustenance; and the glossy leaves of a native laurel (the “broadleaf” of the colonists) shone forth from its gnarled and twisted trunk.

When the old man bellowed forth his stentorian laugh, the startled echoes

*So called by the colonists. The tree is really a species of beech;—Fagus Cunninghamiana.
caught the unwanted sound, and from the reverberating rocks came back a hoarse "Ho! ho!" Again and again it was repeated, till from a far distant gorge a faint "Ho! ho!" smote mockingly on the ear. Pegleg stared aghast, and the Third Mate, luxuriously rolling on the sandy beach of the creek, ceased his gambols, and with ears upstanding, listened amazed to the reiterated laughter.

"Well, I'm blessed," cried Jim Darley, "if the place ain't haunted. What are we here for at all, I want to know!"

"Gold, I guess," answered George, laconically.

"Why, you don't expect to get any gold here, do you?" And Jim looked round him with an air of disgust, as if he considered himself a deluded and injured man.

"Gold!" chimed in Pegleg—"why gold—what gold? No, Capen, do thou take Old Dick's word for 't, there be't no gold hereabouts. I've seen a sight o' diggin's in one place and o'other, lad; but I never see any gold in such a den as this be. Good Lord! what a cursed den it be surely. (I do hope the Cap'en be't a silly.) Let us ha' done gitseying, lad. Here Jack—good old Jack—come here thou willful brute, wilt thou? Jim, lad, do thou pack up the traps and let us flee away out o' this. It do make old Pegleg shiver and shake like a leaf."

George listened quietly to the old man's tirade, and merely replenished his plug. A curious smile beamed on his face as he watched the pair making hasty preparations for departure.

"Go-ahead partners," he said at last. "If you're such darned fools as to let an echo frighten you away, I ain't, that's all. I rather conclude to prowl around here for a spell and make my pile."

Something in his manner arrested the attention of the two men.

"Do you really think there's a show of gold here?" asked Jim.

"No, sir; I do not," was the emphatic reply. "I don't think there's a show, at all. I know there's a considerable heap."

"Aye, lad!" cried Pegleg. "Says't thou so? Why, where be the sign o'it? I don't see no sign o'it. (It do seem as how the lad's cranky.)"

"Well, now," said George, "do you know that's very curious. See here, now, Mister Pegleg, you're a high-toned old gent, and as a cook you ain't got your equal on these here diggings; but I'm just totally darned if you know a cent about gold-finding, and Jim there ain't no better. When you see other men getting gold, you can count in with the best of the crowd. But gold-getting is one thing, and gold-finding is another. Guess I picked up my knowledge down to California, where folks don't allow their brains to lie idle muchly—they as have got any brains. Now I've been putting my brains and my eyes to work, and I just tell you that if you conclude to part company and quit this location, you'll lose the smartest chance of making a pile that ever you had since you were foiled."

"Why, Cap'en, lad, thou says't fair enough. What shall we do, Jim? Shall we hold on for a spell, and try the ground, or shall we go? (Dash my buttons I maybe Cap'en's right.) Speak up, old Pegleg 'll do as thou dost, Jim—just as thou dost."

"Suppose we prospect about for a day?" proposed Jim, somewhat sheepishly, and with the air of a man "convinced against his will."

"So be it, lad. Why a day's nought—a day—why it be neither here nor there. Thou'rt gotten thine own way, Cap'en, this time."

"Right you are, gent," said George, "Resolutely accordingly, that Pegleg and Co. do remain. You'd have played a remarkably foolish game if you hadn't, I tell you. Why, partners, you are set right down in the Home of the Gold!"

CHAPTER XIII.

PEGLEG GETS A LESSON IN ACOUSTICS.

Then Mr. George W. Pratt concluded to explain.
"See here," he said. "Do you see that white streak running down the mountain over there?"

Yes; they did see it.

"Now then—right about face! Do you see that other white streak—not quite so regular, but its there all the same, on the opposite side of the gulch?"

Yes; they saw that also.

"Well, that's quartz, that is. Nothing less, you bet! That's jest the real old mother of all the gold in these creeks. The tops of them reefs have been shocked off, or been blown off, or blown off maybe. Anyhow, they have been shocked off somehow; and the gold that used to be up there in the caps of the reefs has got carried down by the floods and buried in the gullies and flats below. Now boys, where the bottom was level most of the gold has been swept along way down, but where there was a bar across the gully the gold lodged. And it ain't been excavated yet; for no white man ever tried it, and the all-fired niggers that you call Marris hadn't the savvy to know the value of gold."

"By gum! Cap'n George is right," growled Pegleg. "Why dash my old hat if you and I ben't fools Jim. Eh lad! ben't us fools? Why don't thou speak, Jim, lad? Lord love thee, there be a sight of fools in the world. Us be in fine company lad—fine company. Ho! ho! ho!"

Again the echoes tossed the rough laugh from crag to crag, so terrifying the Third Mate that he threw up his heels and fairly galloped away to the summit of an adjacent spur, where he brayed lustily. "Being out of the echo range no answering bray replied, but this, instead of reassurring his master, caused yet greater consternation.

"Surely," he said, mopping the perspiration from his forehead, "There be devils here mocking I. Why don't they mock old Jack. Eh lad? Tell us that Cap'n. (Good Lord! I have mercy on us! as it were in the beginning, is now, and shall be evermore, give thanks, Amen!)

"Well!" said George, "If this ain't a circumstance. This is the consequence of being raised in a superstition old country like England. Guess they've got their eyes opened too wide for that sort of article in the free and enlightened States of America. Why this here ain't half an echo. There's one in the Rocky Mountains that repeats every word for a whole year, and makes it travel along the chain, so that if you speak at the southern end on the first of January, you can hear it on the north side on the thirty-first of December. Yes, sirree!"

But it was evident that the old man was not to be satisfied by railly. So in order to assure him that he was not the special object of invisible derision, George induced him to mount the hill to Old Jack's side, and to laugh his "Ho! ho!" there, when, of course, the echoes were silent. But it required no little persuasion to accomplish this feat.

"Eh, lad!" he said, as he descended the hill, "I h'ont makin' fun of old Pegleg. Maybe thou don't believe in ghosts and such-like. Thou knowst at a good deal, Cap'n, but thou don't know everything. Ho!—(Lord forgive me.) I'll tell thee some at by-by, Cap'en."

"No, sir," said George, "I don't conceit that there's any sense in ghosts. We don't allow no ghosts in America. Some of our high old Southern folks claim to keep a family ghost for domestic use, but they ain't allowed by the Constitution."

Then he utilized the old man's fears, thus—

"There's jest one thing I might mention to you, sir. Don't you laugh so all-fired loud, because if you do you'll bring a whole heap of fellows on to our location. They're always prowling around to look for prospectors, and one of your sweet-souled laughs might fetch them any day."

"Aye! aye! Cap'en, I'll beware, be thou sure o' that. Old Pegleg'll clip a stopper on his jaw-tackle (as long as he bides in this devilish hole)."

"Jest so," said George approvingly, "keep the pressure on, old boy. And
CHAPTER XIV.

TWO STRANGE STORIES.

Before the day was over they had found a "bar," such as satisfied George’s critical discernment. They then went to work to turn the creek above the bar, and by nightfall the water was running in their new channel. Not till the last rays of the sun were reflected from behind the mountains was the turning of the water attempted, the object of the prospectors being to allow the first water, discolored by contact with the fresh earth, to pass away in the night, so that no telltale traces of their operations should be visible in the morning. For they well knew that muddy water would be regarded as a sure indication of mining up the stream, and so would afford a clue to their location.

That night as they were sitting round the camp fire (which by the way was never lit in the daytime, save to boil the billy for breakfast, lest the smoke should betray them), George said to Pegleg—

"I think, Mister, you promised to tell me something about ghosts. Suppose you were to begin now before we turn in."

"No, no, Cap’en, don’t thee ask me now. I ben’t quite easy in my mind about they echoes, as thou calls them; I’ve heard a many echoes in my time, but I never heard one that spoke back more than once. Dash my buttons if I can make it out yet."

"Why you stupid old donkey," said Jim, who was beginning to pluck up his courage, "Don’t you remember the echo between the rock just below Hartley’s Beach at the Dunstan?"

"It was a most unfortunate illustration."

"What, lad—why, Jim, lad—be’est thou going to turn upon me too? Thou know’st that one only answered back once. Now, this one, he do answer back, and answer back, no end."

"Never mind, old hoss, tell us your story."

Thus George.

"No, Cap’en, I won’t. I don’t like telling o’ in the dark till I do know more about this place. (Home of the gold? Home of old Nick, I do believe. Maybe he made it. They do say a man’s got the devil’s luck whenever he gets money.) No, not now, Cap’en George. No offence to thee, but—some other time."

"I’ll tell you a story," said Jim Darley. And forthwith he began.

"When I was a little kid I knew a man named Billy Pitt, a tailor by trade, and a very good workman when he were real sober. But he used to fiddle awful. Never a wake, or a fair, or a dance, or a club-meeting came off but Billy were there. For he used to play the fiddle, and that made the folks ask him to everything. He was a little hump-backed fellow, and when he had his fiddle under his arm, wrapped up in a big baize bag, you couldn’t tell whether Billy carried the fiddle, or the fiddle carried Billy.

“One cold winter night when the snow were lying deepish, Billy went over to Farmer Welch’s to a hop there was there on account of one of the daughters getting married, and they kept it up all night pretty well. There was lots of beer and cider going, and Billy took his whack of it, you may depend. Farmer wanted to keep the little beggar there all night, seeing as how he was well sprung. But Billy wouldn’t have it, because of Binegar Fair being next day, and he wanted to be there. So off he set in the middle of the night, and he got on all right till he got to a meadow where he could make a short cut, and save about a mile of road. But when he got inside the paddock he couldn’t find the stile at the other side. He kept floundering about through the snow till he got chilled-like, and every time he got to the end of the paddock he comes butt up against a thorn hedge. He could see the houses of the village, but get out he couldn’t. So he begins to holla out—"
'Man a' lost! Man a' lost!' and the people heard him call. But when they listened they could only hear the owls in the old church tower saying, 'Who? who?'—and then they went in again. Billy heard it too, and he says, says he—'Billy Pitt o' Wurmister.' Then folks came out again, and the owls cried—'Who?' So they didn't come out any more. And Billy, he mused about till he got stiff with the cold, and he sat down at last with his fiddle, and went off sound asleep. And when the morning come, Billy was found half-froze, sitting on the steps of the stile; for he was that drunk he couldn't see it."

"Did he die," asked George.

"Not quite. Pretty near though. It took a precious long time to bring him round. And he got the rheumatics that bad in his right arm, he never could play the fiddle again so long as ever he lived."

"Do you know," said George, "that puts me in mind of a circumstance that happened to a personal friend of mine, who was strongly addicted to spiritual investigations. He was mighty fond of skating, he was; and when he began he never knew exactly where to stop. He got worse and worse by degrees, till he lost all control over his emotions; and sometimes he used to fire up and go skating—skating away for days and a night. At last he had to employ a man to put the brake on when it got too dangerous to be safe. However, one time the help got on a spin, and didn't come up to time; and my friend, he started off to skim the frozen river, and he got such way upon him, that he skated clean down a most tremendous cataract, and went on, cutting figures of eight and numerous other devices, till he skated right out to sea."

"Was he drowned?" asked Jim with lips agape.

"No, sir! he skated on to the frozen ocean and up Baffin's Bay; and the last that was heard of him was that he was doubling the North Cape at the rate of nineteen knots an hour, with full steam on, whistling Yankee Doodle, and cutting the double-shuffle round the aurora borealis."

"That be blown for a yara!" said Jim.

"Cap'len, I said thou'rt a cure. Surely that ben't true. Why, Cap'len—Cap'len George—make it twenty knots while thou'rt about it, lad. (A lie—a lie—I'm sure o't.)"

"Gents," said George with much dignity, "see here—there ought to be some sort of reciprocity in these concerns. Jim told a story of a drunken owl, and I didn't contradict him. I gave you a long slide, and I claim to have it entered up as O. K. Nineteen knots was the time entered in the log of the steamer that went after him. Do you think I'd falsify history for the sake of one knot?"

CHAPTER XV.

DISCOVERED.

Early next morning George took a tin dish and went down to the claim. In half-an-hour he returned with half-announce of gold—course, heavy gold—shining in the bottom of the dish. "There, pardners," he said, "guess that'll make up for the foolish yarns I reeled off last night. Can't think what put such darned stuff in my head. Think them hooting owls of yours, Jim, must have been flapping about my ears."

The old man and Jim were in raptures at the excellent "prospect." In truth Mr George Washington Pratt was one of those men who abound on every goldfield—men who have not been artificially schooled and dragooned into the possession of a smattering of scientific knowledge, but who are no mean geologists, nevertheless. They have studied in the school of Nature only; and therein they have gained much practical knowledge which, engrafted on native intelligence, has rendered them adepts.

The "prospect," as I have intimated, was a good one. The gold lay in the
fine sand of the creek bed, within a few inches from the surface, and when they penetrated to the bed rock, the diagonal state bars were found to be a series of rich “pockets” (as the crevices are termed) wherein the yellow metal was thickly packed.

“Hurray for home and beauty!” cried George. “If there’s much of this, New Zealand will be minus one distinguished foreigner very shortly.”

And before his “mind’s eye” there uprose a picture of Ruth, whom he had left in Missouri awaiting his return with the money that should satisfy the old “Squire,” her father, of George’s ability to support a wife. “Twas a pleasant vision, and he went about his work, with a cheerful smile upon his face, and in a resolute manner which acted as a stimulant on the others. Truly there is no such incentive to labor as a fixed definite purpose.

So many people were exploring the wild solitudes of that mountainous wilderness, that it was highly improbable they would long remain undiscovered. Under George’s advice they wrought manfully to excavate the wash-dirt and pile it up, deferring the washing process to the future. Thus they were enabled to strip more ground than they would have done otherwise. Besides which, they avoided defiling the creek water, which, as already explained, would have have discovered their whereabouts.

Little did they know that there were those on their trail, who, for reasons of their own, would proclaim their discovery to the world—that is, to the little world of miners who were pouring into the district. From the moment that Ginger and his mates caught sight of George at the station they persistently strove to hunt him down. For these men feared, hated, and believed in the American. Personally they feared and hated him; superstitiously they believed in his “luck,” as they termed it. Your true ignoramus never gives his neighbor credit for achieving anything by superior knowledge or intelligence. It is always “luck.” As though a man’s “luck” were not the result of foresight and wisdom; and his want of “luck” did not result from the absence of those qualities.

For some time the pursuers were baffled. George’s party had easily been tracked to the main gully, and for some distance up the donkey’s hoof-prints had furnished a clue to their progress. But there were so many branch gullies that it was some days ere the particular ravine where George and his mates were at work was explored. It is doubtful whether the latter would have been discovered so soon as they were, but for the unfortunate echo.

High up on the mountain side were the three pursuers, anxiously straining eyes and ears for any sign or sound that might betray the location of the prospectors. It was midnight, and intense silence prevailed. Suddenly there arose a din as of asses braying. Not one, nor two, but seemingly an entire herd of them. For the Third Mate had lifted up his voice, and the rocks replied like a gigantic chorus.

“My word!” shouted Ginger, better versed in the mysteries of echoes than Pegleg, “that’s the moke we saw with Yankee Joe. Let us get down to the creek. They ain’t far away now.”

And guided by the sound, they easily found their way to the prospectors’ claim.

It was with a troubled mind that George recognised the three men first, “Ginger” came by with a diabolical smirk on his evil countenance; then ‘Flash Jimmy,’ with his greasy curls and oleginous visage, strolled up; and lastly, ‘Tripes,’ sulky and scowling, joined the other two.

“There’s no more peace for us,” said George to his mates, “there’s three of the damnest villains in the country guess we’ll have to work all day and watch all night.—Well, Mister, (continued to Ginger) I don’t own up being specially rejoiced to see you. Might I make free to inquire your intentions? Because, you see, if you mean fight I’m your Moses, and if ye
mean peace, you'll have to keep a respectful distance off. Say—how do you conclude to eventuate?”

Flash Jimmy replied: “You needn’t be so blessed huffy, mate. I suppose there’s room for all of us, and we’ve got as much right here as you.”

“I don’t give into that,” said George, “we have prospected the place, and we mean to have our full rights—not a cent less, you bet. So we’ll just mark off the ground, and if you come within our pegs, you’ll likely get some cold medicine which will reduce the size of your claim by one and carry nought. There ain’t no Commissioner here just now, but we know the law, and we mean to have it followed out. Yes, siree!”

They were three to three. But one was a cripple—old Pegleg. So by way of enforcing his argument, Mr. George W. Pratt carelessly drew his revolver.

“See that grey place in the rock yonder?”

He levelled his weapon and pulled the trigger. A small scale fell from the rock, as the bullet struck the indicated spot. He returned the weapon to his pouch.

“Now, boys,” he said, “let us understand each other fairly. Keep clear of our location, and don’t meddle with us, or as sure as my name is George Washington Pratt, I’ll drill a few small holes in your skins. Jim, you just go up the creek, and when I call, put down a peg for our boundary. We can’t stop to measure.”

Jim did as instructed. “That’s our line, boys,” said George. “Don’t come this side of it night or day, if you place any value on your personal comfort.”

Then the three declared that they wouldn’t be bullied, and a tempest of angry ejaculations defied the atmosphere. The quarrel ended characteristically. Ginger said something too gross for George’s patience. Whereupon George grappled with him, much as a mastiff might seize a snapping cur, and pitched him into the crock. Jim fired up and engaged in a pitched battle with Tripe, and Pegleg coming unwares behind Flash Jimmy dealt him such a violent kick, as sent him howling out of the old man’s reach. Finally the trio retreated beyond the indicated line, and left our friends in possession of the battle field.

But the mischief had been done. Thenceforth, as George well knew from past experience, there was no security for them. But little did he dream of what the result was to be.

CHAPTER XVI.

PEGLEGG’S STORY.

Elek another week had elapsed the once solitary gully teemed with human life. For the news of the discovery became bruitcd abroad, and from all parts came crowds of miners. The three vagabonds kept carefully aloof during the day-time, but George and Jim kept watch alternately during the night. Nothing came of it, however, and it seemed as though their unwelcome neighbors had given up all idea of molestation.

Said George to Pegleg one night:

“You haven’t told us that story yet, Pegleg. Suppose you were to do it now. What say?”

“Why, lad, I don’t mind if I do. There’s a many folk about now, and I do believe thou’rt right about that dash’d echo, though such a thing old Pegleg never heard afore in all his born days. Jim, thou comical young monkey, wherefore dost thee grin? There’s a sight more in such like doings than thou know’st on.”

“Never mind old Timber-toes. Go on and spin us a yarn.”

“Why, lads, I’ve seen a sight o’ things in my time. When I were a kid, the old man made me work in the farm. Then I got to think the sea were better than the land. I were wrong though—I were wrong, lads. Better to plough the harvest furrow than the sea. However, nought’d do but I must to sea, and the old man wouldn’t hear o’t. He never could abide the notion. So one day I packed up two or three
things in my handkerchief, and off I goes to Bristol. There were heaps of ships, and I'd heard that boys were wanted. I went aboard one after t'other, though, and got well scouted for my pains. All up and down the quay and along the Welsh back I went, till at long and at last I got engaged as cabin boy in a Africa ship going to the Gold Coast. She were a main trim boat, all full of gold and pictures and big looking-glasses in the cabin. They used to put things in to daze the niggers with, when they went to get gold dust, and oil, and ivory and all them sort o' things.

"I made two voyages in that ship—

the 'Harry Hill' they called her, only 'twere wrote in some outlandish language— 'A-r-i-e-l,' which do seem to I a queerish way o' spelling a Christian name.

"What I was going to tell thee happened on the second voyage. There were a great big black nigger from the West Indies— Jacob, we called him— shipped as a seaman, and he were a terror, he were. He bullied the men, and were very impudent and cross-

wayed to the mate and Cap'n. One day he gave Cap'n some sort o' crooked answer, and Cap'n he up wi's fist and knocked 'im down like a bullcock. Jacob, he jumped up, and says he, 'Cap'n,' he says, 'I'll be quits wi' thee for that;' and he showed his big white teeth and grinned savage-like, so that all my blood run cold.

"I used to sleep in the cuddy so as to be handy-like, if Cap'n wanted anything in the night time. Sometimes he'd call me up in the middle of the night; so I got used to it and used to waken up on the least noise. The night after Cap'n had the row wi' the nigger, I roused up in a main hurry thinking I heard Cap'n call. But when I went to his cabin he said 'No!' he hadn't called, and cursed I for a young fool. Why I hadn't abed again nor 'a half an hour when I heard 'un again.

'Dick! Dick! I could ha' swear'd to't. 'Aye! aye, Sir!' says I, and away I goes to Cap'n's cabin again.

He says again as he didn't call, and I must ha' dream'd it. Next night the same thing happened, and Cap'n he punched my head for a stupid young fool and kicked I out o' cabin.

"Why lads then, when third night come I were called again. I made no count o', I began to seem like it were ghosts, so I put my head under the blankets and tried to go to sleep. I couldn't do it. The same sort o' voice called again close to my berth 'Dick! Dick!' I got that frightened I couldn't stop there, so I got up and went on deck.

"T'were a fine night, lads. We were pretty far south, and there were only a three-knot breeze blowing. The waters were alive wi' fire, and the big star they call Venus made quite a track o' light in the sea. All at once I heard a yell like nothing I ever listened to afore or since. Just the one scream—

such an awful sound I hope never to hear again. Then there were a dash in the water as of som'at falling overboard. The mate he got out the boat and put the sails aback, and they rowed round and round but nought could they see. So the mate he went down to report to Cap'n. Lord ha' mercy on us! there were no Cap'ns to be found. His bunk were empty, and the big stern window were open and there were just one spot of wet blood on the blankets. Nothing else whatever.

"Be sure we were in a main funk, lads. We searched the ship high and low, and never a sign of anybody a-coming about could we find. The mate he suspected the nigger, but he were found in his bunk, sound asleep, and the watch reported that he hadn't been seen out o' fok'sle all night. Every man looked at other wi' a sort o' fear like, and all things seemed to go contrary from that out.

"I told mate and the men what I had heard, and they seemed to think I knewed, more o'than I told. And Jacob—the nigger—he were very hard on me. He said I had a hand in it; and they talked o' putting me in irons. But mate said, 'No, let un be; and
he'd see all right when we got home.' Jacob tried hard to pump me; but I knew nought more than I says, and couldn't tell me more. But that didn't satisfy the nigger. He swore he'd have it out o' me. I got so frightened one way and t'other I could do nought at last but cry, and wish I were safe home again.

"Same night I had a terrible dream. Seemed like as if Jacob were standing over me wi' a big knife in his hand, going to stick me. I tried to wake myself and couldn't do it. And I heard the same voice I had heard before crying out for me—'Dick! Dick!' I tried hard to get up; but no, I were as like I'd been gned down to the bunk. I know I must have struggled, for by'n-by, I felt a sharp pain in my left arm, and I woke up sudden, and there was that cursed nigger standing over me with something—a knife, I know now 'twere—upraised to strike me again. Then there were a noise and a crash, and cries, and Lord knows what, for I swithered away in a faint, and when I come to I found my arm bandaged, and I were lying in a different bunk.

"Seems that Jacob, he killed Cap'n and shoved him out o' the sternport. He fanc'd I knew o't, and were keeping it backlike till we got home again. Whereby he wanted to get rid o' me as he had got o' Cap'n afore, only mate watched for un, and caught the black soundrel after he had wounded me once in the arm, which saved my life by reason of it lying across my chest."

"What did they do to the nigger?" asked Jim.

"Why, Jim—what, Jim—see now how sin' do find a man out. The varmint jumped overboard while we were on the coast, thinking to swim ashore; and a shark nipped him afore our very eyes. He went down with a fearful yell, and the blue water were colored red, and that's all I know about it, for, lad, he never did come up no more. But that cry o' 'Dick!'—Dick!'—haunted me. I heard it every night while I were in that ship. Blow high—blow low—sometimes in hold—sometimes in cabin—from topmast and fo'c'sle—up in the air, and down in the sea itself, I were always hearing the same cry o' 'Dick! Dick!' till I got afeard to move after dark. And when and ever I got home to Bristol, I up foot and made tracks and quit the seagoing from that out. I couldn't stand it, lad—No—I couldn't stand it."

"See here, Mister," said sceptical George, "don't you rather guess that what you first heard was that blood-thirsty darkey trying to find whether you were awake?"

"Maybe so, Cap'en. Why, aye, may be so. But thou knows if a boy geteth a fright o' that sort, it sticketh to him through all his days. I don't say nay to thee; but it do seem it were a warning, mate, only I hadn't the savvy to use it properly."

"Yes! Well, now, do you know, I should have supposed that them as were able to send a warning were able to make it understandable. No, sir, I don't fall into your view. There's a hitch in it somewhere. It don't work smooth, that's a fact. Damned stupid thing to wake a boy up and not explain what he's wanted for."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PRISONERS OF THE PEOPLE.

One Sunday morning, "cool and calm and bright," when all nature seemed at rest, George was aroused from his slumber by a confused noise as of many voices. Without disturbing his mates he went to the door of the tent and looked forth.

The tent had been pitched on a spur which commanded a view of the gully for some distance on either hand. About a quarter of a mile further up there was a small "flat," which offered a favorable site for a township. And there consequently the storekeepers had located themselves. Be sure there were not a few shanty-keepers among them, for the liquor trade on new rushes requires but little capital and
less intelligence, while the profits are in inverse ratio.

Congregated on this flat there was a considerable crowd on that Sunday morning. They appeared to form a ring, and George’s first impression was that the “noble science of self-defense” was about to be both practically and brutally illustrated. But presently he noted a figure solitary and motionless standing in the centre, and around him some four others revolving. A babble of many tongues surged upon the air, as the crowd swayed to and fro apparently in wild excitement. But never a foot stirred the central figure—not for an instant did the four cease to continue their regular circumambulation.

“What is the matter?” asked Jim Darley, as he emerged from the tent.

“Darned if I know rightly,” answered George. “Looks very much like a case of Judge Lynch. Say, pardner; jest you mount guard over the camp, while I step down and obtain the latest information.”

And he strode down the hill towards the mob.

As he neared the noisy throng a female form with hair wildly streaming and disordered garments, came flying from the mob and, seizing George’s hand, threw herself on her knees before him, crying—

“Save him! Save him, Mr Pratt. For Heaven’s sake don’t let them murder him!”

“Jehoshaphat!” exclaimed George. “Mary Kenway, what are you doing here, ma’am?”

He lifted her up with all tenderness, and, gazing steadfastly in her tearful eyes, repeated the question.

“It’s Tom!” she cried, “my Tom. They are going to hang him. Don’t stop here. Go to them at once. They’ll listen to you, I know they will. Come!”

And she strove to urge him onward; but George was too self-possessed to be hurried.

“See here, Mrs Kenway,” he said, “If I’m to do anything in this matter,

I must do it my own way. That’s so. It ain’t no use being hurried. You just go right away to my tent, or else sit down here till I’ve inquired into the rights of the case. I don’t make no promises till I know what your Tom has been at.”

But Mary was too much excited to take matters as coolly as George proposed. With a cry as of a stricken animal, she burst from him, and flew back to the crowd. Through the struggling ranks she forced her way, and reaching her husband’s side, she threw her arms around his neck in a passion of tears, declaring that she would not be parted from him.

“They shall kill us both, Tom,” she cried. “I’ll never quit you.”

The angry crowd became still, and their hearts were melted by the woman’s devotion.

“Let him go!” shouted some sympathetic soul; and a responsive murmur spread through the multitude.

But the charm was quickly and rudely dissolved. The man thrust from him the woman—forcibly he thrust her from him, with shameful oaths and opprobrious epithets.

“What’s the good of this nonsense?” he asked. “I know they’ll hang me. Let them do it at once.”

Mary, thus repulsed, sank crying to the earth; and the people—who for her sake were ready to have released their prisoner, but now fresh angered, because of his treatment of her who tried to save him—became dangerously violent.

George W. Pratt pressed through the seething mass. “Morning, gent,” he said. “What the little game?”

Then to Mary—“Keep your heart up, ma’am; I’ll stand by you.”

It was briefly explained to him that Mr Tom Kenway had robbed a miner of a bag of gold. Now every miner is of necessity a peace officer. For, living in remote and sequestered localities where there are no constituted authorities close at hand, he is compelled to protect himself, and to unite with his neighbors in a mutual bond of defence and safety. As a rule, there is
about one constable to a district equal in extent to an English county. Yet crime is very rare on the Goldfields, and so imbued are the miners with the spirit of order that they will walk twenty or thirty miles, climb mountains, and ford rivers, to give information of any matter of which it appears to be desirable that the police should have cognizance. There is good in this, for it tends to develop and foster that self-reliant spirit which is so marked a characteristic of the gold-miners of New Zealand.

Now, Master Tom Kenway had been drinking at the shanty, where the robbery had occurred, and had gone thence to another grog-study. And when the loss was discovered, lo! there was the empty bag in Tom's pocket. Whereupon he was seized by the indignant spectators and detained in custody pending the arrival of the police, who had been communicated with, and into whose hands it was the intention of his captors to deliver him. The capture had been effected at three o'clock in the morning. It was now eight, but there was no sign of the police, and the crowd, already impatient, became savagely so when they witnessed the fellow's brutal treatment of his wife.

"Hang him up! String him up!" they cried.

"No," said the miners in charge of him. "We've got him, and we mean to keep him till the police come."

Then a single voice—a hoarse, muddy voice—called out, "There's no police. Hang him!"

George looked in the direction of the voice, and his eyes encountered the turbulent visage of "Flash" Jimmy. When that worthy felt George's glance upon him he slunk behind the crowd abashed. George walked over to Tom Kenway.

"Say, mate, are you innocent or guilty?" Thus George.

"Innocent, by — !" And he named a name never to be uttered "without that reverence which is due from the creature to the Creator."

"Needn't swear," said George, "What you say ain't a bit more believable for that. Reckon if a man's able to tell a lie, he's mostly equal to swearing one, as a general thing. On your word, as a man—(though you ain't much of that, neither)—did you steal that gold?"

Tom Kenway glared at him angrily. "Mind your own business. I don't want any of your preaching humbug."

And he turned sulkily away.

"Well, Tom," George quietly observed, "I guess I'll mind my own business, for it ain't very reputable to be mixed up in your affairs, that's a fact."

He walked over to where Mary was standing, anxiously awaiting the issue of the conference. "Mary—Mrs Kenway"—he said, "this ain't no sort of place for you. Go away to your tent, and leave it to me."

"No, no!" she cried, "I can't go—I can't leave him. What will they do to him? Oh, sir, I beseech you save him from those cruel men."

"Now see here," said George, firmly, "you must go away. If you don't, I will, ma'am."

"Why do you want me to go away?" she answered quickly. "Is it because you know they will kill him, and you wish to spare me the sight? Is that it?"

"No, ma'am," said George, "it ain't that; but it ain't fit for you to stay here, nohow."

"Fit!" she echoed. "What place so fit for a wife as her husband's side when he is in danger? I will not leave. Let me pass. I will stay by dear Tom to the last."

"Yes? That's very good of you, Mrs Kenway. You're a plucky little woman, ma'am, and I esteem you. You're a true wife, you are, and I guess a good mother, too. Might I inquire how the baby progresses?"

She parted the hair on her forehead with a gesture of apprehension, and the maternal instinct—dormant in the contemplation of her husband's danger—awoke within her breast. "My child!" she said. "Poor baby, I had forgotten
her. Ah yes, let me go to my child. I will come back again, Tom,” she cried more loudly.

And Tom, hearing all—caring nothing—condemned her to perdition.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE JUDGE AND THE SERGEANT.

The disappearance of Mary from the scene was the signal for a renewal of the uproar. Some there were who demanded Tom’s release, but they were few in number and proportionately loud-voiced and defiant. Others called for instant punishment on the offender. The great majority sided with Tom’s captors, desiring that he should be given over to the police. And they shouted and scolded, and raved and gesticulated, as only an excited mob can. And still the prisoner stood in the midst, and his four guards, armed with pick-handels, patrolled between him and the people in a steady, resolute way, which compelled order, and secured the accused man from violence.

Suddenly, where or by whom none could tell, a pistol was discharged amongst the crowd. A moment of confusion ensued, of which Tom Kenway took instant advantage. With a nervous bound he sprang away, and before his captors had recovered from their surprise he was fifty yards off. Then with a tremendous shout—a thousand-man power cry of rage—the entire crowd pursued him.

It was a race for life or death; for Tom expected nothing less than a stout rope and a short thrust in the event of his being caught. He was lithe of limb, and sound of lung, and active withal; and many a footrace he had won in his time. But then his powers had been exerted in friendly contest; how heavy was the stake for which he now ran!

Down the gully he went at a marvelous pace, leaping obstacles of all kinds—water-holes and rocks, and claims and cradles; and ever at his heels followed the infuriated mob, yelling, cursing, clamoring—all “giving tongue” like a pack of hounds in chase. But in all that crowd none ran so fleetly as the hunted man. He strained every muscle in his sinewy frame to compass his escape. The cries of his pursuers stimulated him to renewed efforts, and hope sprang up in his bosom as he found the space between himself and them gradually increasing.

The course he was taking led him past the foot of the spur whereon stood the tent of our friends. Jim Darley and Pegleg were sitting outside, taking their breakfast in the cheerful sunlight. They heard the report of the pistol, and saw Tom burst away from his captors. The excitement of the chase infected even them.

“Why, Jim lad,” roared Pegleg, “how he do run. He be a main strong runner, surely. Den’t he be a fine runner, Jim?”

“Aye,” said Jim, “and he’ll get away, too—bless’d if he won’t. Wonder what he’s done!”

On came the hunter and the hunters. With clenched hands, set teeth, and staring eye-balls—panting with the violence of his efforts, Tom flew down the ravine with deer-like rapidity, and still on his trail swept the angry crowd, bent on re-capturing their victim. As he came up to the spur, Jim threw down the pannikin from which he had been drinking and dashed down the declivity at an acute angle, so as to intercept the fugitive at a farther point. He calculated his distance well. As Tom came up to the point, Jim bore down upon him, and with a blow of his muscular fist knocked him into the creek.

And the crowd, coming up hastily, fell over Jim and over each other, and for a minute there was a promiscuous mass of people all struggling to extricate themselves from the common press.

Presently Tom emerged on to the bank, closely guarded by two determined-looking men, who hurried him onward in the direction of a steep cliff, from the crevices whereof sprang a stunted, but sturdy birch-tree. The
people readily divined their purpose, and the loud outcries were replaced by an ominous under-current of sound. Not a word was spoken by the leaders; but in awful silence one of them scaled the cliff, and made fast a rope to the pendant tree. The other end dangled loosely over the prisoner's head. Instinctively he closed his eyes, and a tremor pervaded his frame, and the perspiration stood in large beads on his forehead, and trickled down his blanched and livid face.

Not a word was spoken; but from afar came a shriek as of a woman in agony, and all knew that that anguished cry was the cry of Tom's wretched wife.

"Now, then," said one of the leaders. "We cannot wait any longer. If your mates hadn't fired upon us we'd have kept you for the police. But it don't seem as if they mean coming, and we won't stand to be shot down. Say your prayers, mate, for in five minutes you'll be a dead man."

Whether they would really have proceeded to this last extremity we shall never know. I doubt it. For I do not know of a single case having ever occurred in Victoria, New South Wales, or New Zealand, where the penalty of death has been inflicted by the miners; although Judge Lynch has sometimes—not frequently—inflicted minor punishments.

But before a hand was laid on the prisoner, George W. Pratt stepped up to his guards.

"Boys," he said, "this sort of thing won't work nohow. Fair play is bonny play all the world over. If this poor devil has done anything, punish him as much as you choose, gents, but let him be tried first. See now, I've witnessed many a Lynching down to California, but I never yet saw a man hung without a fair trial. So—by your leave, boys—I propose that a Judge and a jury of seven be elected to try this man."

A dozen voices seconded the proposal, which, as the newspapers say, was "carried by acclamation." Then the jurors were elected by a show of hands, and finally George himself was voted to the judicial chair. All this occupied much time, and so aided the object which George had in view, which was simply to keep the crowd amused till the proper authorities should arrive. Unknown to the others he had dispatched Pegleg on the donkey to hurry up the police. And he now availed himself of every pretence which would enable him to gain time.

At length the preliminary proceedings being completed, George assumed his seat as Judge on a convenient slate boulder, and on either side sat the jury, three to the right and four to the left. The prisoner stood in front, his hands and feet manacled with ropes for the better prevention of a second escape. The prosecutor, a tall Scotchman, stood a little nearer to the impromptu tribunal, so as to be heard equally by the Court and the prisoner. And the admiring audience formed a semicircle around, which, as the Judge faced the range, gave to the whole scene an amphitheatrical appearance.

And, first, George administered to the jurymen, singly, the obligation of their office thus—

"You promise on your honor as a man that you will patiently, carefully, and fully inquire into all the circumstances of this case, and a verdict return according to the evidence laid before you without fear, malice, or affection."

To which each jurymen replied "I promise."

Then, with much dignity, George called upon the prosecutor to state the case. He was gaining time famously. But this was more than the said prosecutor was prepared to do. He had been drinking with Tom and others at the shanty, and had had a bag of gold, about ten ounces, stolen from him there, and that was all he knew about it.

"Do you charge this man with the theft?" demanded George.

"Weel, I'm no vera sure in my mind o't," quoth the Scotchman, with characteristic caution. "Maybe aye, maybe no. I wadnae care to swear tillt."
“Gents,” said George to the jury, “it appears there is no charge against the man.” Then, noting the murmurs of dissatisfaction which arose from the British public, he added—“However, it’s only the square thing to go on with the case, and hear all the evidence, so that if the man is guilty, he may be punished; and, if innocent, he may be honorably acquitted.”

A cheer followed this speech. Then, turning to the prisoner, he said—

“Thomas Kenway, you are charged with having stolen a bag of gold from Sandy M’Pherson; how do you plead?”

“I don’t plead at all; I won’t plead. You have no right to try me. It’s murder—murder, I tell you.”

“The Court will enter up a plea of Not Guilty,” said George, very calmly. Then calling Jim, who was standing by, he told him in a whisper to go to the top of the terrace, and see if Pegleg was coming.

“Now,” said George to M’Pherson, “I must administer to you the customary obligation.”

This created another diversion. Sandy wouldn’t take any obligation; he “misloubted if it was richt to dae sae.” George was gaining time excellently well. At last it was agreed that Sandy’s evidence should be taken without the obligation. By this time it was ten o’clock.

“Weel,” commenced Sandy, “I was doon at yon place they ca’ Lang Tam’s on the Sabbath e’en, jist haeing a wee drap whiskey, ye ken, and a crack wi’ two bodies there about a wheen things, an’ I foregathered wi’ this laddie there, an’ the ane stoup brought on the tither, till about twal o’clock I minded to be ganging, because o’t its being close on the Sabbath morn; an’ when I clappit my hand in my pock-poke I faund nathin’ in till’t a’ a. I had a bag o’ gold au’t two pund notes, forby some siller, when I went intil Lang Tam’s, an’ it was a’ gane.”

“Would you know the bag again,” asked George. “Is this it?” dangling the bag which had been discovered in Tom’s possession.

Sandy inspected it long and carefully, turning it upside down and inside out. “It’s muckle like it,” said he at last—“it’s very muckle like it, but I’ll no be sure o’t. Ye ken there’s mony sic-like bags, an’ I’d no like to be positeevie aboot it.”

“Well, sir,” said George, “you give your evidence fair and square. If you can’t speak to the bag, have you any other cause for supposing prisoner to be the thief? Mightn’t some other man have annexed it, do you think?”

But before Sandy could answer, a loud whistle from Jim Darley drew everybody’s attention to the terrace above. There appeared three riders—I cannot say horsemen, for one of them bestrode an ass. Of course that was old Pegleg and the Third Mate. Of the other two one, wore blue and buttons, the other was in ordinary private costume. A loud cry arose, “The Police!” George and the journeymen kept their seats and their gravity. The two horsemen rode up.

“Don’t take the law into your own hands, gentlemen,” cried the foremost.

“Show me the prisoner,” demanded the second—“I arrest you in the Queen’s name!” he continued when Tom was pointed out to him. Then, observing George, he exclaimed—“Upon my conscience, thin I’ve a mind to arrest you too for contumacy and breach of the peace.”

“Hey, what,” said the other, “Why, bless my heart—so it is—Good morning, Mr Pratt. What? Poaching on my preserves!”

It was our old friend the Commissioner, and his ally was no other than the bold Sergeant.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LONG ARM OF THE LAW.

The appearance of the two officials was as unexpected as it was opportune. In fact they had only arrived at the Station on the previous day. The Commissioner had been sent over from his own district to report on the new goldfield, and he had selected for his aile
the Sergeant, who, despite his eccentricities of speech, was a most able and energetic officer.

"Don't take the law into your own hands," repeated the Commissioner. "You must not suppose that because you are here, in this remote wilderness, the law cannot reach you. The law has long arms—very long arms—and if this man had been harmed, I would have marched the offenders down to Dunedin. What is the meaning of that rope?"

The leaders in the late scene slunk away abashed. But George replied—

"Well, Mr Commissioner, that rope was hoisted up there jest where you see it, to hang your prisoner with if he had been found guilty by the boys; that's all sir."

"That's all, indeed?" cried the Commissioner, "Why you—you—Mr Pratt—Do you know it would have been murder—murder, sir?"

George aimed a straight shot at the rope, stowed his plug in a corner, and answered:—

"Perhaps so; guess killing is always pretty much like murder. I don't see it makes much difference in the sum total of the account, whether it's done inside a stone fence or out in the free air. Best not go to argue about that. You've got your prisoner, sir. If you had aroused yourself a little earlier, I reckon you'd have saved this child a mighty deal of worry. He'd have been as dead as a Queen's speech if I hadn't knocked around to get him a fair trial."

"Where is the prosecutor?" inquired the Commissioner.

There was no response; Sandy McPherson had disappeared in the throng.

"Guess he's slopped," said George. "Can't allow that. Jest you wait here till I resume acquaintance with him."

Sandy was quickly found, for the mob still thirsted for vengeance. But Sandy was resolute not to prosecute.

"I'ze no for ganngin' doon till the Camp," he said. "It winna fetch back the gold, and I'd maybe lose mair in

the daein' o't than a' its worth. Eh, mon! but it's a fair loss! Ten braw ounces a'gane. Neist time I gae intil a shanty I'll be mair careful wha I forgetter wi'. But I'ze no gang till the Camp."

"See here, said George, "there's no cause for you to go to the Camp; but if you don't give in your name to the Commissioner he won't take that poor devil away, and I won't answer for his life if he stops here."

"An' wha cares for sic a ne'er-do-well as you? Hangin's too gude for the fallow."

George looked at him. "Well," he said, "you are a caution—you are. Think of his wife and bairns."

"Imph—impl!—Its gey hard, mooot, for the wife and wean, 'but I canna be fashed."

"Sandy," said George, "I reckon I know where your gold is to be found."

"Aye?" quipped Sandy.

"Yea airmee, and I rather guess I can get it back for you if you do as I wish. Go up to Mr Commissioner and give in your name at once, sir, or, by Jehoshaphat! I don't illuminate your dismal understanding one cent."

"Weel, weel! I'll dae anythin' that's richt, ye ken; an' as ye say it wad be a fearsome thing for the poor wifie to see her husband strangled afore her vera een. I'm a merciful man myself, an' a member o' the kirk, and it wad ill become me to be the cause o' any man's death. Sae I'll jist tak your advice, and speak till the Commissioner. I'ze no ashamed o' my name."

So Sandy gave his name to the Commissioner and received his instructions to be in attendance at the Camp on the following morning.

Mary Kenway had been held in check by a matronly neighbor during this interval; but when she saw her husband being led away captive by the Sergeant, she broke away, and once more appeared on the scene.

"Where are you taking him?" she cried. "What are you going to do with him?"

"Dear, dear!" said the Commis-
sioner, "this will never do. Take away that woman, some of you." "Be easy, my dear," whispered the Sergeant. "He'll be better wid ourselves than in the hands of the raging populuxs."

But Mary would not be so comforted. She declared that she would go with Tom—that nothing should part them. 'Twas pitiful to see her distress. Yet more pitiful was it to witness the cold unresponsive brutality wherewith Tom ignored the woman's devotion.

"Come away Mrs Kenway, ma'am," said Pratt. "If you wish to go down to the Camp we'll jest hoist you on to the back of our Third Mate, babe and all, and I'll see you safe there, you can bet on that, ma'am."

And thus with much persuasion and some gentle force was Mary restrained from following her husband.

CHAPTER XX.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE WITH A NEW NAME.

As the Commissioner moved away, the crowd began to disperse. But in front of George's tent there remained a small group intently scanning the miners as they passed up the gully. These were George and his mates, Sandy McPherson, and the whole of the late jurymen.

"Now, Mister Sandy," said Pratt, "jest you try to point out the men who were in Long Tom's shanty when you dropped that pile of yours."

Presently there came by two men, diverse in appearance but alike evil of countenance. The one was dark, with greasy locks—obligituous of vision, and grimy: it was Flash Jimmy. The other was conspicuous by his shaggy red hair and fiery visage: it was Ginger. The Scotchman indicated these as having been in his company on Saturday night.

"Jest so," said George. "I guessed how it would eventuate. Well, Mister, I reckon them darned loxours have got your gold. Now, boys, I don't want any noise made about this. The only way to fix the varmints is to keep low and trap them before they take a scare."

An hour afterwards, when all was quiet, Mr George W. Pratt sauntered down by himself to Long Tom's. There was quite a crowd in the shanty, and amongst them were the seven jurors, who, in accordance with a preconcerted arrangement, had dropped in one at a time so as to avoid giving any alarm. Neither Ginger nor Flash Jimmy was visible; but there was Tripes busily dispensing fiery spirits to the thirsty multitude.

"Morning, boys," said George. "Jest looked in to see the gent that keeps this shanty."

"There he is," said one of the jurors, pointing to Tripes; "that's Long Tom."

"Oh, that's Long Tom! Well, now, that's mighty curious. 'When I met him last he owned to another name."

"What business is that of yours?" growled the ruffian tapster. "Can't a man call himself any name he likes? That's what I say."

"Certainly, sir," said George. "This is a free country, I guess. I'll trouble you for some liquor, sir, if you please."

With visible reluctance, Tripes, or Long Tom, as we must now call him, filled up a glass and handed it to George, who, looking him steadily in the face, poured the contents on the ground.

"What is the meaning of that!" shouted Long Tom in a rage.

"Jest notice to quit, that's all," said George. "If you ain't out of this in quick time, every drop of stuff there is in this darned cuss of a place shall be poured out like that, you bet."

There was a commotion amongst the inmates of the shanty, and the seven jurors ranged themselves by the side of George.

"Now, boys," said George, "I've got a word or two to say to you all. There's been a robbery in this here place, and it's a disgrace to the gully if we don't find out the thieves. This morning I and these gents were elected
by the people to try a man—that's Tom Kenway—for it. We believe that man was innocent, and that the empty bag was planted in his pocket by them that robbed Sandy of his gold. Now that man Long Tom, as you call him, is a notorious vagabond, and a confederate of two of the infernalist soundrels in these parts. That's so, gents. And they've got the gold between them. Now we mean to have it back anyhow. Will you stand by us and see the square thing done?

"It's a lie—an infernal lie," roared Long Tom. I know nothing about it. Tom Kenway took the man's gold, and this cursed Yankee wants to screen him, because he's sweet on his wife."

George strode over to the infuriated shanty-keeper, warded off the blow made at him, and seized him by the throat.—"You black-souled villain," he cried "if you don't unsay them words, I'll squeeze your lying tongue out of your dirty mouth."

And indeed Long Tom was getting black in the face before George released him—trembling with fright and pain. "I didn't mean any harm," he said. "Twas as ample an apology as the fellow was capable of offering."

Then sheltering himself behind a table, he cried, "Will you let an honest man be bullied like this? I haven't got the gold."

But the appeal was not responded to. "See here, boys," said George, "I mean to give this skunk a chance. He can't get away to let on to the others, for I've taken care to have them shepherded, you bet. All I want him to do is to write three lines to his mate telling them to give up the plunder."

"I won't write anything. I'll see you——"

"No you won't. Guess I know what you were about to observe. But it can't be done at the price. Just take this pencil and write, as I tell you."

Long Tom refused. He would not write—he could not write. George put the question to his jurymen——

"Say, gents, do you concur that he's to write what I direct?"

Yes; they concurred.

"Do you also concur that if he don't do so we burn this shanty down, spill the liquor, and absorb his carcass in the dam?"

They concurred in that also; and the bystanders stood neutral and admiring. Not a friend had Long Tom in that crowd.

"Very well, then," said George, "that being resolved accordingly, I'll proceed to business."

He lit a match. "Now, if you don't write as I tell you before this match burns out, I'll fire the tent with it—to begin."

The ruffian nature held out to the last second. George had already stooped to fulfil his threat, when Long Tom cried, "I'll give in. What am I to write?"

And at George's dictation he scrawled the following:

"We are found out. Give up the gold, or we are dead men.—'Tories.'"

While this was passing in the shanty, other events were occurring outside. Ginger had noticed George's movements, and wondering at such an unusual occurrence as the American's visit to a groggery, had stepped out of his tent to go down there also. But he found himself encountered by Jim Darling and Pegleg.

"You can't go that way," said Jim.

"Why not?" asked Ginger. "I'll go if I like."

"No, you won't," said Jim. "I've got my orders. You're to stay here till the Cap'en comes."

"Aye, aye, lad," chimed in Pegleg, "shout in the right o't. Jim. The Cap'en he's got some'at to do down to shanty,—some'at to do—hain't he, lad?"

Then Jim explained to Mr Ginger that the miners—a number of whom were standing about—were all on duty as sentries to prevent any communication till the mysterious "some'at" had been satisfactorily settled. And in fact Ginger found that himself and his mate
were prisoners in their own tent. So he retired to his den discomfited and rather uneasy in his mind.

Soon George W. Pratt made his appearance, attended by his faithful jurymen, and made straight for Ginger's tent, where he discovered that worthy and Flash Jimmy in close conclave together. To them he presented the scrap of paper bearing Long Tom's autograph. "Now then," he said, "you've jest got two minutes to hand over that gold. You see your mate has confessed, so it ain't no use to deny it, and we ain't got no time to spare about it. So wake snakes and be smart."

There was no need to describe the scene that ensued. The protests of the thieves were drowned by the yells of the miners, who now began to reassemble.

In less than three minutes the gold was given up, and the villanous trio were in full retreat down the gully, having been allowed ten minutes' law by Judge Lynch. At the expiration of that brief period the tent and the shanty were fired, for in this matter George was unable to stay the angry populace. And thus was justice briefly and expeditiously executed.

CHAPTER XXI.

TOM'S WIFE.

Then there was a general gush of sympathy with Tom Kenway and Tom Kenway's wife. For the popular instinct is ever honest, and faithfully responsive to the best impulses of our common nature. The people surrounded her tent, and glorified her by way of making amends for their previous mistake. They frightened her in fact by their noisy and tumultuous enthusiasm. But through it all, with glad tears in her eyes, she clung to George as her friend, and the mob echoed her feelings by chafing that gentleman. They carried him shoulder high to his own tent, and set him on a rock, and demanded from him a speech. Then, Mr. George W. Pratt, being moved thereunto by the excitement of the moment, spoke thus:

"Fellow citizens and brother miners!—I ain't muchly in the way of orating, but I'll just speak a piece if you won't make such a damned row. I ain't very powerful in the wind, that's a fact, owing to having got clogged up with too much molasses and huckleberry jam when I was a lovely infant in my mother's arms. Now, gents, there's jest one piece of advice I want to give you. You were nigh hangin' an innocent man this morning; and I believe many have been hustled out of the world for jest as little cause before. It strikes me no man should take from any other man what he can't give back again if he finds he's made a mistake. And that's life. That's the gift of God, that is, and nobody but He that gave it has a right to take it away. That's my opinion. So, gents, next time you catch a thief, don't be in an all-fired hurry to string him up, for fear you might be wrong. Now you'll all go home happy, because you weren't let to do what you wanted this morning. How would you feel if Tom Kenway were a-swinging from that tree yonder? Not very good, I reckon. Well, boys, that lets me out. Guess I've used up all the dictionary I know about."

Then the crowd gave three cheers for George—three cheers for Mary Kenway—three groans for Long Tom and his mates; and having thus exhausted its superfluous energy, it went quietly home to supper.

Next day George went down to interview the Commissioner. And Mary Kenway, in her anxiety for Tom, would insist on going also.

"Don't understand it ma'am," said George. "You seem almighty fond of that young man, as no doubt you should be, being his wife. No offence, but he does take it wonderful cool—that's so."

"Poor Tom!" said Mary, "he loves the very ground under my feet; but it's his way not to show it."

"Yes? Well some folk's ways are peculiar. Tom Kenway's are."
"Ah!" cried Mary, still pleading for her husband, "you don't know Tom as I do. Would you like me to tell you my story, Mr Pratt? I think I may. I don't think Tom would object."

"Well, Mrs Kenway, ma'am, I'm the least curious man in the world; but I would be pleased to hear your little story, I know."

So as they walked, Mary Kenway related the story of her life—poor little life—so few years spent—so much to tell.

(End of Book I.)
CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH MARY KENWAY TELLS A PART OF HER STORY.

"I was very young when I lost my mother," said Mary Kenway; "quite a child indeed, not six years old."

"Yes?" said Mr George W. Pratt. "That was cruel hard on you, ma'am. Always is so, when mothers die and leave young children."

"But, sir," said Mary hesitatingly, "and as it were beseechingly, "my mother didn't die; at least not then. She--she went away, sir."

"Went where?" cried George.

"Went away--left us, you know. I don't know where. I didn't know at the time. All I remember is that one night I was awoke after I had gone to bed--long after it seemed to me--by my mother kissing me; and she was crying--she must have been crying, because my face was wet when I awoke. It is all like a dream to me. I was fast asleep, and when I opened my eyes there was dear mother, with her arms round my neck and kissing me, as I told you, sir. She said something--I didn't well understand what--bidding me good bye. 'Good-bye, darling,' she said. 'May God in Heaven bless you!' And I think I answered, 'Good-night mamma!' and went off to sleep again. I was very--very young you know. I couldn't understand it at all. But I never saw her again--never; and next day they told me she had gone away. That is all I know about it, Mr Pratt."

George looked down scrutinizingly on the young innocent face of Mary Kenway and wondered much. The extremes of artfulness and simplicity approach each other so nearly that it is not always easy to discriminate between them. Yet, in this case, George felt convinced that Mary was unconscious of the possible interpretation which might be attached to the scene so simply described by her.

"I was the only child," continued Mary, after a pause, "and my only remembrance now of my mother is of the sweet, loving, sad face bending over me that night. I don't know where she went, or why she left us, but soon after they made me put on a black frock, and told me that she was dead, and the servants called me 'Poor child!' and seemed to pity me very much. I don't know why now. Sometimes I seem to have read it all in a book--the whole thing is so dim and shadowy."

"Might I inquire where was your father, ma'am," said Mr George Pratt. "I don't think I ever heard of him till some years after mother went away. When that happened I was taken away to a school in Hobart Town--you know I am a Tasmanian born, Mr Pratt. A dismal dull place it was, and the mistress was very stern and staid and solemn. I did so much dislike the place. It was so different from the dear little cottage where I had lived before. Oh, how I missed our garden, with its beautiful flowers and the shrubs where I used to hide, and the fruit trees I used to climb, and,
the soft sweet grass where I used to lie and watch the birds.

"At the school there was a great tall fence round a square stiff grass plot, and we were never suffered to move outside except when one of the teachers marched us two-and-two in procession down the street to show off the school. And I could not learn much. I never was good at learning, and that dreadful arithmetic and the awful nouns and verbs vexed my poor little head till I used to go sobbing to my pillow and cry to mamma to come back to me. But she never came back. She couldn't you know, if she was dead.

"The first time I recollect seeing my father was when I had been seven years — a dreadful time it seems to me—at school. I was sent for one day into the mistress's room, and the governess—a prim, old, judy-faced, kind-hearted creature—took me first up stairs, and made me put on my best clothes, and clean stockings, and she trimmed my hair, and washed my face, and I recollect her putting a blue silk sash of her own round my waist. Then I was taken into the parlor and there was a tall dark gentleman with a great beard, and eyes that seemed to look through and through me. I don't think—I am nearly quite sure that I had never seen him before. So the mistress said to him—'This is Miss Mary, sir?'; and then it struck me for the first time that I had no other name than Mary. Other girls were called Miss Smith, and Miss Maclean, and Miss Williamson, as it might happen to be, but poor little I was only Miss Mary—always Miss Mary—nothing else."

"Guess that's a short name for a full-grown girl," said George. "Did you never get another till you got married?"

"Oh yes; afterwards, you know, sir. The strange gentleman looked at me very hard for a time, without speaking. At last he said, 'Humph! very like; very like!' Then he called me to him. 'Come here, Mary,' And I was so frightened that I burst out crying; he looked so stern, you know. And I said to the governess, 'Oh, please let me go away!' But she took me by the hand kindly. 'Nonsense, child!' she said. 'don't be silly, you little puss! This gentleman is your papa.' And he took me in his arms and looked into my eyes with a strange and look as it seemed to me. 'Yes, Mary, I am your father. Will you live with me, little Mary, and love me?'

"And was it really your paternal ancestor?" inquired George.

"Yes, indeed, it was, Mr Pratt. I was a little—I mean very timid—at first. He had a stern way with him that I felt, you know—I felt it; I cannot describe it, but I felt it. Yet he was very kind, and I learnt to love him in time. He used to come to see me often after that, and some way I could not help loving him. Only there was always a spice of awe mingled with the love. It is a curious feeling. I can't well explain it, Mr Pratt. But I think you understand me. Some people make you love and fear them, whether you will or no. Tom does. I love him dearly, but I'm a bit afraid of him sometimes; I don't know why. I like you too, Mr Pratt—not in the way I like Tom, you know; but I do like you, and I don't feel afraid of you at all."

"Thank you ma'am," said George, "for the compliment, which I duly reciprocate. I don't want you to feel alarmed at my presence. I ain't a man-eater, that's a fact; and I don't aim much at lady-killing. It's not in my way. But I rather approbate your style, Mary—might I make so bold as to call you Mary, ma'am?"

"Oh yes, sir!" cried Mary, "do, please; it will be so nice. And I'll call you Cousin George, shall I?"

"Certainly, ma'am, if you wish. Cousin is a very respectable denomination. It ain't quite so near as sister, but it's a mighty deal sweeter, I reckon."

Mary looked up into George's face inquiringly. His honest eyes met hers
frankly, yet with a certain gleam of
fun that brought a shadowy blush to
her face. "You don't think it would
be wrong, sir?" she asked in the most
artless manner conceivable.

"No," said George gravely, "I don't
ma'am. I have sisters of my own."

"Then I will call you Cousin George,
and you shall call me Mary," said Mrs.
Kneway.

Nevertheless, I think they were
approaching as near to the limits of
Platonic affection as is admissible.

CHAPTER II

"MARY" AND "COUSIN GEORGE."

"When I was about fourteen," con-
tinued Mary, "my father took me from
the school to his house. But I havn't
told you who my father was yet, I
think."

"Just so, Mary," said George,
"that's an unmitigated fact—that is.
Suppose he had a name?"

"Yes, indeed he had. He was a re-
tired East Indian officer—a Captain
in the Company's service, at least he
had been a lieutenant, and took rank as
captain when he retired. Captain
Fielding, that is his name, for he is still
living; you know, and I was Mary
Fielding of course. I don't know why
they never gave me my full name be-
fore. Well, I went to live with him at
Avondale—that is the name of our
place, Cousin George. A beautiful place
on the Derwent river, above Hobart
Town. I was very happy there. I had
no lessons to learn. I could roam about
all day, just as I pleased, and I had a
pretty bay pony to ride. That is how
I became acquainted with dear Tom,
you know. He was in my father's
employ—at least he was engaged to
teach me riding, and we used to go for
such long pleasant rides under the
scented gum trees, and through the
pleasant wattles down by the river and
over the plains. Ah! Cousin George,
it was very nice. I enjoyed the free
fresh air so much, and Tom was so good
and so kind to me, that, do you know,
I got to love him dearly."

"Well, now," said George, "that's
quite natural. You ain't the first as
got fond of a fellow over that sort of
game. I don't know of nothing better
calculated to set young folks a-sweet-
hearing than mutual pleasures—
specially on horseback. No, I don't
ma'am."

Mary laughed a breezy little laugh.
"I don't know how it happened, but I
did get very fond of Tom, and I knew
he was quite fond of me, because he
used to say so. But I never thought
of marrying him. I'm not sure I ever
should have married him, only for an
accident."

"Yes? How was that precipitated,
Mary?"

"Well, I can hardly tell. Somehow
I fell one day. Baldly—that was my
pony you know—stumbled over a fallen
log, and I was thrown. I fell against
the log, and was stunned; and when I
came to myself, Tom was holding me
in his arms, trying to revive me, you
know, and—and, well, he kissed me,
and told me how he loved me, and I—
I can't tell you what more. Before
we went home I had promised to
marry him. And of course I did."

"Didn't the old gent protest against
the annexation?"

"The Captain, my father, you mean.
Oh, yes. He was very angry when he
knew it. My father is very hot-
tempered, Cousin George. He said
Tom wasn't good enough for me. But
I was fond of Tom, and I had promised
him. So I could not help marrying
him when he asked me to keep my
promise. How could I? Besides, my
father wanted me to marry another
man—a man I didn't care for one bit.
He had a large estate near ours, but he
was twenty years older than me, and I
didn't like him. Why should a girl
marry a man she doesn't like? I
couldn't, you know, and I didn't; and
when papa insisted on it I told Tom
that he must take me away and make
me his wife at once. And of course he
did, you know. There was nothing
else to be done."

"Just so," said George. "But how
about the paternal. Wasn't he wrathful just a trifle?"

"I have never seen him since, cousin George."

"No; how did that happen?"

"Well, you know," said Mary, "he wrote me a letter saying he disowned me, and threatening to leave his property away from me, and when Tom and I went to the house he refused to see us. Oh, sir," she continued, with tears starting to her eyes, "he was very, very unkind. I don't like to talk of it. Perhaps he'll change some day, for I am his only child. But anyway I've got Tom."

George thought in his heart that "Tom" was but a poor exchange for even the roughest and sternest of fathers, but never a word said he of this. Nay, he strove to console her—tried against his convictions to persuade her that her stern parent would by-and-by relent, and receive the wanderer back into the fold.

"Don't you think it very hard," said Mary, "to be compelled to choose between one's husband and a father?"

"Yes Mary, ma'am," answered George. "It is pretty tough lines when it comes to that, I reckon. And I don't want to be hard upon you, but when a young gal runs her head slapdash into love it's ten to one she gets so preciously befuddled that she can't see clear to steer a straight course. Anyway it's even betting she ain't the best judge of what's good for her. Never mind, Mary. You jest keep your heart up, and maybe the old party will come round in time."

Now, when George began, he had intended to give Mary Kenway a small piece of a moral lecture, but she was so completely overcome—broken-down in fact—that she began sobbing pitifully before he had well got steam up. So he forbore to add to the pressure, and ended by an attempt at consolation. The end of it all was that Mary threw herself down on the grass, handkerchief in hand, to have "a good cry," and George—always tender-hearted and now quite pitiful—sat down by her side to comfort her. Which was all very right and proper, no doubt, but very decidedly dangerous.  

CHAPTER III.  

A STRANGE GROUP.

"Ho! ho! ho! What art about Cap'en? Thou'lt never get to camp that fashion. Why Cap'en—Cap'en George, thou'rt a rum 'un, thou art, to be cuddlin' a lass when thee shouldst be making haste on thy way."

"Er, but it's a weary day and a long road, and a Bonnie laisie's a gran' temptation to a poor man in sic an awsome place as this."

George sprang to his feet and looked round. There was old Pegleg astride Old Jack, and marching by his side was Sandy M-Pherson. They had surprised him unawares. George bit his lips with vexation.

"See here now," he said, somewhat angrily, if the truth must be told, "see here, now, I don't approbate this kind of talk, not much. No sirree. The lady was tired out with the heat and wanted to rest, that's all."

"Aye, aye, Cap'en, that'll do—that'll do lad, I don't want to vex thee. Lord love thy soul! Pegleg were young once. Here Cap'en, here's Old Jack for thy lady. Why didn't we tell us thou went going to Camp. Jack'll carry thy missus, won't thou, Jack?"

And in response to this appeal the Third Mate lifted up his voice and brayed lustily.

In truth the old man had thoughtfully enough followed on the track with his faithful quadruped, for the express purpose of expediting Mary Kenway's journey, and Sandy was necessarily going down in accordance with his promise to the Commissioner.

So now behold Mary seated on the donkey and escorted by "Cousin George," old Pegleg, and the Scotchman. Sooth to say, they made a picturesque group as they wound round the rocky spurs—fern clad, with occasional clumps of birch and manuka, and little rivulets trickling over rusty iron-
tinted boulders;—Mary, with her grey dress and bright tartan shawl, seated on the hairy brown donkey; George, clad in red shirt, tall felt hat, and ponderous knee-boots, striding alongside; Pegleg in blue shirt and yellow clay-stained moleskins stumping along astern; and Sandy, gorgeously arrayed in a braun new suit of heather tweed, suitable to the dignity of "the Court" wherein he was to figure as a principal witness. I met the party as they came along, and wondered at the scene. Years afterwards I first heard the story as I sat by a camp-fire on the shores of Lake Wanaka.

Thus, then, they made their entry into the embryonic township at the Station, which has since expanded into Queenstown. Of course, Tom was released from durance with as little delay as comported with the majesty of the law; receiving, somewhat ungratefully it must be said, a friendly hint from the bold Sergeant to be "more circumspect" of his company in the future. "Yes," growled Tom; "I'll take care to keep out of your company. That's the worst I ever got into."

"Come now," quoth the Sergeant, "kape a civil tongue in your head. It's meself that knows you well, faith, little as you think it, and the wife, too—bad luck to the day she ever set eyes on ye!"

Tom Kenway turned very pale, but never a word he answered. He seemed to suffer before the Sergeant, and literally slunk away like a whipped hound. George, and George only, had overheard this brief conversation. Said he, as Tom moved off, "You'll find Mrs Kenway waiting for you at the hotel facing the Lake."

For already there was an hotel (there are no inns in the Colonies), a palatial structure, cunningly constructed of an infinitesimal quantity of timber, and an unlimited proportion of canvas and calico. And it stood very nearly on the site of what is now one of the most comfortable, commodious, and complete hotels in all New Zealand.

But in reply for the information thus vouchsafed, Tom scowled angrily on his informant, and with a muttered oath went in the opposite direction.

"Well," said George, "you're a sweet youth, you are. Guess you'd be a bad bargain at five dollars, boots and all. Say, mister, where did you know that young fellow before this?"

But the bold Sergeant was not at all inclined to make a confidante of our friend Mr George W. Pratt. He had his reasons, had the Sergeant, for regarding that person as "a suspect," as the police termed a doubtful character: "Sure, now," said he, "I'm thinking ye've no cause to be asking that. Thim as consorts with bad characters is no better themselves."

George's eye twinkled with suppressed fun. But he restrained himself. "That's smart," he observed with a critical air—"mighty smart, I must say, though it ain't over and above polite, that's a fact. Now do you know I was about to give you a small assortment of information that might be useful, but one good turn deserves another, and if you don't feel disposed to reciprocate, I ain't on. What say, mister?"

"To the devil wiv your information," cried the Sergeant indignantly, and he walked away scornfully.

George was baffled for the time, but not beaten. He, too, walked away, but it was in the direction of the Commissioner's abode. Just as he reached the door Pegleg came up. "Now, Cip'nen, Ind," said that worthy, "when art goin' back? There's nought here but swilling and drinking—drinking and swilling. I'm giddy looking on at it, Cip'nen—giddy looking on. (Dush my wig, if I don't think thou'rt nigh on drunk, Pegleg.)"

"So I observe," said George, "the smell of the liquor seems to have got into your timber leg. See here, Pegleg, You go and saddle up Old Jack, and get away home, and I'll follow on by-and-bye."

"Ho! ho! ho!" shouted Pegleg.
THE ADVENTURES OF

CHAPTER IV.

THREE SCENES.

SCENE FIRST.

In a low booth at the rear of the township sat two men, with a brandy bottle by their side, whence they took frequent draughts, without recourse to the intervention of drinking utensils, or the admixture of water. One was a young man whose features would have been handsome but for the intense malignity which overcast his brow, and shone forth from his eyes. The other was older, and the expression of his face was that of a diabolical cunning. Other men were in the booth, but these two sat apart in a corner, conversing in stealthy monotones, regardless of the loud noise, the reckless laughter, and the ostentatious blasphemy which was freely indulged in around them.

"Did you see this, yourself?" asked the younger man.

"No," answered Long Tom, for he was there. "How could I when I wasn't there?"

"Then I won't believe it," said Tom Kenway. "I won't believe it," he repeated energetically. "Mary has always been a good wife to me. By—— she's a lady born and bred."

"That sort's often the worst," urged the tempter. "I'll tell you all I know about it. When they came in I twigged old Pegleg with your wife, and that Yankee fellow—curse him. So when Pratt went up to the camp, I got into conversation with the old 'un; and made friends with him, and he told me all about it."

"It's all lies, now I know it. Mind what you're about, for I'll kill you if you deceive me, I will."

"Oh, well, if you don't want to know the truth, it ain't no odds to me. Drink up the brandy, I don't mean to say no more about it."

"Yes, tell me what the old villain said about my wife. I'll keep my temper, never fear."

"Well, let's have a nip first." And they applied themselves in turn to the bottle.

The Sergeant came to the rescue with as much haste as was compatible with the dignity of his office. His hand clutched the offender's shoulder——

"Come away with ye," he cried. But Pegleg was indignant, and began to remonstrate in a tone and after a fashion which made the Commissioner stop his ears. A lodging in the lock-up seemed inevitable; but George took the Commissioner aside, and by dint of persuasion and entreaty he succeeded in getting Pegleg released, on the faith of his promise that he would take him away from the township immediately.

Brief as was this scene, it attracted a small crowd, amongst whom George recognized Long Tom and his friend of the greasy locks.

Ten minutes afterwards George was seen leading the donkey (on whose back was the refractory Pegleg) through the winding street of tents and stores, and so they passed, not unobserved, out of the place and up the Gorge which led to their location. Having got the old man safely past the grogshops and a mile or two on the way home, George gave the bridle into his hands, and bidding him make haste back, he returned to the township.
"Now then," said the unhappy young man, "go on. What did he tell you?"

"He said as how when he came up they were lying in the fern, and your Yankee friend was kissing her like mad, and — sit down, you fool, and don't make a row."

For Tom Kenway had risen to his feet, giving forth meantime a cry of wrathful anguish, which attracted to them the attention of the crowd.

"What's up? What's the matter?" asked two or three in a breath.

"Oh, nothing particular," said Long Tom, pushing his companion back into his seat. "The young'un's got a bad headache, I think. Come out into the fresh air," he continued addressing his victim. "It's too hot in here."

Kenway submitted to his guidance, and the pair emerged into the open space. "This ain't no way to be going on. Keep your temper," said Long Tom. "I'll show you how to be revenged on the hound."

"But is it true? Tell me that. Upon your oath is it true?"

"True as gospel, I tell you. But be quiet with you, or I don't help you. I don't want to swing for it."

"I'll do anything to have my revenge. I never thought it would come to this," he cried. Then in his passion he betrayed a truth to his comrade. "Look here," he said, "I never cared much for her, never. Her ways ain't my ways, and my ways ain't hers. But I run away with her, thinking the old Captain would make it up when we were man and wife. He's got lots of money—plenty of it, and I thought I'd be a made gentleman. But I've never had a penny from the old brute, and I never expect to. He's gone and adopted a niece, and he won't speak to Mary nor answer her letters. Curse her, how I hate her now. She's been a trouble to me, that's all, nothing else, with her baby ways. I'm sick of her. I'll never see her again. Her mother was bad before her, and she's the same. Let her be."

His tormentor watched him with demoniakal satisfaction gleaming from his bloodshot eyes. But not thus did he intend that the matter should terminate. He had his own revenge to wreak on George W. Pratt, and here was a fitting instrument for its accomplishment.

"Aye," he said, "let her be—that's best. Then she can go to her lover, you know, and you can go where you like."

"Never!" cried poor Tom Kenway. "I'll kill them both first. I'll strangle her, and shoot him dead for it."

"And get strung up for your pains? I can put you on a better lay than that. Will you listen?"

"Yes, yes, anything. What is it?"

"Sit down then, and be quiet, or I don't say another word."

They sat down—the weak victim and the wily torturer—side by side, and the latter unfolded a plan, a devilish plan, for taking vengeance on poor innocent Mary and honest George Pratt. Then with dry lips, and fiery hearts consumed by unholy passions, they again repaired to the booth to swallow more brain-destroying poison. There Tom Kenway was pilled with draught after draught of the burning liquor, till he was no longer master of his reason. He was ready for any deed of violence or villainy.

Scene Second.

Pegleg had not gone above a mile on the road after George had left him when he was overtaken by a man whose face seemed familiar to him, but whom in his bemuddled condition he failed to recognise. The new-comer entered into conversation directly. "Hullo mate! where bound?" he asked.

Pegleg regarded him with a leer of drunken gravity. "Home surely," he answered. "Let me see, I know thee and I don't know thee. What's thy name, lad? Eh! what's thy name?"

"Jones?" was the reply, "Don't you know Jones that lives next tent to yourself?"

"No, lad; I do not know thee," said the old man positively. "Thou're strange to me, but some way I seem
thy voice ben't new to me. What's that in thy hand, lad? Eh, why—why, lad, it do look like a knife. What dost carry a knife in thy hand for?

"Only to get a stick with," replied the false Jones; and with the word he cut a branch of the prickly Tumaturu.

"Ho! ho!" laughed Pegleg, "That be a main small stick. Thou't not travel far—"

Before he could finish the sentence Old Jack gave a vigorous bound, lifting his heels high up in the air, and sent his rider clean over his head. Then wildly careering he galloped off at full speed with the thorny branch fast under his tail, where it had been dexterously applied by the new comer.

"Thou be'st a bad 'un, thou be'st," roared Pegleg as he picked himself up. And without more ado he closed with his treacherous companion. The struggle was short, though fierce. The strength of the old man prevailed, and he quickly had his antagonist face downward on the ground. Then he sat upon him.

"Ho! ho! I know thee now, thou villain. Thou're Ginger, thou art. Thou wicked thief, I'll pay thee out. Do'st think to play tricks on an old man?"

And with every sentence he raised his wooden leg, and inflicted a blow on his prostrate foe. Suddenly Ginger collected his strength, and taking the old man by surprise, threw him off. Before the latter could recover himself, Ginger was on him. With his knife he severed the straps of his opponent's wooden leg, which he threw far away into the gully below. "There," he cried triumphantly, "I've a precious good mind to send you after it, and I would if you weren't such an old 'un. Now I don't want to harm you more than I can help. 'Twouldn't be so well though for either of your mates if I caught 'em. But home you don't go to-night, if I can help it. So stop there, old cockerlorn, till somebody comes to fetch your leg for you."

And with many mocking words, he returned on the track.

Now the spot where this incident occurred was a short cut over a spur, which was infrequently used, for although it saved nearly a mile in distance, it was rougher than the winding road which led up the glen.

So that, except by the merest chance, it was improbable any one would pass by for at least some hours.

**Scene Three.**

"Oh, sir! Mr Pratt, I fear Tom has gone home. Why did not some one tell him I was here?"

Thus Mary. To whom George, unwilling to wound by telling her that her husband knew right well where she was, and anxious to detain her in momentary expectation of his arrival, replied—

"Guess he's got among some old friends. Don't be in haste, ma'am. He'll come along in good time, no doubt."

"But it's getting so late, you know, sir. And there's poor baby too. I've been away from her all day. Oh, Cousin George, do you think you could find him?"

Before he could answer, the door was thrown violently open, and Tom Kenway stood in the entrance. Flushed with wrath and brandy he stood there, and surveyed the pair. Mary flew towards him. "Oh, Tom, dear, Tom!" she cried, "I am so glad you've come."

Thus with no word of reproach on her lip—no angry feeling in her bosom—the gentle woman met her lord and master. He repulsed her, inarticulate with the fury of his new-born jealousy. "Go!" he cried at last, "Go; you are no longer my wife. I have heard of your doings. I see it is all true; go to your fellow. I disown you; I leave you for ever."

"See here," interposed George, "you don't know what you are saying or doing. Your wife—"

Tom glared at him with maniacal passion, and thrust his clinging wife from him with such violence that she fell
heavily on the floor. Then with a fierce and awful malediction he rushed from the place and hurried down the crowded street.

George tenderly lifted the poor woman, and seated her in a chair. But his efforts at consolation were in vain. She could not understand what ailed "dear Tom." How should she, pure in heart, comprehend the impure thought that filled her husband's mind. In vain George assured her that it was "only the drink." That when he got over it he would be sorry, with many other commonplace, feeble enough, God knows, and all unavailing to erase the wretchedness that bowed her down. So he became silent at last, and let her weep on uninterruptedly.

Presently the flow of grief subsided; she rose to her feet and wrapped her plaid round her. "My child," she cried; "let me go back to my child. I have her left at least—come."

And so in silence, broken only by stifled sobs, the mother went forth, with George, striding solemnly and in great perplexity, by her side.

CHAPTER V.

CHILD OR HUSBAND?

The bold Sergeant was by no means "bouncing" when he intimated to Mr Thomas Kenway that he was acquainted with that worthy's antecedents. And the information which he refused to George W. Pratt he cheerfully tendered to the Commissioner. That information I am about to disclose to the reader with the sole reservation that—like all other scandals—it is to be regarded as strictly confidential, and not to be imparted to a third person, on any pretence whatsoever.

The bad, bitter blood of convictism ran in Tom Kenway's veins. His father had been transported for horse-stealing, and his mother for a watch robbery. From such an union, what could be expected? Tom inherited the vices and the propensities of both parents. He broke in Captain Fielding's horses, and he stole Captain Fielding's daughter. Little cared he for the latter, save as a means for the acquisition of the property which would, he thought, naturally devolve upon her as the Captain's sole heiress. But he erred in his estimate of the man with whom he had to deal. Captain Fielding—a stern, proud man, jealous of his honor, and morbidly sensitive of the very shadow of reproach—had in years gone by driven from his house the wife whom he adored, because of an unworthy and baseless rumor affecting her fair fame; and the poor disgraced woman had died of a broken heart shortly afterwards. One would have thought that such a lesson would have sufficed to teach him caution. Yet when he had so far conquered his pride as to take his daughter—her daughter—to his home, he left the girl free to follow her own inclinations, without stint or constraint. Thus it happened that, unchecked by parental authority, and unguided by parental advice—with no mother to watch over her—Mary fell an easy prey to the arts of the smooth-tongued and evil-hearted groom.

We know the result. Discarded by her father, whose doubly-wounded pride steeled his heart against her tender solicitations, Mary went forth from her home a pauper, yet still full of love and trust in the man who had so sordidly betrayed her. To her, he was all the world. She saw no faults, recognized no evil in him. And he, ever believing that sooner or later the old soldier would relent, had maintained at least the pretense of affection, though often the true temper of the fellow would break through the thin coating of complaisance wherewith he cloaked his naturally wicked disposition.

Rudely had the veil been torn asunder—"What does he mean? What can he mean? Oh! tell me, Cousin George, what is it all about?"

"Well ma'am," said George very gravely, "I won't lie. He's not in his right mind jest now. Some darned skunk has been fly-blistering his head with nonsense about me. Yes, Mrs
Kenway; that’s so. And when I get you safe home I don’t think it would be according to Cocker for you and I to be together muchly.”

The revelation came on Mary with the force of a thunderbolt. She stopped—pale, trembling, terrified. “Is it so?” she gasped—“Oh, sir, I have been wrong. But I meant no harm. Go away from me, I beg you! Why have you brought this dreadful thing upon me. You should have known better, Mr Pratt. Go—go away. You have ruined me.”

And covering her face with her hands, she burst into a very passion of tears.

What could George do? He was fairly nonplussed. He had only shown her the ordinary civility which is due from all men to all women. Yet here he was fairly involved in a dispute between man and wife, in which both parties apparently held him to be blameworthy. ‘Twas not the first time that a generous man has found himself in a similar dilemma, but it was George’s first experience of the sort, and he suffered accordingly.

“Well ma’am,” he said after a while, “when you’ve done crying I’ll take your orders. It ain’t the right thing to let you travel by yourself; but if you prefer it I don’t say No.”

Mary removed her hands from her eyes whence the tears were still streaming. “Mr Pratt,” she said, “I have offended you. Pray forgive me, sir. But, please go back and let me find my way alone. I am not afraid, I assure you, and I know the road well; I must go to my darling Clutha. But Tom—Oh! where is he? I think I ought to go to him. He will forgive me when I tell him all. My child—my husband. Oh! what am I to do? Tell me, Mr Pratt—don’t you think I should go to him!”

Then before he could reply she continued—“But my child?—How will she do without me? What shall I do—Oh, sir, what shall I do for the best?”

Thus torn hitherward and thitherward by conflicting emotions—divided between love for her husband and maternal affection for her child, poor Mary stood irresolute and undecided.

Then the strong will of the man came to her aid. “Mrs Kenway,” said George “in such a matter as this, I calculate your husband claims to be first. The youngster will work through one night, no doubt. See here, ma’am, I’ll just go on by myself and see the little woman is being properly tended. You go back and hunt up Mister Tom, and take him away from the infernal Philistines that have got hold of him. Yes, that’s best, ma’am.”

The wife conquered the mother. With hurried, faltering steps, and tearful eyes, Mary turned back to seek and reclaim her husband. And George went on his way musing on the strange chance which had placed him in such a predicament, and inwardly resolving to steer clear of all wives and babies that might thereafter come in his way, and especially to have “no more truck,” as he termed it, with the Kenway family.

CHAPTER VI.

SNALED.

How he kept his resolution may be judged from the sequel.

The track pursued by George after Mary left him led for some distance by the side of the Shotover River. It was not the best nor the easiest path, for it wound over and around steep precipices beneath which the turbid stream held its sullen course, winding like a huge serpent between walls of sombre rock. In some places the path descended to the very brink; at others it led upwards to dizzy heights, whence the traveller looked down hundreds of feet from a mere shelf worn by human feet in the hanging cliffs. It required a sure foot and a steady head to traverse this road, but it saved a long detour; and George went steadily on, assisting his steps when needful by holding on to any bush or plant, or even to a stout tuft of wild grass.
Presently he turned off from the river and entered a dark ravine, which in fact was the mouth of the little creek wherein his party were located. As he did so he heard a faint "Coo-ee!" but whether the sound came from behind or ahead he was unable to decide. So he paid no regard to the signal; and as it was getting much too dark to waste time unnecessarily, he continued to press forward. In a few seconds the cry was repeated, and this time George responded in bush fashion with another "Coo-ee!". Then there was borne on the breeze two distinct signals, the one from before, the other from behind him; or were the echoes deluding him? To test the matter he sent forth a vigorous shout, and awaited the result.

About half a mile beyond the spot where this occurred the by-path which George was following joined the main track which ran along the side of the ranges at a higher elevation. From this track apparently—certainly from above and ahead—came the reply, and George therefore pushed on somewhat more expeditiously to learn, if possible, the cause of the cry. "Some poor fellow in trouble, I guess," he said. "Broke his leg maybe over these damned stones, or got his house down perhaps."

But to his astonishment and perplexity, he had barely gone a dozen yards when faint and low, yet clear and distinct, another "Coo-ee!" ascended from the river which he had just quitted. And whilst pondering on the matter yet a third call came from far up the glen.

George came to a dead halt. "Seems like as if there was a heap of folk in trouble about here" (thus he commended himself). "It ain't an echo this time, that's certain. Well I don't very well see how I can go three ways all to once. So I guess I'll just keep on right ahead."

As he neared the point where the two tracks joined he perceived above him dimly a human form advancing towards him. Still, from the distance beyond, and from the river below, came at intervals the calls. But to these George paid no heed whatsoever. It occurred to him that the matter was so much mixed that any attempt to disentangle it would be a waste of time. So he preferred to press onwards.

"Are you George Pratt?" asked the stranger when he came within hail.

The voice was quite unknown to George, and so were the features of the inquirer.

"Well, sir, that's the name I was taught to answer to in my days of youth and innocence; and I ain't got no cause to suppose that anybody took advantage of my simplicity in the matter. Why do you ask, sir?"

The stranger evidently did not understand George's humor. "Oh, hang it!" he said, "I don't want none of your chaff. Are you George Pratt or are you not?"

"Yes, sir!" replied George sentimentally. "What might you want with me?"

"Want I?" cried the man in an aggrieved tone. "Why I've been waiting here for you this half-hour to get you to go back to the township."

"Have you, sir? Well now do you know I am amazingly sorry you should have taken so much trouble on my account. Very kind and sociable of you to stop out here in the damp night-air a-waiting for my company. But it ain't to be done. No sirree."

"What? Do you mean for to say you won't go?"

"Yes, sir, that is my present intention. Nothing else, you bet!"

"Why she told me ——. Blame my stupid head! I forgot to say as how it were a woman. Mrs Clearway—Carway—I think is the name as sent me after you. Stop, why here's a bit of a note she bid me give you."

And the stranger fumbled inside the lining of his hat for the document, which when produced was so stained with grease as to be almost illegible in the waning light. By the aid of a vesta match, however, George managed
to decipher the contents, which ran thus:

"Dear Mr. Pratt,—I hope you will forgive me for this liberty. I am in great trouble, and only you can help me. Do please be so kind as to come to me at the township. The bearer who brings this will tell you where to find me. Please come at once.—Yours truly,

"MARY K. —"

George read and re-read this singular epistle. It was in a woman's hand doubtlessly, neatly and, excepting the slip in the word "truly," faultlessly written. He had never seen any of Mary Kenway's writing, but he never suspected its authenticity for a moment. Wherefore should he do so? What woman could have any motive for perpetrating a hoax on George W. Pratt? Nevertheless some inexpressible instinct seemed to whisper of danger, and he hesitated greatly to accede to the request contained in the note.

"Who gave you this, Mister?" he asked.

"A woman—the woman I told you of. I don't know anything about it. I live up the gully about a mile above old Pegleg and his mates, and if I didn't meet you at the junction I was to leave the note at the tent. I've got another for the woman as have got Mrs Carraway's baby."

Just at that moment a loud, long "Coo-ee" came from below, to which the stranger responded, and again a third voice took up the cry from above. George looked at his new acquaintance curiously.

"Might I be so bold as to ask what this here cooeying is all about?" he inquired.

The man grinned. "Why," said he, "that's my mate down below there; he took one track and I the other, so as not to miss you."

"Yes? And the other party overhead? who do you reckon that is?"

"I don't know nothing about that," said he.

As, indeed, he did not, for the third voice was none other than that of poor old Pegleg, whom we left stranded on the range, and who was employing his time in busily shouting for aid. But of course George knew nothing of that.

"Well," said George, "I don't know rightly what to make of all this, sir. Can you tell me what is the matter with the lady who gave you this note?"

"No, I don't know nothing about it more than I've told you. She said I was to give it to George Pratt, or leave it at his tent—Pegleg's tent that is—and to say she was to be found at the same place she was at in the morning. So now you know just as much as I do, and I'm going on, for it's getting late, and I advise you to do the same. Good night!"

And without waiting for further questioning he walked away up the gully at a smart pace.

George felt a little disposed to return to the township. However, his good nature prevailed. Calling after the stranger to request that he would look in at the tent and inform Jim and Pegleg of his movements, he treated himself to a fresh plug of honeydew, and once more turned back on the road.

It was too dark to attempt the dangerous river-track, so he took the more circuitous but safer road round the gully. As he strode along misgivings troubled him, and once or twice he came to a dead halt, half-disposed to retrace his steps. This unusual indecision surprised even himself—"It ain't my usual style," he said. "As a general rule I know what I'm about, but darned if I think I do jest now."

As it oftentimes happens with strong, masculine-minded men (and I use the phrase advisedly, as indicating the antithesis of mere effeminacy) this very hesitancy only caused him to brace up his moral nerves more vigorously. In other words, it strengthened his persistence. He had started to do a certain thing; and, right or wrong, nothing should now deter him from going through with it. So casting aside as unworthy of him all doubts, he went..."
bravely on to meet his fate—be that fate whatsoever it might.

It came at last—as fate at all times will. I know I am writing that which to many minds is rank heresy. But I have so often seen brave, sensible men, and some foolish ones, rush on to certain doom, that I cannot, sceptical as I am in many things, resist acknowledging that.

There's a Divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them as we will.

And lest I be misunderstood, let me say how that when men talk of Fate, their inner and perhaps unacknowledged consciousness means Providence. Words, after all, are but feeble vehicles for thought.

When George W. Pratt inquired for Mary at the Hotel, he was accosted by a man, who, overbearing his question, came forward and introduced himself as the bearer of a message for him.

A sullen, low-browed, unattractive individual was this man—whose furtive glances betrayed a mind ill at ease with its possessor. "It's all right, mate," he said, "she sent me here to meet you. Blessed if I ain't tired waiting. I'll take you to her. But I suppose you'll shoot drinks first."

"See here," said George, "I don't drink, and I don't 'shunt,' as you call it. If you know where Mrs Kenway is, jest you indicate the location, and I'll kindly dispense with any more of your respected company."

The fellow muttered an oath by way of venting his disappointment in regard to the anticipated liquor, and then with a surly—"Come on, then," he went out into the street.

And George followed. Followed down the main street, and along the margin of Lake Wakatipu, where the gummy heaving waters reflected the stars of Heaven, and the wavelets splashed softly on the beach. At the far end of the town a few scattered huts occupied the narrow space between the 'Terrace' at the foot of Ben Lomond, and the Lake, and it was in this direction that his silent guide conducted George. Again some mysterious—mysterious because inexplicable—feeling of danger seemed to thrill him. And he loosened the trusty revolver which then as always was suspended from his waistbelt.

At the door of one of these huts there stood a female figure, and by the faint light of a candle which glimmered in the interior George plainly discerned that she was clad in a plaid, such as Mary ordinarily wore. To this hut the guide directed his steps.

"There she is!" he said.

George advanced to speak to her.

"Mary—Mrs Kenway—"

Before he could utter another word, he was smitten by a blow, whence, and by whom delivered, he could never tell. The pistol dropped from his grasp, and he fell to the earth insensible.

CHAPTER VII

THE RESCUE OF PEGLEG.

We left old Dick—Pegleg, that is—in a dreadful quandary, bereft of his leg, and helpless, on the road side. Let us see what happened to him.

When placed in the unpleasant predicament related, his first impulse was to vent his wrath in imprecations; his second, to bewail his melancholy fate; his third, to roll himself into a soft place amidst the luxuriant fern, and yield to the soporific influences begotten of the unaccustomed potations wherein he had been indulging.

"Thou dast'ld villain!" (thus he apostrophized his late antagonist as he settled down for a soothing nap) "thou'st never ha' got best o' me, it's war'n't for drink. Ah, drink—false friend it be, surely. Here be I in this bad fix through drink—Pegleg, I tell thee what, thou'rt a fool—a dashed fool—to let drink best thee. Well, well, what can't be cured, must be endured. Here I be, and here I'll bide, till mayhap somebody cometh by. Our Jim—ah! good lad, Jim. He'll know some't'ns up when—he see's—see'th Old Jack."
And so, muttering interjectional fragments of speech, the old man coiled himself up in the lap of Nature, and soon became oblivious of his troubles.

When he awoke the curtain of night was rapidly descending. And now Pegleg began to get alarmed. He had heard—who has not—of lives lost by exposure in those elevated regions; and it is as true now as ever that the tree of deepest root is found least willing still to quit the ground, &c.

I dare say you all know the moral. In his alarm he began to revolve the propriety and possibility of trying to reach home on his one leg. But his very first effort in that line caused him to abandon the idea; for on making a forward movement his foot slipped on a treacherous root, and he came to the ground with a force of percussion which caused him to uplift his voice in a steadfast howl of anguish.

"Hah!" he yelled, as he tenderly clasped the injured part—"Hah! hah! Oh! Lord have mercy upon us, as if he now ever were and shall evermore become give thanks amen!"

The final "amen" dropped from his lips in a semi-whisper, for fairly as from a great distance he fancied that he heard a "Coo-coo!" He was not long left in doubt. Again the reply floated upwards to him, and then Pegleg replied with all the force of his vigorous lungs. Then there arose a chorus—a very Babel of "Coo-coo! Coo-coo! to right of him; Coo-coo! to left of him—all round the gully it volleyed and thundered. In fact, it was the scene already described as occurring in the case of George W. Pratt.

Presently the responses became limited. One cry, and one only, answered to his call. That cry came from far up the valley. In truth, as I hate mystery, I may as well say at once that it proceeded from Jim Darby, who was out in search of his mate, of whose misadventure he had only become suspicious late in the day.

For the Third Mate did not, as Pegleg had supposed he would have done, go straight back to the tent. That sagacious animal pranced and kicked until he had rid himself of the obnoxious appendage wherewith he had been so maliciously supplied by Ginger, and then with a triumphant switching of his tail and a loud-voiced bray of satisfaction, he philosophically addressed himself to the consumption of the succulent grasses which flourished on the slopes of the range. And so much time was occupied in testing the relative merits of these, and the ranker growth by the creek-side, that the sun was well down in the West before he presented himself with well-filled pouch and guileless, hairy visage at the tent.

Of course when Jim saw the Third Mate return with an empty saddle (for no amount of rubbing and rolling had sufficed to get rid of that equipment) he knew that something must have happened; so without loss of time, he set forth to seek his mate, and soon the echoes reverberated with his frequent calls.

Now, leaving him on his way for a few minutes, we must again return to Pegleg. Whilst that worthy was in indulging in the hope of speedy rescue, a strange thing happened to him. He had taken from his pocket his pipe, and, striking a match, was about to inhale the pleasant fumes of the weed of Virginia, when a rustling sound in the bushes attracted his attention.

"Be that thou, Jim, lad?" he cried. "Be that thou? Ho! ho! thou'st been a main long time coming—a desperate time, Jim. Why, Jim—why, lad, I've been here a matter of four or five hours surely."

Then neither perceiving any one, nor hearing the sound of footsteps, he continued—

"Come lad! don't be playing any of thy tricks on old Pegleg. Don't thee lad, now.—Ho! ho! that be a brave lad, and thou too, Cap'en—good lads—good lads both."—For he now discerned two men approaching him.

But the supposed "good lads" uttered a suppressed malediction, and
rushing violently upon him; threw him from his sitting posture, and quickly passed a woolen muffler over his head to stifle his cries. The old man fought like a tiger, and once and again he got his mouth free from restraint, and then his powerful voice went ringing through the still night air—"Help! Help!"

It came quickly. Jim Darling heard the cries and rapidly made his way to the scene of the struggle. Ginger and his mates, for they were the aggressors, were yet struggling with their prostrate victim, when Jim leaped in amongst them. He stayed not to ask questions, but with all the force of his strong young arms he piled the stout wamaka cudgel where-with he was armed. Once—twice it descended, and at each stroke a man fell prone upon the earth.

"Ho! ho! ho! lad!" shouted the delighted Pegleg, "just in time, lad. That thon be—just in time. The dashed vagrions, they were getting better o' me when thou came up. Let'em be, Jim—don't mind such scum as they. Help I to tend, lad, wilt. They'll get right bye-and-bye—bye-and-bye lad, never fear."

And even as he spoke one of the fallen sprang to his feet and took to flight—away down the gorge.

"Aye, aye—run, thou devil, run; Jack Ketch'll have thee some day, surely. Ho! ho! ho! Now, Jim, take me pick-a-back. That be the only way, for they have robbed me of my peg-leg, the dashed villains."

So Jim took the old man on his back, and with many a pause, for he was not a light weight, contrived to carry him in safety to the tent.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN JEOPARDY.

A sense of suffocation—of confinement in a close dense atmosphere—a bewildering feeling, as of one awoken from a fearful dream greeted George when he returned to consciousness. He tried to move, but his limbs were fettered, and he could not. He made an effort to speak aloud, and he found that speech was impossible. He strove to see what was around him, and all was dark and blank. Gagged and muffled and bound—the only remaining sense that he could utilise was that of hearing. He listened intently. Close by him, as he lay stretched full length on his back he could hear the lapping of waters as against the side of his prison, and—what was that? Yes; he could distinguish the sound of oars in the rowlocks—steadily, steadily pulling away. Where was he? In whose hands? He could only conjecture, and conjecture served him but little!

"Rush!—swish!—The water gurgled by, and George lay in his floating prison wondering. What was to be the issue? He guessed, and guessed rightly, that he was in a boat on the Lake, but whither his captors were taking him, or for what purpose, was more than he could divine. So he stoically resigned himself to his fate, and waited for any further indications of coming events.

A whispering breeze floated overhead, melodiously as he thought, as he lay and listened to it. Faint and melodious at first, and the waters rippled tunefully past the boat. Stronger and more loudly it blew, and the whisper became a howl and the ripple became a singing wave, and the boat no longer rocked peacefully on the water, but rose and fell spasmodically as the waves lifted her up and dashed her down again. The rowers evidently were contending against the element. Still they spake no word. But more and more increased the elemental strife, and at length, wearied out, as it would seem, by the struggle, the oars were drawn suddenly in.

"Stash this," cried one of the unseen rowers, "I've had enough of it."

"A little farther," whispered a hoarse voice in reply. "It's only a quarter of a mile to the Cove, and then we shall have him safe. Hark!"

A low sullen growl as of distant thunder rumbled afar off.

"Pull! for God's sake, pull, ye devils! If we don't put him ashore in ten minutes we'll never get back to-night."
“What’s all the row about?” said one—and George recognised the accent of his old enemy Long Tom, alias Tripes. “Blowed if we ain’t all a pack of fools. I say shove the bigger overboard at once. That’s best. Dead men tell no tales.”

“No, no,” it was Tom Kenway’s voice this time. “I can’t agree to that. You promised me there should be no bloodshed—no murder. I won’t have it said of me that ever I killed a man in cold blood. It’s murder—that’s what it is.”

“Whist, ye fools! How do ye know the man isn’t listening!”

And simultaneously the covering was removed from George’s face, and a lighted lamp was passed before his eyes. He feigned insensibility. It was his best course. His life hung upon a thread. A motion even of an eye-lash would have been dangerous.

“All right” (such was the final verdict of the examiner). “Now, boys, pull for your lives and let’s get rid of this troublesome cargo before the storm comes on.”

Not another word was uttered. Loudly overhead pealed the loud thunder—ever, as it seemed, approaching nearer and more near. Blue gleams of light penetrated even the thick covering under which George was concealed; and the rowers beat to their oars till suddenly, as it seemed to him, the water became still and tranquil, and he could hear the mellow sound of a rivulet making soft music amid crags and over sandy beaches. Then the oars were drawn in, the keel of the boat grated on the shore, and George felt himself lifted out. Again he was examined, and still he gave no evidence of consciousness. In truth George was beginning to feel amused. At that moment he was as intent as anyone in solving the interesting problem in which he was playing so conspicuous a part. So he determined to see it out.

Two of the ruffians hoisted his apparently insensible form on their shoulders, and, proceeded by another, who carried a bush lantern, they went for some distance up the face of a broken range.

“This here’s the place,” said the leader, and the voice was the voice of Tripes—“This here’s the place, shove him in.”

If George could have striven he would have done so at this juncture. But he was far too tightly bound for that. So he waited to see what would come next.

Not long bad he to wait. With a “One,” “Two,” “THREE!” they swung him away. Down he went with a momentum begotten of the force wherewith he was thrown—crashing through bushes, and over rocks—down—down—rolling over and over again, till dizzy and exhausted, he fell into a shallow pool of water.

The canvas in which he had been enveloped had been taken off him before he was hurled into the pit or chasm—he knew not which. And as he lay on his back he saw shining overhead, through a dense maze of foliage, one bright star. And, almost without will, he blessed it. He could never tell why—he was not sufficiently imaginative to conjecture—but as in the dark hour of doubt, distress, and despair, that star shone upon him, he felt his courage rekindled, and his determination renewed.

CHAPTER IX.

RETribution.

There are scoundrels—and scoundrels. Few are they whose consciences are thoroughly steelcd—hardened against the “still small voice,” which persistently demands of them an account of their brother. But some there be whose strong will enables them to smother the ever-recurring sensation of remorse for crime. Blood-beadled murderers have over and over again told a shuddering world that the first crime brought in its train intolerable anguish, which only a second crime could obliterate; and modern criminal records, from Lynch, the Sydney tomahawkcr, to Palmer, the English poi-
soner, and Sullivan, the New Zealand fiend, show that the first fatal step inevitably leads to more, till the offender becomes case-hardened, and impervious to mercy for his victims, or regret for his misdeeds.

There are others—half-hearted villains—who, having yielded to the impulse of passion, suffer the pangs of most intense reaction; and would, were it possible, undo the evil deeds which have placed them for ever in the category of criminals. Such was Tom Kenway. His revenge accomplished, he repented him of the act. It is not easy to explain the self-deluding sophistry of guilt. As has been told, he had opposed the proposition of his evil-souled comrades to throw our friend George into the Lake; yet he had unrelentingly—and, gladly—assisted to place him in a position where death, by a slow lingering process, must be his fate; unless—which was very improbable—he was discovered and rescued. So far as Tom knew, there were not any miners or other residents within miles of the spot where George had been cast forth to perish.

Men hate a villain; a coward they contemn. A depraved mob will cheer the felon who steps upon the scaffold to meet his doom with hardihood; and the same mob will hoot and execrate the wretch who in the last awful moment betrays any sign or token of human weakness. Thus, Kenway's refusal to participate in the immediate murder of Pratt, had considerably lessened him in the estimation of his ruthlessly companions; and when, on returning from the scene of their dastardly exploit, he began to exhibit symptoms of repentance, they expressed their contempt in no measured terms.

"Why, you miserable hound," cried Long Tom, alias Tripes, "you brought us into the mess to serve you, because the fellow was snoopy on your wife, and now you funk it. Perhaps you'll go and split on us to the traps when you get back. Blow me if I haven't half a mind to settle your hash for you."

Taint safe to be in the same boat with such a scum as you."

"No, no," pleaded Kenway, "I won't blow on you. Upon my soul I won't do that. But I don't half like it. I wanted to serve him out, but not to kill him.—Oh, my God! what a flash!"

A blinding flash.—Vivid, dazzling, close at hand, streamed forth the jagged lightning, illuminating the dark waters. A second—it seemed no more—and a terrible crash of thunder pealed overhead, and re-echoed from a thousand mountain peaks, rolling and volleying from crag to crag, till it died away in a hoarse sullen growl in far-off ravines. Then, in its train, there suddenly came down the lake a furious gust of wind, roaring as in very wrath, and driving before it the piled-up waters, in huge rollers crested with seething spray, showing white and ghastly in the fitful starlight, which served only to enhance the intense blackness of the looming thunder-clouds. And the boat rocked to and fro, rising and dipping violently as the gale rapidly drew near. On it came—louder and more loud howled the tempest—and another startling flash, closely succeeded by a thunder-clap, so near and loud that it deafened the listeners, revealed a huge wave—a watery mountain—coming down behind. Kenway, now thoroughly scared, cast aside his oar, and throwing himself down in the boat, appealed to Heaven for mercy. To his craven mind it seemed that Divine retribution was about to avenge his guilt. And who shall say that it was not so? But his harder comrades scorned his penitency.

"In shore!" shouted Long Tom, "pick up your oar and pull, or I'll smash you."

But it was too late. The wave struck the boat, tossed her high aloft on its foaming summit, then pitched her down into a deep watery gulf. The dense wreck overhead veiled the last star from sight; and the boat spun round broadside on to the waves, and the angry flood rushed over her, and
buried her beneath the tumbling waters.

Ten minutes later, and the tempest had passed by. Far away to the southward the lightning still flashed amongst the mountains, and the boom of the thunder reverberated in the distance. A deluge of rain succeeded the electric storm, and the water, though still heaving fretfully, was comparatively placid. A boat, keel upwards, was drifting down the Lake, and beneath pale stars shining in an unclouded sky, a man was lying exhausted and motionless on the rocky shore. It was Tom Kenway.

The others were never seen again. In the hour of their cruel triumph they had been destroyed. Long afterwards a fleshless skeleton was found on a sandy beach far down the Lake near the Lochy River at Halfway Bay. The back part of the skull was gone, but round the waist there still remained a narrow leather belt, and on the right foot there was a sock. Those who had known Long Tom professed to be able to identify these as having been worn by him on the day he disappeared. Of the third man no trace was ever discovered.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE GLEN.

Mr George W. Pratt was truly in a critical plight. When he surveyed the position, he found himself lying in the bed of a small creek, which flowed through a deep wooded glen, the sides of which rose steeply to a height of a hundred feet or more. Just beyond where he lay was a narrow gorge, wherein the streamlet formed a deep pool as it forced its way between perpendicular walls of rock, gloomy and forbidding in appearance, and so overhung with trees as to shut out from view the cheerful sky. Even sunlight could not have penetrated the dark abyss. The low gurgling of the water, as it eddied under the grim rocks, and rippled over shallow bars, was undisturbed by the blast that howled overhead in fitful gusts. But George could see the tossing branches overhead as they waved to and fro bending responsive to the gale. And through the tracery of foliage gleamed the rays of the one bright star, so that he found strange consolation in the fact that he had fallen where he was, rather than into the cavernous gorge below.

He reviewed the situation philosophically. "Guess, I'm trapped" (thus he argued the point with himself) "Comes of trusting women. You've been a darned fool, G. W., fix it up how you please; and now you've got to make the best of it. What on earth am I to do next?"

With a mighty effort he rolled himself bodily over towards the bank. But the experiment proved well nigh fatal, for the water covered his face and almost suffocated him. There was nothing for it, however, save to repeat the attempt. He knew that a night spent in that chill stream would ensure his destruction. So again, and once again, allowing himself intervals for breathing space, he forced himself over till at length he found to his great satisfaction that he was clear of the stream, and lying high and dry on a strip of shingle. Here, then, he resolved to await the return of day-light.

But man proposes and a higher power disposes. The storm came on and the clouds blotted out the star, and the lightning flashed amidst the trees, and the thunder bellowed overhead, and the pitiless rain came down with tropical violence. What sound was that which made itself heard in the intervals of the elemental din? faintly at first, then more loudly he heard it. He heard it, and at once he recognised the extent of the new danger which threatened him. The narrow channel of the creek was flooded. His ear, rendered painfully acute by the jeopard wherein he was placed, distinguished the on-coming rush of water and the grating of boulders rolling over the rocky bed. Already the water reached him as he lay. Rapidly it rose around him, and the steep banks
rendered further removal impossible. In vain he strove, with all the strength of a desperate man, to burst asunder the bonds which imprisoned his limbs. The flood came down, impetuous and strong, surging high up against the imprisoning rocks, and spreading forcefully over the open reaches. It lifted the helpless man like a dry log, and bore him onwards to the gorge, tossing him to and fro, as in mockery, as it hurried him onwards to his doom. With fearful velocity he shot under the frowning rocks, and went down into the depths of the pool, and rose again to the surface. Battered and bruised, blinded and half-suffocated with the cruel waters, he was dashed against a reef of rock, and the flood poured over him and floated him to safety.

Yes, to safety. How it happened he could not tell, but in that awful struggle for life—if struggle it may be termed—the cords slipped from his arms, and, benumbed though these were, he was yet able to hold on to the reef till the flood had passed by, and the creek had again fallen to its normal condition. To remove the gag from his mouth, and cut asunder the bonds from his feet was easy enough now that his arms were free. And when the tempest died away in the distance and the stars again shone forth, George crept back to the shingle beach, weary and enfeebled but safe and unharmed.

He knew not where he was. It was a part of the country which had not yet been much explored by the miners. So he resolved to seek for some more secure and sheltered spot, and try to sleep away the remaining hours of the night. For this purpose he had already climbed a few steps up the bank, when he heard above him that which made him pause, and conceal himself in the gloom of the cliffs.

A sound of footsteps,—of parted branches, and rolling gravel as of one cautiously descending the steep declivity. Was it his enemies returning to finish their half-completed work? Anyway he thought it well to pause and see what would come of it.

Down came a man, slowly, swinging himself from branch to branch for security. Down to the water's edge he went. Then he struck a match, and by the glimmer George saw that it was Tom Kanway. As in search of something, he moved along the brink of the stream. He lit another match,—more matches,—and peered anxiously adown the dismal gorge and up the rocky channel. "Gone!" he said, at last—"drowned in the flood, no doubt. I wish I had no hand in it; but curse him! it served him right. His ghost won't trouble me."

As he spoke these words he was standing on the shingle beach, within a few yards of the spot where George lay concealed. Suddenly from out the gloom his intended victim stepped forth. The feeble, tickering light of the match just served to disclose his features—wan, ghastly, and death-like from the effect of his recent disaster. At the sound of his footsteps, Kanway turned, and turning, cast one horrified glance at the seeming apparition. Then, with a yell of abject terror, the terrified soundbrell darted away. In his fright, he ran down the stream, and before Pratt could interfere, he had plunged into the dark pool, and was struggling for dear life in its depths.

In vain George called to him to stay. Fear—cowardly, craven fear—held full possession of him. In his blind terror he forced his way through the pool, and continued his flight down the bed of the creek, clambering over rocks, plunging through water, some times shallow, sometimes knee-deep, often breast-high. And George's well-meaning efforts to arrest his flight only increased his headlong speed.

Was he afraid of punishment from the man whom he had so wickedly betrayed? or was superstitious terror the spur that urged him on—ever on to his doom?

Whatever the incentive, certain it is that he stayed not in his course, till he reached the mouth of the creek. There, where it entered the Lake, his course was arrested by One mightier than he.
At the junction, as is not uncommon with such streams in New Zealand, there was a quicksand—a treacherous, yielding, fast-holding quicksand. Into this he rushed and the sands drew him in and down—ever down. In vain he wrestled with the danger—every struggle served but to accelerate his destruction. Deeper, and yet more deep he sank in the quagmire. It reached to his waist—to his breast; the surging waters of the Lake dashed over his head. One loud, long cry of agony—one last despairing glance at the peaceful sky—now serene in starlit beauty, and all was over with Tom Kenway.

George Pratt, making his way landward to the Lake, heard that cry and hurried onwards, intent on rescuing from destruction the man who had sought to rob him of life. But when he reached the beach, there remained not any trace of his presence. The cruel man had died a cruel death, and Mary Kenway was a widow.

CHAPTER XI.

JIM DARLEY HAS A DREAM.

"I don't half like it," said Jim Darley, as sitting by the camp-fire he listened to the recital of Pegleg's grievances—"I don't half like the look of it. There's some mischief afloat, depend on it. I've a mind to go down to the Lake, and try to find out where the Captain is."

"Don't thee, lad," responded Pegleg. "Don't thee, now, there's a good lad. Cap'en do know what he be about, I warrant. He warn't born near woods to be frightened wi' owls, thee be sure of that. Why, Jim—Jim, lad, what'll I do without thee, and my timber leg gone too. No, no; thou'll stay wi' Pegleg till mornin'."

Jim did not answer immediately. Truly it was a long way to go, and the road was bad, and the night was not promising fairly. Dark clouds rolling up from the North hung like a funereal pall over the snow-crested peaks, and the intense stillness of the atmosphere boded ill for the wayfarer amidst those wild ranges, where violent storms are ever preluded by unnatural quiet. Then there was the old man to be considered. Could he be left alone in his present dilapidated condition? No; on second thoughts he would wait till the morning.

"Very well, Dick," he said, "I stop; but I must be off at daylight, for I ain't easy in my mind about it. So I'll just tether Old Jack. He'll take me in quicker than I can walk. And I'll bring you back a new prop-stick, daddy, if I can't find the old one."

"Good lad—good lad! Aye; that be right. Tether Old Jack, and bide wi' old Pegleg till mornin'."

I have told of the storm that ensued on that night. It scarcely brushed with its edge the gully, but rolled along the lofty mountain range, the peaks of which rose aloft to the westward. Nevertheless the lightning was vivid, and the heavy thunder roused the slumbering echoes of the glen. Jim lay awake on his rude pallet, listening to the elemental din, unable to divert his thoughts from George. But exhausted nature will have its revenge. As the storm ceased he sank into a profound but troubled sleep. Constantly the image of his mate came before his mental vision. By some occult sympathy he knew that George was in peril; but the fleeting visions of dreamland evaded the grasp of memory when he started from his uneasy slumber. Once he thought he heard a footsteps outside, and went forth to look around—nought was visible; and he returned to his bunk.

Presently he dreamed a dream more connected than the vague phantasies which had previously troubled his brain. George was standing on the brink of a precipice, the abyss beneath which appeared a vast black sea of vapor, through which waves of fire darted upwards menacingly. By his side there was a woman, whose face he could not discern, but she seemed to hold George's hand in his, and to beckon downwards into the gulf. And George, apparently yielding to her in-
fluence, leant forward, and the woman floated over the bank and sought to draw him after her. Then George resisted, but her weight overpowered him. Gradually he yielded to the influence. The edge crumbled under him. Already he was sliding down into that fiery abyss, when two other forms swept past him, and disappeared beneath, and from the gulf there came up wailing cries of "Help! help!" and Jim awoke in a state of profound perspiration.

He sprang out of his bed in much agitation. The stars were still shining, but a faint streak of golden red in the east showed that day was breaking. The cry for help seemed yet to vibrate on his sense of hearing. But everything was still and calm, and the only sound audible was the tinkling of the little rack, as it danced merrily past the pebbles, or fell with softened cadence over the bars that crossed its appointed channel.

"I needn't wake the old man," he thought. "He will be sure to know where I have gone. But I'll light the fire, and make a billy of tea for him, as he can't get about."

So he raked up the ashes, and piled on wood, and made some tea, and drank some himself, completing his frugal repast with damper and cold mutton. Then he went out to look for the Third Mate.

To look for him! Yes, "only that and nothing more." The Third Mate had disappeared. There was the tether rope lying on the ground; but old Jack was gone. He searched long and anxiously; but Jack was gone. There was no doubt of it.

"It must have been old Jack's braying that I heard in my sleep," cried Jim Darley. "Confound the beast! I shall have to go on Shank's pony now."

When Pegleg awoke, he found himself alone. By his side was the billy full of steaming tea, and the fresh damper and the cold mutton, with all needful adjuncts for the morning meal.

"Ho! ho!" roared the old man. "He be gone off surely. First goes Cap'nm, then Jim. All about a dashed woman too, I do think. Well, well! J'm be a good lad to get breakfast ready for I before he went."

CHAPTER XII.

BEARDING THE LION.

Let us follow Jim Darley for a while. When about half-way to the Lake, he saw a woman coming towards him; and, by some indefinable process of thought, he felt that it was the woman whom he had seen in his dream. When they met, she averted her head and tried to pass. But the track was narrow, and Jim recognized her. It was Mary Kenway.

"Don't stop me," she said, as Jim barred the way.

"But I must," said Jim. "You are Mrs Kenway. Can you tell me what has become of George Pratt—my mate. I am going to seek for him."

She turned to him with a sharp sudden movement, and then Jim saw why she had wished to avoid him. Her face was fearfully bruised, and one eye was blackened and swollen.

Mary burst into tears. — "Oh, sir," she cried; "if you are a friend of Mr Pratt's go at once to the police. I fear he has been murdered—murdered! — and — God help me! I have been the cause of it. Go to them—tell them that he was knocked down—beaten—taken away in a boat—last night—at the township—mercy—mercy! what shall I do! My Tom was in it."

She fairly broke down, and began to sob hysterically. Jim tried in his rough way to pacify her, and by degrees he extracted from her a somewhat coherent account of what had happened.

Briefly told, her story was this.

Under the pretence of George's presence being necessary to prevent the apprehension of Tom Kenway by the Police, she had been induced to write the letter which had caused the former to return to the township. It was in-
deed herself whom George had seen at the door of the tent, and she had witnessed the cowardly assault upon him and his subsequent treatment. She had remonstrated, and her punishment had resulted. The brutal husband, for whose unworthy sake she had forfeited her only parent's affection, had turned upon her, and smitten and calumniated her — had added unmanly insult to unmanly violence, and finally had left her, breathing hot, sulphurous vows of future vengeance. In fear and trembling she had waited through the weary hours of night, and so soon as the first faint light of dawn had come, she had escaped from the hut, and was now flying to her only remaining solace, her child.

She extracted from Jim Darley a reluctantly given promise that he would not mention her husband's name when giving information to the police. For still, in her true woman's heart, love prevailed. She could not all at once stamp out affection for her girlhood's lover, though the events of the night had done much — very much — to weaken his hold upon her heart. She would fain have saved George, but she hesitated to sacrifice her husband. Thus torn by contending emotions, and suffering in both mind and body, she failed to make Jim comprehend that she was quite blameless in the matter; so that when he left her to pursue his course, he set her down in his mind as a light-o'-love, and his honest soul unjustly conceived indignation against her, as the destroyer of his friend and comrade.

Breathing undeserved anathemas on all the sex, Jim hurried on to the township. He might have taken the matter with more coolness. When he arrived at the camp, the bold sergeant was indulging in his matutinal repast, in the preparation of which, moreover, for want of any aid, he was himself engaged. With coat off and shirt sleeves turned up to the elbow, that worthy officer of the State was deep in the mysteries of mutton chops; and a wrathful man was he when thus impertinently intruded upon.

"How dare ye come in here, disturbing me privately without my consent? Look at the time, sir! Shure, thin's not office hours."

Jim pleaded the emergency of the case. "I wouldn't have troubled you. I'm very sorry," he said, "only seems to me there ain't no time to lose."

"Oh, indade! Is that your opinion now? Is it you that come here to teach me my duty? Ye'll just walk out, young man, till I've had my breakfast, and then if ye're civil, maybe it's mesif that 'll talk wid ye."

But Jim was too full of his mission to be disposed of thus summarily.

"Look here," he said, resolutely. "If you don't listen to me, I'll go in at once to the Commissioner. There's been too much time lost already."

Jim overstepped the mark. The threat was too much. The cup of the Sergeant's indignation boiled over. But he was single-handed, so he cloaked his excited feelings. He smiled a smile — a treacherous smile — and in his mostrehearse accents spoke he thus —

"Upon me conscience thin, ye're right. Come this way, young man."

And, leaving the mutton-chops to their fate, he preceded Jim Darley to a rustic cottage fashioned of logs. The walls were of logs roughly dovetailed together; the floor was of logs, and the ceiling was also of logs, all similarly jointed. Into this place Jim unsuspectingly followed. Then the bold Sergeant stepped outside quickly, closed the door, bolted it, double-locked it, and Jim found himself imprisoned.

The bold Sergeant went back, resumed his cooking, and breakfasted sumptuously. And Jim Darley made his throat very hoarse, and his hands very sore, by calling aloud in vain, and thumping fruitlessly against the door of his prison.

Bye-and-bye he heard a smart sharp voice call out — "Sergeant! Sergeant! what is all that horrible noise about?"

And the bold Sergeant made answer thus :—

"Shure it's a lunatic, Sir, just
brought in; and very obstinately he is, Sir."

Whereupon Mr Commissioner retired, grumbling, to his quarters.

Then Jim heard the Sergeant speaking to him. "Now, young man, I advise ye to be quiet and easy. And when I've precluded me appetite I'll let ye out."

So Jim made a virtue of necessity, as many a better and a wiser man has done, and will continue to do till the lion lies down with the lamb, and he that is smitten turns the other cheek to the smiter. And the bold Sergeant concluded his culinary operations, and the Commissioner trimmed his beard in peace; and each sat down to breakfast with a conscience void of offence. Nevertheless, an innocent man meanwhile fretted in prison.

But all things must have an end. Consequently the hour of Jim's release came round in due course. "Now then, what is it ye're after?" demanded the Sergeant, as he opened the door of the log-hut, and let in a flood of dazzling sunshine. "Come out of that, can't ye, and tell me what's your little game."

"No, I won't," was Jim's dogged reply. "I heard you tell the Commissioner that I was a lunatic. That's a lie, and you know it. Go and fetch him here. I don't move—no, not an inch, till he comes."

And Jim fully meant to stick to his word. But the Sergeant was an adept in the art of blarney, and easily persuaded the "young man" to relinquish his intention. Then Jim told his story. But what did it all amount to? Only that George was missing and that there was a woman mixed up in the mystery—which, said the Sergeant, was "moiety suspicious."

"I tell ye it's all nonsense," quoth the Sergeant; "your mate's on the spree—that's all! Just go round the township and hunt him up; and don't get into trouble yourself. D'ye mind me now?"

So Jim went forth disconsolately to search for his missing friend. He saw many curious things during his wanderings in that infant township—strings of peak-horses leading up for distant diggings—vast piles of merchandise heaped within canvas walls—banking establishments in calico tents, buying bags of gold—cats tied to doorposts, bearing tickets intimating that one of those valuable animals could be purchased for the insignificant sum of three pounds, lawful coin of the realm;*—and many other sights such as only new rushes could evolve. But of George W. Pratt no trace found he, till he went to the hotel. Then for the first time he obtained a faint clue. George had been there inquiring for Miss Kenway, said the ugly and overdressed barmaid, who alone had noted the circumstance. And he had gone away with a man, she added, "What like was the man?—She could not tell. Was too busy. Shouldn't have taken any notice, only the Yankee asked for that woman. What would Jim take—brandy or square gin? There was nothing else."

Just so; there was "nothing else; and Jim went out again, and wandered up and down, seeking everywhere for George, and of course seeking in vain. In his rambles, however, he fell foul of Ginger, and relieved his over-wrought feelings by picking a quarrel with the scarlet-headed youth.

"You multiple-doomed scoundrel," cried Jim, "You stuck up my ok mate, didn't you? A man with only one foot, and old enough to be your father; and then you took away his timber leg, you miserable cur. Stand up if you're a man, and take you punishment fair."

But that was about the very last thing that Ginger wanted. So Jim threw down the gage by dashing glass of grog in his face. Then he dragged him outside, and hummured him to his heart's content till forced to give over from very weariness. He felt better after this exploit, but before finally concluding the perform

*Fact! The author speaks from ocular knowledge.
nce, he said to the whipped hound—
just you tell me what you and your
predeceased mates have done with
George Pratt, or I'll have you up be-
fore the Commissioner for what you did
old Pegleg."

And the crestfallen bully dolefully
harrumphed out, "Let me alone for any
like, and I'll tell you all I know. Don't
it me again—don't, I tell you—I'll tell
on the sanguineous truth. So help
ye I will. They took him up the
lake in a boat. "Up the Lake, I say;
don't know where to, if I was to
be this blessed minute."

"Die!" cried Jim, giving him a
rathing kick, "You'll never die till
Ketch puts a collar round your
ash'd neck."

And in this matter Jim prophesied
ery truly.

CHAPTER XIII.

MAORI JACK.

AN broke serene and calm. The
ark blue waters of the Lake, their
surface unruffled by the faintest zephyr,
y like a vast mirror between the
fty mountains, which reflected therein
ir bold outlines and snowy peaks,
that the unpractised eye could scarce
iscern the line of demarcation between
nd and water. The rising sun already
ilded the crests of the loftier moun-
tains, and soft white mists floating
vingly round the crags caught ros
ts from his rays.

But to George's vision there was
omething much more interesting than
ake or mountain, or up-rising sun
en. Far up the glen which had been
scene of the night's events, he
ed a tiny wreathe of smoke curling
owards amidst the trees, and this
ication of the neighborhood of
was especially grateful to him just
en. So he strode away in the direc-
on of the guiding "pillar of smoke."
he travelled along the banks of the
le stream he remarked that the
ine through which it flowed grew
per till at last it wound; amongst
lls of rock, five hundred feet or
ore beneath the surrounding country.

Presently he found himself in a small
clearing whereon stood a substantial
hat, from the chimney of which the
oke proceeded. The door was open,
and from the interior proceed savory
odours and sibilant sounds suggestive of
mutton chops. George did not wait
for invitation, but entered forthwith.
Moving amidst the blinding smoke
wherewith the hut was filled, he per-
ceived a dusky figure—tall, well-
formed, and dressed in ordinary bush
costume—superintending the cooking
operations. At the sound of the in-
truder's footsteps he turned, and then
George saw that he was what he men-
tally termed "a colored man," but of
what nationality he could not deter-
mine. He noted the thin lips, straight
hair, and dusky tint of the oval face.
A negro he could not be; perhaps a
Kanaka, as the natives of the Sand-
wich Islands are termed, or a Maori.
Yet he was very unlike the Maoris
whom George had seen around Dun-
edin. Lighter of complexion, more
muscular of form, with a more intelli-
gen countenance.

It was Himoni Witi—better known
as Maori Jack—the original discoverer
of gold in the Arrow, upon whose hut
George had intruded. Jack was then
acting as stockman, but his longing was
to return to the North Island. For he
was a Thames native, and his heart was
with his countrymen who were then
fighting in the Waikato.

George easily made him comprehend
that he was hungry, and Jack piled up
his plate with smoking chops, and
brought forth the inevitable damper, and
filled a pannikin with steaming hot tea
for his refreshment. With natural polit-
eness he refrained from making any in-
quiries till his guest had concluded the
meal. Then he plied him right and
left with questions, which George im-
perfectly understood and replied to very
much at random.

"My golly!" quoth Jack, taking
hold of George's wet clothes, "what for
you too much dis-a-ways?"

"Fell into the creek," said George,
"Lost my way over night."
Then Jack began plucking at them and by signs and very much broken English made George to understand that he was to divest himself of his clothing, and lie down in one of the bunks, whilst it was being dried before the huge log-fire—a proceeding to which George offered no opposition, when its purport was made plain to him. Truth to tell he was beginning to feel uncomfortably moist, for the heat was extracting volumes of steam from his outward belongings.

Behold him then snugly ensconced in bed, with the tall Maori sitting by the fire, his dusky figure enveloped in wreaths of wood smoke and steam from the rapidly drying garments, a pipe in his mouth, silent, impassive.

Suddenly he turned to George and said, "You been get gold, eh?"

George replied in the affirmative.

"You get um gold down——" He finished the sentence by a pantomimic gesture, indicating the deep gleam.

"No," said George. "Shouldn't think of any such darned foolishness," he added, half to himself.

But Jack heard and understood him; he could generally understand any English phrase spoken, though he could not always render himself intelligible in English. His bright eyes narrowly scanned the speaker's face, and an expression of strange intelligence overspread his features. Quickly they relapsed into their customary stolidity. For a minute or two he was quite silent. Then he spoke again. This time he muttered something in his native tongue, gazing intently into the fire the while. Presently his thoughts shaped themselves in the language of the stranger. Divested of lingual extraneous, his discourse ran somewhat thus:

"The pakeha is very wise; but he knows nothing. He comes here to get gold, and he walks over it, but he cannot see it. It is under his feet, but he has no eyes. You tell me," he continued, turning to George, "where you got mates?"

Then George tried to explain what had happened to him, but failed to make his dusky acquaintance understand anything of his story. It must be remembered that he knew nothing of the fate of the two men in the boat. But the destruction of Tom Kenway in the quicksand he had partly witnessed, and this he tried, by pantomime and speech, to impress upon his hearer. Slowly Jack seemed to grasp at the notion.

"My golly!" cried Jack, "that bad place. Take in man, take in bullock, take in horse. Swallow all up."

He smoked again in silence, and George had just fallen into a doze when his strange friend aroused him.

"I show you plenty gold, you give me some?" he asked.

"Certainly I would. Go your halves anyway, my sable friend."

The Maori shook his head. "Long time ago," he said, "I brought the gold to pakeha. I found it in the Arrow river lying in the sands. He said, 'No good!' Then he tell his pakeha friends. I got nothing. Kawana (governor) ought to pay me for it. I show you gold, you ask Kawana let me go away to Auckland, to my own people?"

"Well, I don't know what's to hinder you. Can't you go if you like?"

"No; Kawana say no."

"Well, that's because they are fighting up there, I suppose. Do you want to fight the pakeha too?"

"My golly, yes! I go back, I fight for my land. What for pakeha take Maori land?"

"Well, I ain't got much influence at Court jest now," said George, "so I can't promise very high about it. But if you can show me good gold I'll divide fair with you. Darned rum thing to go mates with a savage, though," he muttered to himself.

But nothing was further from the Maori's thoughts. He preferred his half-wild stockman's life to the steady toil of the miner. "You give me five pounds I show you gold."

Now George could hardly do this in his present condition, so he endeavored
to temporize with him. But all was in vain. The Maori turned a deaf ear to all his promises and persuasions, and sat over the fire smoking incessantly and brooding probably on his own wrongs and the wrongs of his tribe and people. And George, lulled by the genial warmth, and feeling very weary, sank into profound repose.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NEW PARTNERSHIP.

When he awoke the noon-day sun was streaming in at the open doorway. He sprang out of the bunk and looked around. The Maori was gone, but his garments, dry and warm, were lying on a stool near at hand. So he ended himself therein, and refreshed himself with a fragrant plug. Then he stepped to the door with the intention of departing. But when at threshold he encountered Jack. "See!" he cried, and extending his hands he disclosed a quantity of small pieces of gold.

The prospector's enthusiasm was at once aroused. "Why where the mischief have you got this?"

"You come with me," said the Maori; "I show you." Down the steep bank he swung himself, followed by George, and then the latter first learned the cause of the sudden flood overnight. A pile of fallen rock and trees had formed a natural dam bank, and the violent rush of water during the thunderstorm had burst the frail barrier. Just above this place the receding waters had laid bare a sandy beach. To this the Maori bent his steps, and scooping aside the surface with his tawny hands, he disclosed the bright yellow gold sparkling amidst the cold grey sands. The very rocks lying with their laminated folds edgeways to the streams were glittering with particles of gold. Here indeed was treasure for the having.

"See here, Mister," said George; "let you and I work this claim. It's a fortune, man."

Jack turned away contemptuously.

"No," he said; "you work and pay me. I mind bullock and sheep."

"Well," said George, "this is a strange move. This colored person don't care to work, it seems, except after his own fashion. Very well, Jack; let's cover it up till I fetch my mates, and I'll give you your share, fair and square, every ounce of it, my boy."

But this was not what Jack wanted. "No," he said, shaking his head with a great show of dissatisfaction. "No mates. You get gold, I get you bullock and sheep; mates no good."

From which speech, after some further explanation, George rightly inferred that Jack's idea of the division of labor was that he—George—was to do the work of getting the gold, and Jack was to cook for him, a lazy luxurious occupation which exactly tallied with the Maori's idea. To this, however, George demurred, and after much talk, it was agreed that he should go for one mate and for the necessary tools. Then they returned to the hut.

There they found a new comer—a shepherd who had come from the station at the township, and was brimming over with a wonderful story, of dreadful deeds done the night before. After listening some time, George found out that he was the hero of this story, although the events were so overlaid with imaginary circumstances that it was difficult to recognize the fact. Nothing said he or Jack of the gold, but simply mentioning that he had lost his way, he inquired of the shepherd the route to the gully wherein his tent was pitched.

"Oh, for the matter of that," said the shepherd, "you had best go up to the township. I don't suppose you'd care to go over the mountain."

"I aint sure about that," said George. "What kind of road is it?"

"Pretty rough, mate, I tell you. Plenty of snow, my word! However, if you aint in a hurry, I'm going part of the way myself as soon as I've had a feed. It's a precious sight nearer than the road by the station. Why, the creek below comes out of the same
hill as the other one, only not on the same side. It’s only to go just over the saddle, and you’ll be there.”

So George agreed to go with the shepherd.

Before he started, the Maori took him aside. “You come back here?” he asked.

“You’d better believe it, my colored friend,” said George; and so they parted.

CHAPTER XV.

HEEL UPWARDS.

It is decreed by the law that one man shall not beat another with impunity. Nevertheless Ginger accepted his thrashing without seeking the interference of the law. ‘Twas not a part of his scoundrel creed to resort to legal tribunals, save upon compulsion. So Jim Darley was suffered to return homewards unmolested.

Unmolested, but weary and disconsolate, yet not quite hopeless. The bold Sergeant, aroused by Jim’s persistence to the conviction that there had been foul play, rose to the occasion, and accompanied by a constable he set forth on a voyage of discovery up the Lake. But before they had proceeded far they met first an ear and then a boat wherein our friend had been spirited off. Keel upwards it came drifting down towards them, and the boatman at once recognised it as that which had been hired by Long Tom on the previous night. So with this dumb witness in tow the Sergeant returned to the Camp, and in all good faith reported to the Commissioner that the party, George and all, had been lost in the storm. And then Jim departed, angry and sick at heart.

“The dashed wretches! If they had gone and drowned themselves I wouldn’t have cared. But I’m real sorry for that Yankee.” Such was Jim’s monody.

In an angry mood he neared his tent, when he heard such a confused Babel of sounds as caused him to run onwards at full speed, anticipatory of more mischief and harm to follow. In breathless haste he darted in, and there he beheld a strange sight.

Pegleg was sitting on an inverted bucket in the centre of the tent with a baby in his arms, which, however, he was trying to put from him. And kneeling on the ground, and crying very heartily, was Mary Kenway. On Jim’s entrance, however, she started up and seized him impulsively by the hand.

“Oh, sir!” she cried; and Jim saw that her poor, bruised face was wet with tears. “Oh, sir! have you found him—Cousin George—Mr Pratt, I mean? Tell me you have, and I don’t care what becomes of myself.”

“Don’t thee hearken to her, Jim,” shouted Pegleg; “she come to tend on I; but I won’t ha’ none o’ her tendin’. Not I. She ben’t no good—she ben’t. She have a got Cap’en into trouble, and now she do want to get out on’t. Shame on thee, woman. Why, woman—why dost thee ax for Cap’en afore thy own husband? Cousin George, too! I’d ‘Cousin George’ thee if I had my say.”

But Mary still clung to Jim, and besought him for news of George. Although in his heart he shared in the suspicions of his old comrade, the honest fellow pitied the woman, and was loth to tell her the worst. So he merely said, “They took him up the Lake, and he ain’t come back, and your husband is with them.”

Her shrewd womanly instinct divined that something remained untold. “Has Tom returned?” she asked.

“No, none of them.”

“You know more, I see you do,” she said. “Something has happened, I am sure of it. I read it in your face. In the name of Heaven tell me all.”

“Aye, aye, lad!” said Pegleg. “If more there be to be told, out wi’ it. Don’t thee hide nought—don’t thee, now, there’s a good lad, Jim.”

And so between them Jim’s secret was wrested from him. “We found the boat bottom upwards,” he said. “They’re all gone, I fear—your husband—George all?”
CHAPTER XVI.

THE EARNSLAW.

"Pretty?—No, sirree!—Pretty ain't no word for it. It's splendid, sir—glorious! Jest that. See here,—I aint no babec—I aint. I've viewed a few splendid things in my life, you bet! But this here kind of kicks anything in the universal world, ever I set my eagle-glance upon. Yes, sir!"

And, in truth, if superlatives are justifiable in any case, they were so then and there, as, standing on a bold ridge, George and the Shepherd surveyed the scene before them.

Overhead, the transparent ether, with fleecy clouds floating indolently, upborne by softest zephyrs. Below, the translucent Lake—"deeply, darkly, beautifully blue," as Byron hath it—calm and still, save for a dreamy undulating motion—basking in the rays of the noontide sun, and ever and anon flashing back the warm beams that wantoned over its gently heaving bosom. Around, a sublime spectacle of lofty mountains, and ravines so deep that they showed like dark shadows in the picture. Islands, crowned with graceful trees, dotted the surface of the Lake, and the forest-clothed spurs of Mount Boupland ran down to the water's edge, whilst, above the dense vegetation, towered the snow-clad ridges of the mountain. Rivers glittered in the dazzling sunlight, as they hurried on their course to the Wakatipu:—The Von and the Greenstone dashing over rock and scarp; the many-mouthed Dart gliding, in fifty channels, amidst shining sand-banks; the Rees coyly emerging from the shade of cool banks to gleam brightly for a brief space, and again hide bashfully in its retreat:—all these, and many un-named streams of lesser note diversified the view. Over all, at the northern extremity of the Lake, arose the crowning glory of the scene—majestic Earnslaw—the grandest mountain of New Zealand—solitary, snow-crested, cloud-capped. On either side a valley, wide stretching, ran down from the base—
or Earnslaw "brooks no rival near his throne." Directly in front, Mount Alfred, an isolated pyramidal cone more than 4,000 feet in height, but dwarfed into utter insignificance in that vast presence. Between these, Lake Diamond, a gem-like sheet of water, lying the feet of the mighty monarch.

"No," said George again, "it ain't at all pretty." And George was right.

"Well, mate, pretty or not, we had best be making tracks. We've a longish way to go yet, and I don't want to be out at night among the snow," said the Shepherd.

"No, sir. Rather not. That wouldn't be quite according to my notions neither. Very romantic, and all that sort of thing, no doubt; but I ain't an Alpine youth, and don't ambition much to leave George Washington Pratt in a snowdrift. So beave a-head, pardner. Excelsior!"

"No," said the Shepherd, "that isn't the name. It's Earnslaw; though some calls it Mt. Macintosh, because Mac—that's one of our stockmen—first discovered it."

"And a pretty tall man he must have been to discover such a mighty heap of rocks as that. But Excelsior ain't the name of any mountain, my esteemed friend."

"What is it then? A brand—X. L. C. R.? I don't think there's any cattle branded like that herabouts."

The American smiled all over. "By Jehoshaphat!" he cried. "You are perfectly correct there. Anyway I haven't come across many of them in this country."

Then he explained to his wondering companion the pith of Longfellow's quaint little poem, wherewith as a true American it behoved him to be familiar. And so, with jest and tale, the time sped on. Their path wound upwards along a "leading spur" of the great range, and as they ascended, the grass grew coarse and scant in huge waving tussocks till they reached the snow-line, when the character of the vegetation again changed to a soft, short growth, which formed a bright
green sward of toothsome grasses, such as the mountain sheep delight in. Heavy patches of snow lay in the sun-burned hollows, and, occasionally, deep wreaths had to be crossed on the track. As they travelled still onward and upward, these increased in number and extent till they attained the summit, when all traces of the ground disappeared, and they forced their way over a heavy patch of trackless snow, through the thinly-crusted surface of which they sometimes sank to their knees. Deeper and yet deeper it became, but they went on, now in silence, broken only by their labored breathing till at last the Shepherd, who was leading, slid into a heavy drift, and nearly disappeared therein.

George helped him out and got him back to the track. Then he said to him quite calmly—"I say, friend, do you feel quite sure you're on the right course?"

The Shepherd gazed around with an air of bewilderment. Said he, "I have been over this range scores of times before now, and never missed the track yet. But I'm blessed if I don't think we've taken the wrong spur."

CHAPTER XVII.

"THE WRONG SPUR."

Do you know the meaning of that phrase, reader? It means that from the top of the mountain there is always one, and only one, long spur, which will conduct the traveller in safety to the valley beneath. The spurs radiate from the centre like fingers from the back of the hand, and so closely resemble each other that none but practised eyes can distinguish them apart; and even the accustomed wayfarer must exercise great caution and vigilance when he commences the descent, lest he unwittingly takes the "wrong spur," which, if followed too far, inevitably leads to danger and sometimes to death.

George had not been sufficiently long in the country to understand the ful!
dangers whereof sunset was the assured prelude. To add to their dismay (and George only now first comprehended the situation), a dense mist was rolling up from the valleys, and had already shrouded the lower peaks in its chill white folds. The Shepherd was in despair. "If that fog overtakes us in the mountain," he cried, "we are dead men."

For these mists bear two horrors on their darkling wings. They are so dense that when enveloped in them one cannot see more than a few paces ahead; and their breath is icily cold, piercing to the very marrow, and paralyzing the frail spark of electricity which imparts vitality to the human frame. Even in broad daylight men have lost their way, and have perished in these terrible mists, which come on suddenly, swiftly, and without warning. At night the peril is increased a thousand-fold.

But George was one of those men whose powers increase in emergencies. For a minute he calmly contemplated the scene. His active mind quickly reviewed all the probabilities, and his decision was formed.

"See here, mate," he said, "I ain't going down into that damned fog, not if I know it; and I ain't going to perch up here till I get froze up neither. So I vote we go back towards the hut."

"We shall never get there," said the man, "I couldn't find the way in the dark, and that fog will be up to us before we can say Jack Robinson."

"Perhaps so, but if we keep the spur we shall come to open country where there ain't no snow, and if we don't find any timber we can burn the tussocks. Tussocks don't burn bad where there ain't nothing better to be got, sir."

Partly by persuasion, and partly by sheer compulsion, George succeeded in arousing the dormant energies of his companion, and they both set off at good speed down the face of the mountain—literally fleeing from death. The active exercise warmed and excited them, so that in a few minutes George was jesting and the Shepherd was laughing at their misadventure.

But the cruel mist swooped upon them, and wrapped them in its folds before they had proceeded far. Then they were compelled to move more slowly, and a nameless dread possessed them, as the darkness became intense, and the very earth was lost to view. In silence they plodded over the crisp snow, which crushed and crackled dizzily under their lagging footsteps. At last the Shepherd halted—

"I can go no farther," he said. "Let me be!"—and he threw himself down on the snow.

Poor fellow, he was fairly exhausted with fatigue, and overpowered with drowsiness—that most insidious foe whose embrace in these elevated regions is the sure precursor of sleep's twin-brother—death.

"Let me be!" he repeated, as George tried to arouse him. "It's no use. I can't move another step; and—and we've lost the track again, I know."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"SIMILIA SIMILIBUS CURANTUR."

"I've been in many a bad fix in my time," thought George, "but never in one so bad as this." And then he thought of Ruth—his well-beloved Ruth, waiting for his coming in her far-off home, and he softly murmured her name.

"Poor Ruth!—I'll make another effort for her sake. Guess I can't leave this man to perish here."

But the Shepherd refused to move—

I had written "resolutely," but in fact all resolution had deserted him. George felt the numbing influence of the icy atmosphere creeping over himself.

"There ain't no time to lose," he said.

He tried to lift the fallen man, and the effort drained his own muscles, and so did him good service. He might as well have attempted to lift a rock—so powerless and inert was the body. George hesitated a moment; then he drew forth the knife which he carried
in minor fashion suspended from his belt; and with the sharp point he pricked the drowsy Shepherd. The effect was instantaneous. As he felt the keen blade he started into a sitting posture, and regarded George with a wild glare. "Do you mean to murder me?" he cried. "You double-dyed villain! Are you going to kill me?"

For answer George made a feint of stabbing him. With a furious yell the Shepherd scrambled to his feet, and fell upon him. He was effectually aroused now. All unwittingly Mr George W. Pratt had applied the original principle of homœopathy—for he had driven away one fear by the application of another.

George was the stronger, and the struggle was brief. The Shepherd more consented to proceed. "See," said George, "here is a tussock-head—the snow is getting thinner—we shall soon be out of it."

And, in fact, before they had proceeded a hundred yards they found the bare earth beneath their feet.

"But we are lost, I tell you, for all that; for this ain't the spur that leads to the hut."

"Never mind, sir," replied George, gaily, "we've got clear of that damned winding sheet up above, and so long as we keep going down, we can't go far wrong. I know enough for that."

And with that all conversation ceased, and they plodded onwards as best they could, but ever keeping on the downward track. Presently they were brought to a standstill, for the ground sloped abruptly from beneath their feet, and they rightly judged that they were on the brink of a precipice.

"Hiss!" cried the Shepherd, "I hear water!" And his sharpened senses had informed him correctly. From the invisible depths there came up through the fog a faint and muffled sound as of the tinkling of water.

"Where there is water there is wood—scrub of some sort, if no big timber. Come on, mate; let's climb down somehow."

With the word, the Shepherd swung himself over the cliff, and holding on to the brink, sought to find foothold below. But everywhere the smooth face of the rock repelled him. For a little while he struggled, and then—weakened by previous toil—his grasp relaxed, and, with a great cry of terror, he fell.

George peered over the bank, but the fog was far too dense to permit of his discerning the fate of his comrade. There was a dull sound, as of a body coming in contact with the earth, and then an avalanche of rocks seemed to roll thundering into the abyss. He waited till the noise died away, and then he shouted aloud.

An answer quickly came. A peal of laughter, so close to his ears as he lay on the ground, cautiously overhanging the cliff, that George actually retreated in amazement. "What in thunder is this?" he cried. "Are you there, gardner?"

"Aye, aye, sir," responded the Shepherd. "All right; no bones broken, only a little bruised, that's all."

In truth, he had fallen on a small terrace, a mere shelf in the mountain side, the level of which was not more than twelve feet below the bank. In his fall he had dislodged some loose rocks which had gone bounding down into the valley. In a few minutes George had achieved a similar feat, and they now stood side by side on a narrow plateau, which they found on exploration terminated everywhere in steep declivities. A few green tamaruakura bushes struggled for existence in the crevices of the rock, but they were worthless for firewood. To proceed farther in the darkness was impossible. But they were now sheltered from the chill blast; so, making the best of it, they huddled together under the lee of the precipice, and ventured to indulge in sleep.

What dreams they dreamed—what visions of the night passed before them—this writer cannot tell. But just before dawn, George aroused the Shepherd, much to the discomfort of the latter.
"What's up? — what's the row?" inquired the drowsy swain.

"Say, there ain't any wild beasts in this here wilderness, are there, pardner?"

"Wild beasts!" echoed the Shepherd in a tone of extreme disgust. "My carminative word! I should think not. Yes—there's rats. Have any of 'em been biting your rubbound toes, mate?"

"Not exactly, Mister. None of them varmints have prospected to that preposterous extent. But I was awake just now; but the queerest, damndest noise ever I heard in the whole course of my life. Guess I know what the growl of a 'grizzly' is—and I've been introduced to the snarl of a 'painter' before now; but I don't know of nothing like that noise. It warn't a roar, nor a screech, it warn't a tune on a fog-horn quite; but it seemed to be made up of all three, with the yell of a wild-cat thrown in for variety."

"Lord's sake!" cried the Shepherd, now quite awake. "Why it must be a moa!"

"Yes?—are there any of them critters about these parts? Thought they had gone dead right out."

"Aye," said the Shepherd. "That's what the zoological folks tell us. Blamed fools! What do they know about it? I believe there's plenty of moas in these here mountains yet."

"Did you ever see one?" asked George.

"No, I can't say as ever I did exactly see one; but the boss there, down at the Station, knows a man who had a mate lost up the Dart for three days; and he always said that he had often seen their footprints in the sand on the river bank, though he never got sight of 'em. And only a month since the miners at the Arrow saw one on the range overhead, just about dark."

"Curious, if correct," commented George. "What was it like?"

"Like? Oh, like a moa to be sure, fifty feet high, with a neck like a chain-cable, and a beak like the fluke of an anchor, and eyes like— Oh Lord! what's that?"

And on the breeze upborne there came a repetition of the strange sounds which had disturbed the repose of Mr George Washington Pratt.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LONESOME LAKE.

At the sun's approach the heavy mists gathered themselves together, and rolled upwards towards the mountain peaks, which they encircled awhile with wavy wreaths ere floating aloft to mingle with the clouds. For a time George and his companion were enshrouded. A sea of vapour spread around them, concealing from view the surrounding scenery.

And once again from the depths below there came that strange sound which had disturbed their slumbers. Then George smiled a subtle smile. Said he: "Guess I know what critter that is now."

"That's more than I do, then," cried the Shepherd. "I never heard such a queer sound in all my born days. Why, it's like a cow with a sore throat."

"But it ain't though. I reckon that voice is more familiar than you suspect, if we could hear it a little more plainly."

"Why, what do you make it out to be?"

"Well, sir, if I ain't out in my judgment, it's an animal something like a calf, but more like a horse—bigger than a prairie dog, and not quite so big as a buffalo. His ears are long, and his tail is longer; and what's more, it is generally found to hang down behind when he ain't switching the flies with it. He has got four legs—two in front and two astern—"

"Oh! come now," interrupted the Shepherd, "stash that, mate, will ye? Don't be putting any of your sulphurous nonsense on to me."

"Well, friend," said George, "you needn't cut up rusty about it. I was only trying to describe the critter in appropriate language. That's all, sir."
And he applied himself industriously to the extraction and ejection of tobacco juice, whilst the Shepherd smoked his pipe in sulky silence.

And now the mists became less dense, and the light began to penetrate the fleecy curtains that veiled the earth. Then suddenly the conquering sun shone full upon the terraced shelf where the wanderers had taken refuge, and the scattered vapours hastily retreating revealed a scene of wild beauty.

Down, far down below, appeared a tiny lake—a veritable mountain tarn—deep-set among the everlasting hills. For the most part precipitous rocks ran sheer down into this lake, but on one side its steel-blue waters laved the sandy beaches which lay between the projecting bluffs. The spot wherein George and the Shepherd were located, and wherefrom they now looked forth upon the scene, was on the face of a bold, rocky spur, which protruded, wedge-like, into the lake, at its upper end, so that its waters appeared on either hand no less than before them. Deep gorges—wherein, hidden from view by luxuriant shrubs, small streams ran down from their far-away, snowy cradles, to mingle with the flood—isolated this spur from the surrounding ranges, as effectually as if it had been an island, whilst above them towered a lofty peak, whose crystal mantle, glistening in the sunlight, seemed to forbid all hope of egress in that direction.

"Say, friend, do you know where we are?"—Thus, George, to the Shepherd.

"Yes," replied that worthy, "I know the place well enough, and how the mischief we got here is a puzzle. Why, we're a matter of four miles off the track, which is behind that big hill. However, we can get to your creek this way; only it's a bad road to travel, and nobody knows what may happen on the way."

"Yes!—what do you conclude would be likely to happen?"

"Well, you see this place—the Lonesome Lake, they call it—hasn't got a very good name. They do say that there's some wild natives herabout. Seems there was a tribe once that were drove into the bush by some of the others, and never came out again. Signs of their fires have been seen many times, but they never show out. They got such a fright that they are afraid to come abroad now."

"Then they ain't very dangerous, I should say—not specially, sir, if they are such miserable skunks as you say."

"Well, mate," said the Shepherd, "if you're game to try it, I'm agreeable. So let's see about getting down to the foot of this cliff, which isn't quite so easy as winking."

"Right you are, sir. Move ahead. I'm getting famished rather; and no wonder, when I haven't had nothing but a plug for meat, drink, and blankets since yesterday."

It was not a very easy task—that same getting down. First they had to climb to the top of the spur, and then to seek for an accessible bank whereby to descend into the valley. There was nothing for it, however, but to stick to it, and this they did, till by dint of creeping, rolling, and sliding, they arrived safely at the bottom of the glen.

Then began their downward journey, over a country broken and rough enough in sooth, compelling them to climb the range to avoid the numerous obstructions which everywhere presented themselves.

Just as they arrived at the foot of the Lonesome Lake, they heard a repetition of the terrible cries of the night. It seemed to come from the valley below them, and on turning the corner of a bluff, they saw before them the cause of the disturbance.

It was quietly browsing on a grassy slope, all unconscious of the neighborhood of man. The Shepherd turned to George with a comical expression of countenance.

"Why," said he, "I'm blessed if it ain't a moke."
"Jest so," George quietly replied. "Didn't I picture the animal rightly, sir?"

"And if I ain't astray in my reckon ing," he continued, "that picturesque and venerable beast is an ancient acquaintance of mine. In fact he's my Third Mate. In which case, I guess, we ain't a mighty long distance from the habitation of my pardners."

CHAPTER XX.

ONE AND ALL

It was indeed Old Jack. He had been freed from his tether by some of the rowdy gang who had wrought such evil on George and his mates, and driven up the creek, where he was now found, and where the grasses were so well assimilated to his asinine palate that he felt no inclination to return immediately. George whistled to him after the fashion in which Pegleg was accustomed to call him, and the sagacious beast pricked up his ears, and came gallopping up the range. But when George would fain have caught him, he snuffed suspiciously. It was not his master, and he knew it. So, disdaining to submit to the thralldom of any master, he snorted his disapprobation and turned tail—threw up his heels with a kick of defiance, and trotted off again down the gully.

They drove Old Jack before them as they went along. "Guess he'll show us the road home, anyway," said George. "The perverse old sinner that he is."

And following the windings of the creek they came at last to its junction with a larger stream. Then George knew where he was. He had reached the gully wherein his tent was pitched.

It was still early morning when he sighted it. Jim was at work in the creek, and Pegleg was bending over a pot standing on the fire, whence arose savoury odours, delicious to the olfactory senses of the hungry travellers. The sound of approaching footsteps roused the old man, and caused him to look up.

"Lord save us!" he exclaimed as he caught sight of George. "Here be Cap'en's ghost, surely. Jim, lad—good lad—Jim!—I say, here be Cap'en's ghost."

"Not muchly of a ghost, Mister Pegleg," said George, "as I'll soon convince you if you'll give us some tucker. Now, old boy, look alive and be smart, for I'm as famished as a wild-cat, and the hind-leg of a horse won't be more than about half enough to replenish the magazine."

Jim came running up in haste. "Well Captain George," he cried, "I never thought to see you alive again. Where have you been, and what has happened to you all this time? Do tell us."

"Aye, aye, lad; tell us all about it, Cap'en," chimed in Pegleg. "Not a cent till I've had a feed. So take off the billy, and let us have whatever there is to be had."

Breakfast, be sure, was quickly despatched, and then George related his adventures to his wondering audience. But nothing said he of the gold till the Shepherd had taken his departure. Then he disclosed the discovery that had been imparted to him by the Macri. "And now, pardners," he said. "I vote that as our ground here is nigh wrought out, we make tracks for yonder gully before anybody else happens on it. What say?"

Jim assented cheerfully, and Pegleg, after sagely weighing the pros and cons, proposed to accompany them. But George would not hear of this.

"Not you," he said. "Best stop here a day or two till we get our ground secured, so as to put all curious inquirers off the scent. Then you can put the tent and traps on Old Jack and go quietly into the township till you hear from your's truly. You shall have your share, old man, jest the same as if you were with us, never fear,"

"Who's afraid?" quoth Pegleg. "Afraid of thee and Jim?—Ho! ho! ho! That's a fine joke. No, no, old Pegleg ben't afraid, lad—ben't afraid. And thou be'st a sensible lad,
Cap’en, so I’ll do whate’ernever thee and Jim here thinks best. What dost thee say, Jim?”

Jim agreed with George, and so it was arranged, that at nightfall the two should start on their journey to the new claim, the bearings of which George had noted as accurately as circumstances would permit.

As one and another passed by and recognized George, the news of his return soon spread, and quite a crowd assembled round the tent to hear the oft-told tale. And Mary Kenway, hearing that he was really to be seen in the flesh at his former abode, came hurrying down the glen to greet him.

“Oh, George, sir,” she exclaimed in a great passion of tears. “Thank God, you are alive. I thought they had murdered you. Will you ever forgive me, sir? Indeed, and indeed, I did not know what wickedness was intended, when they got me to write that letter. Oh! sir, do say that you forgive me.”

“Let her alone, Cap’en George,” growled old Pegleg. “I tell thee she ben’t no good. Don’t thee have naught to say unto her.”

But George took her kindly by the hand, and assured her that he quite acquitted her of complicity in the plot which had so nearly proved fatal to himself. “There ain’t nothing to forgive,” he said simply; “and I won’t have the poor woman run down. No, sir; not even by you, Pegleg. She’s been badly used and made a fool of, and she don’t know all she’s got to suffer yet. So, don’t be bitter against her, old man.”

Then he told Mary, as gently as such a story could be told, how he had seen Tom Kenway perish in the quicksand; and when the tide of grief was at its height, and she could only sob, and rock herself passionately to and fro in the utter abandonment of misery, he quietly led her into the tent and, closing the folds upon her, strode away silently down the gully.

In a few minutes he returned, bearing in his arms Mary’s child. Without a word he placed it in her lap, and the bereaved woman found a solace for her grief in the caresses of maternal love.

“Poor Clutha,” she said, “thou hast no father now.”

“She shall never want one whilst I live, by ——!” said George.

“Twas the first oath George had uttered for many a year, and he blushed as the word fell from his lips.

* * * *

That night as the shades of evening fell, George W. Pratt and Jim Darley stood fully equipped for the journey by the log-fire. “Well, ladz,” said Pegleg, “so thou be going to leave the old man. Well, well. All for best—all for best, no doubt. But dash’d if I do half like it. No—no, I don’t, there now.”

“Keep up your pecker, old fellow,” said Jim. “You’ll soon hear from us, luck or no luck.”

“Aye, aye, lad. That be all very right; but dash, my wig if I do like being left all alone.”

“Well, Jim,” said George, “there ain’t much time to spend now, so I guess we’ll make a start. See here, Pegleg, give us a name for the new claim.”

“Name? Why—why, what name wouldst have? Call it Cap’en’s Gully! Or, no—seeing we be one and all concerned, give un Cousin Jacky’s name—One and All, lad; that be it—One and All.”

And thus endeth the Second Book of the Adventures of George Washington Pratt.

(End of Book II.)
BOOK III.

WHAT BECAME OF HIM.

CHAPTER I.

GOING HOME.

"No, boys; I've discussed this here matter a good deal in my own mind, and the long and the short of it is, I'm going home."

Thus spake George Washington Pratts, and by way of adding force to his remark, he aimed a round, straight shot at the atmosphere, and scored a bull's-eye.

They were standing on the beach at Queenstown—as the rising settlement had come to be termed;—George, and Jim Darley, and old Pegleg. The time was sunset, and the big Lake was calm and still as a sleeping child. The mountains were heavily capped with snow, and the air was chill and frost-laden; for the glorious summer had passed away, and the coming winter was making itself felt. A little way off a tiny schooner was lying in the water, as motionless as "a painted ship upon a painted ocean."

"Yes," said George again, "I've resolved to go home. This here game of ours is about played out, and I ain't going to take another hand. And I don't mind telling you, pardners, that there's a pair of bright eyes somewhere in the States, getting kind of dim, on account of my being so long away."

"Well! well!" cried old Pegleg, "if thou wilt, thou wilt, I do know that. But it be main and foolish o' thee, just as news be come o' fine new diggings too."

"Aye!" agreed Jim, "that's what I've been telling the Captain. Why there's Gorman and his mates making a pound weight a-day. I was up there and saw it with my own eyes."

"'Taint no use, pardner. Guess I've said it, and in that schooner I go tomorrow, if all's well. I ain't done so badly, and I don't care to look for more. So say no more, boys. Jest conclude the thing's done and sealed."

And all their efforts to shake his resolution were in vain. The schooner was to sail for the foot of the Lake on the next day; and thence he could proceed to Dunedin by coach, and so onward. As he said, he had been very successful. The claim to which he had been guided by the malice of his enemies, and the knowledge of Himoni Witi, had yielded well—splendidly in fact, and he reckoned that after deducting expenses, he would be able to land in America with not less than Five thousand dollars to his credit—a sum which he conceived would justify him in demanding the hand of Ruth Allan from the rough old "squire," her father. Moreover, his soul hungered and thirsted for news of his love. His letters were to be addressed to the Post Office, Dunedin, and he hoped to receive these missives from Uncle Sol, and possibly from Ruth also.

I may mention here that the gully—sealed in the recesses of the mountains though it was—had quickly been discovered by some of the miners who scattered themselves over the country, and to whom a wreath of smoke, or a muddy water-course, afforded an unfaithful indication of new diggings. Before George and his mates had been at work quite a week one of these roving bands
CHAPTER II.

MARY KENWAY'S RESOLVE.

It was quite true that George paid a visit to Mary Kenway that evening. The poor little woman and her child—Clatha—had been residing in the township since the death of Tom; and George, pitying her distress and helplessness, had supplied her with the means of living. I do not think he was actuated by any warmer feeling than that of compassion; whilst on her side, a lively sense of gratitude was paramount.

"Well, ma'am," said George, after the first greeting, "I intend to depart hence to-morrow, and I should just like to know if you have quite made your mind as to what you intend to do."

"No, George," said Mary—speaking in a low, sad tone.

I've been thinking ma'am," continued George, "of what is best to be done; and I reckon there's only one of two things for it. You see you ain't fit for much hard work, that's a fact—say nothing about minding Missy, and she's a pretty considerable deal of a trouble, I guess; so it just comes to one of two things, as I said before. Either you must go to your father, the Captain, and throw yourself on his kindness, now you've got rid of that—I beg pardon, ma'am—I mean to say now you've lost your husband,—"

"No, no, no!"—Mary interrupted—still in the same tone.

"Anyway you ought to write to him. Seems to me that's no more than your duty, no matter how the old gent may have behaved to you. 'How ever, if you won't go back to him, I've thought of another little plan, which is to set you up in a small way of business—something light and genteel, such as you might prefer—women fixings maybe, or the cigar business. What do you think, ma'am?"

He had delivered this little speech with considerable hesitation, as if doubtful of giving offence;—sitting indeed with his eyes cast down somewhat sheepishly. But fir ing that
Mary made no response, she looked up, and then he saw that she was silently crying.

"Why, Mary—Mrs Kenway!" cried George, "what is the matter. I hope, ma'am, I have not spoken anyway unkind to you."

"No," said Mary—"Don't think it. You are too—too kind."

And she sobbed aloud. This was the second time that Mary had allowed her feelings thus to overcome her, and Mr G. W. Pratt felt somewhat uneasy.

"I wish she wouldn't flow over quite so much," he thought. Then aloud—"Well, Mrs Kenway, as you seem distressed somehow, I'll just step outside for a bit. I've got two or three matters to attend to in the township, and I'll come again to know your mind about things."

She did not answer, so he went away.

"Suppose it does her good, poor thing," was his colloquy. "But she do flow over awful, that's a fact.

In about an hour he returned, and was greatly relieved to find that Mary had, as he phrased it, "dried up." She was calm now, but pale of face, and depressed in spirit. "I have made up my mind," she said in reply to George's inquiries. "I could not stay here after you were gone—her voice faltered ever so slightly here). I should feel so lonely, knowing no one, and, perhaps, pointed out by the finger of scorn as the wife of the man who tried to murder you. Hush!" she cried, as George attempted to speak.

"I know what you would say, but it is useless to attempt to disguise the fact. I have schooled myself to acknowledge it, and the people here talk of it openly, and say cruel things. Oh, sir, do you know what cruel things are said of us—of myself, I mean?"

George gazed at her with genuine amazement. She colored from chin to forehead, and, averting her eyes, continued—

"I see you have not heard the wretched slanders that have been circulated, as I believe, by the malice of that red-haired fellow—Ginger, Tom, (poor Tom!) used to call him."

"Slanders, Mary!" said George; "about what, ma'am?"

"About us—you and I. Don't ask me more. It is so cruel—so wicked, and you so kind to me and my child."

She seemed about to break forth in a fresh flood of tears; but George took her hand in his own, and, looking into her eyes with a steady, honest gaze, spoke thus:

"See here, Mrs Kenway, you needn't put yourself out about any damned lies that folks have been mean enough to forge. I ain't a-going to, myself, I tell you. The schooner goes to-morrow, and you shall go with me in her. You are quite right not to stop in this place, and you had best go to your father on many accounts. I'll see you safe on board a vessel bound for Hobart Town. If there ain't one in Dunedin, you can go to Melbourne in the steamer with me, and get a vessel there. I reckon that's the right thing to do, ma'am."

And thus then it was arranged; and when the morning came, and the schooner spread her snowy wings to the fresh breeze, George W. Pratt and Mary Kenway, with little Clutha, stepped on board, and bade farewell to the City of the Lake.

"Now, Jim, lad, what dost thou say? Didn't I tell thee? There he be surely going away with that young woman. Ah! she be a bad 'un, she be. Ben't old Pegleg right now?"

"Yes, she is a bad one sure enough; and he as is with her ain't much good neither."

These words were uttered in a hoarse, croaking voice by a listener, Jim Darley turned on the intruder. It was Ginger. "You cursed villain," he shouted, with a mighty oath; "I don't much mind what my old mate says about 'em, but I'll be eternally condemned if I'll let thee do it."

And the young giant smote the scarlet soundrel a mighty blow which felled him to the earth, and so for the time silenced his lying tongue.
CHAPTER III.

DOWN THE LAKE.

Down the Lake sped the schooner, by favoring gales wafted on her course. Round the rocky point of the Peninsula which runs far out into the waters, as contesting their sovereignty; under the storm-rent pinnacles of Mount Cecil; past the gloomy walls of the Devil's Staircase, where the rocks run sheer down into dark floods of unknown depth; past Half-way Bay where the Lochy river steals forth from its gloomy recesses to mingle with the sun-lit Lake, beneath a huge terrace which stretches like a rampart across the entrance. And George's heart was light; for was he not going home, to his native land—to the scenes of childhood—to his darling Ruth? I think the quantity of honeydew consumed by him that morning must have been immense. I know that he whistled "Yankee Doodle" between successive plods, and walked up and down the tiny deck with a restless gaiety of demeanour foreign to his usual habits. The Skipper remarked it. "You seem in high spirits," he observed.

"Yes," said George, "guess you're jest about right. I feel good this morning, you bet. Most folks do when they set their faces towards Jordan."—By which figurative phrase he implied home.

"See here," he continued, "I've been roaming, as the song says, for the last seven years, and now I kind of reckon I'm homeward bound. That's what makes me gay, sirree."

"Oh!" said the Skipper, "is that the way of it? Then I don't wonder at it. I've got a mother and sisters in England down about Exeter; but I never expect to go back; and I know they'll never come out here, so I feel as if I were cut off from all my family like."

"Well," said George, "that's rather rough on you, that is. Possible they might do better here than to England. This is a fine country for young women. There's plenty of decent boys going a begging for sweethearts here. Speaking in a general way, it's a fine country altogether; only," he continued, looking upwards at the mountains, "it do seem to be stacked up rather muchly."

There was another on board to whom the voyage was anything but pleasant. Poor Mary Kenway! She had left her dead husband—the one love of her maidenhood—buried in the sands of the region she was quitting. She was going, in fear and doubt, to implore the forgiveness of the father she had abandoned for the dead man's sake. How would he receive her? Her heart sank within her at the thought. What if he again cast her forth?

In vain George tried to rouse her. For her the sublime scenery had no attractions. Uncomforted and desolate, she crept down to the dingy little cabin, to hide her tears from the gaze of the men on board. And then she thought of Ruth Allan, for George had told her the simple story of his love; and she tried to picture the joy of the young girl to whom he was hastening. Thus prone are we to self-torture. The ideal picture of Ruth's coming felicity only aggravated her own misery; yet she dwelt upon it with morbid pleasure.

In truth Mary more nearly resembled the ivy, than the "stalk of carle-hemp." She was unable to stand alone, but ever felt the need of some other to cling to for support—some stronger mind to guide and direct her own. To be compelled to think and act for herself was inexpressibly painful, nor did she possess that happy temperament which enables many people to console themselves with the reflection, that "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." Her thoughts perpetually wandered forth into the coming future, and the prospect was bleak and cheerless. What wonder then that in such moments her mind should dwell overmuch on George—Cousin George, as she delighted to call him. He seemed to her a veritable tower of strength, and like all tender, loving women, Mary admired strong men. I speak not here of mere physical superiority, although
that alone constitutes a powerful attraction for the female mind;—equally so with the refined lady of polished life, as with her untutored sister in the wilds of Africa, or the remotest isle of Polynesia. But mainly it was the strong will of the man that made its influence felt on the forlorn woman, and subdued her. Mary could look up to George Washington Pratt,—could respect him,—esteem him. Did she love him? Not then, I think. Yet—“if Heaven had sent her such a man.”—Mary Kenway and Desdemona lived far apart, yet both were fascinated by the same idea. And soon this man would leave her, and she must go on her way alone and unsupported.—Yes, henceforth, alone in the world.

The child, Cluthe, cried, and she soothed it to rest. “This remains to me,” said Mary. “Thank God for my child!”

She was like the tender vine, putting forth tendrils to grasp something, somewhere—some firmer plant, around which to entwine.

CHAPTER IV.

UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE DOME.

It was a queer old coach—the coach that ran, in the days whereof I write, between Kingston and Invercargill. An ancient coach, with a fine full flavor of “the light of other days” about it. A venerable coach, whose many years gained for it no respect. A coach from whose springs the elasticity of youth had long since departed; in whose cushions the sensation of repose had ceased to abide. The spokes of the wheels rattled like the ribs of a skeleton; and the break jarred wheezingly, as if afflicted with chronic asthma. Truly it was a most uncomfortable vehicle, and its inmates suffered accordingly.

The inmates were Mary Kenway and her child, and two rough, bearded miners on their way to town “for a spree,” under which phrase is usually included all of dissipation, sin, and consequent misery procurable on this side of Hades. They were not uncivil, however, these men. Rather I would term them polite. They asked Mary’s consent before they ventured to light their inevitable pipes, and one of them filled her lap with cakes and “lollies” for “the bairnie.”

George, being desirous of seeing the country, sat outside with the driver; who, finding that he had a real live American by his side, lashed out into a frantic rhapsody of phrases—all more or less blasphemous—in supposed compliment to his passenger.

But the vile parody failed either to deceive or to please Mr. Pratt. “See here!” he said, after enduring more than enough, “this here kind of thing ain’t correct. If you’re a Britisher, you’re a mean cuss to try to make yourself out a Yankee; and if you were raised in the States (which I hope you were not), you’re a damned bad imitation of the genuine article. That’s all.”

After which exposition of opinion the driver relapsed into his normal condition, and ceased to offend.

Through the Dome Pass—a valley eroded by gigantic glaciers ere Man commenced to count the flight of Time—across the Eyre Creek, and so out into the luxuriant plains of Southland; where the Five Rivers, like the fingers of a huge hand, concentrate in one bright crystal stream—rolled the coach with its living freight. Suddenly there came a crash—the near fore wheel flew into a score of pieces; there was a wild confusion of horses, and the crazy vehicle fell over on one side. The horses dragged it for a few yards till the king-bolt snapped, and then, with pole and harness lashing them into fury, they set off at a gallop over the plain.

The driver, to do him justice, manfully held by the reins so long as it was possible to do so, suffering himself to be dragged some distance. But when the coach and horses parted company, he relaxed his grasp, and picked himself up. Then he returned to the wreck.

The inside passengers were safe and
unhurt. But George had been violently thrown from the box-seat, and in falling had been caught by the roof of the coach, which now rested on his legs, pinning him to the earth.

They lifted the coach with difficulty, and sought to raise George to his feet. But he groaned and fell back again, beseeching them not to touch him, for the pain was greater than he could bear. His leg was broken below the knee.

What was to be done? There was not a house of any sort within five miles. The day was chilly. The situation was perilous. At last one of the miners proposed that they should construct a litter from the fragments of the dismembered coach. It was done without delay, and George was tenderly lifted into it. Then, with many pauses, the men set forth with their burden.

Imagine the scene. Two miners, clad in blue serge shirts, bearing the impromptu litter—cunningly constructed of bright painted wood, soiled gay chintz, and dingy American cloth. The driver striding ahead leading the way, but impatient to catch his runaway horses; and Mary Kenway, with little Clutha, tramping in the rear. Over swamp and rock they trudged—five weary miles, and never a word spake George save once, when he faintly begged for water. Mary flew to the adjacent river—it was a quarter of a mile away—but, all encumbered by the child though she was, she traversed the distance in an incredibly brief space of time, whilst the weary pallet-bearers halted by the road-side. Then, panting, glowing with the unwonted exercise, with her luxuriant hair loosed from its bondage, and a world of compassion and affection in her eyes, she poured forth the welcome draught into a simple pannikin, and held it to George’s lips. And when he took it from her hand, with a smile of gratitude, uttering faintly-spoken thanks, Mary felt that for such poor reward she would gladly undergo tenfold more fatigue.

CHAPTER V.

UNDER THE DOME.

The entrance to the Dome Pass is guarded, so to speak, by two bold mountains, in appearance totally unlike any of their surroundings. In place of the sharp, rifled peaks, and splintered crags, which present a monotonous diversity of wild scenery to the beholder, who wearies of continuous sublimity—these mountains—named respectively East Dome and West Dome—are rounded at the summits, and of regular contour. Beneath the shadow of the West Dome, at the period of my story, there stood a small shanty, miscalled an “Accommodation House,” where accommodation there was none. Thither his bearers carried George Washington Pratt, greatly to the consternation of the grimy couple, who there eked out a precarious subsistence for themselves and their unkempt and unwashed progeny.

“We can’t accommodate the young man here,” decisively said the red-faced, frowzy female who owned the shanty-keeper as her husband. And he, as in duty bound, re-echoed her sentiments.

“Take him down to the station, can’t ye?” he growled.

I am obliged to say that the miners swore at this; and the driver cursed in parti-colored phraseology. Of a verity his oaths, garnered from the vocabularies of many lands, were various as the shreds of Joseph’s garments. Still the shanty-keeper and his larger half insisted that George must be taken on to the nearest station. Now, the nearest station was fully six miles distant, and there were good and sufficient reasons for not proceeding further just then. Firstly, the men were fatigued—George was not a “feather-weight;” secondly, he was unable to endure the pain of removal. He had all but fainted—strong man though he was—on the way thither. So the dispute
waxed loud; and high above the clamor arose the shrill vituperation of the shanty-woman, and the polyglot objuries of the angry driver.

When the tumult was at its highest, the hard, harsh woman felt a soft hand on her bare red arm, and a gentle voice addressed itself to her ear.

"Oh, ma'am"—it was Mary who spoke—"do please let him stay here till to-morrow. He is so ill and weak. Pray—pray take him in."

The virago looked down on the pale, pure face, and into the pleading eyes, and on the pouting, beseeching lips, and she saw the child Clutha sleeping on the mother's breast, and her true womanly instincts gained the mastery.

"Well, well, my dear," she said, "I won't deny it, just for your sake. Tell them to take your husband in, and we'll do our best for him."

So absorbed was Mary in her care for George that she heeded not the misplaced epithet of "husband." Enough for her was it that she had secured shelter for this man who had befriended her in her troubles, and who now claimed in return her friendship and assistance.

So they carried George into the hut, a small, low-roofed, mud-floored, three-roomed cabin; and laid him on the bed usually occupied by the shanty-woman and her husband. "Tain't much of a bed, but 'tis the best we have, mum," said the now thoroughly softened woman.

Strange was the influence exercised by Mary upon more vigorous natures. All weakness herself, she yet bent strong wills to her wishes. Verily, she "stooped to conquer," and was victorious because of her humility.

CHAPTER VI.

DOCTOR JOHN.

He was a representative man, was Doctor John,—representative of a peculiar class of practitioners. Brass door-plates, yellow chariots, and cockaded men-of-all-work, are not among the belongings of this class. Day-bells and night-bells are alike unknown to them. Nobody delivers urgent messages to them in church, nor whispers them hurriedly out of crowded meetings. They have no fixed places of abode, and to this extent would come under the head of vagrants. Indeed, so far as the term "vagrant" means one who wanders from place to place, that designation would not be misplaced. But there the definition stops. Idle wanderers they are not. Rather the reverse—very much rather so.

In remote and sparsely settled districts, the station-owners combine to form a joint stock fund for the payment of a medical man, whose services are equally at the disposal of the contributors and any stray settlers in their vicinity. "The Doctor," by which generic name he is usually designated, moves from station to station as he may feel disposed, or as may be requisite for the due performance of his professional duties. He is generally a bold rider and a good shot, and when time and occasion serve, he will assist in mustering cattle and driving sheep, or even shearing them if hands are scarce; and in "the season of the year" he is always ready to contribute his quota of game to the station larder. He is usually of gentle birth, and therefore more willing to "rough it" uncomplainingly, than men of less tender nurture. As a drinker—not a drunkard, be pleased to understand—he is unconquerable; his capacity for the consumption of cut cavendish is immense; he is a joker of the first water; and as a spinner of yarns he is unapproachable. Small wonder is it, then, that "the Doctor" is a general favorite wherever he goes.

Of these was Doctor John—a healthy-visaged, stalwart man, standing some five feet ten or eleven inches in his stocking-feet, broad-shouldered, and with limbs proportionate; bright-eyed, heavily-bearded; attired in blue serge shirt and woollen-cord continuations; ready on the spur of the moment to shoot a wild bullock, break in a
vicious horse, or prescribe for a patient.

He stood there—did Doctor John—by the side of George's bed, looking every inch a man. He had examined the leg, and pronounced his verdict. There was a bad compound fracture, and it would take time to reduce it. Skillfully and carefully had he performed his duty, and now he was urging the removal of his patient.

Said he to Mary, who pale and sorrowful, stood by the side of the sufferer's pallet—"You see, ma'am, it will be some time—many weeks probably—before your husband will be able to move about, and this is not a fit place for him to be in. I'll ride over to the Station and get a bed prepared for him—he can have my bed for that matter—and then I'll get out the waggonee, and put a mattress in it, and fetch him over myself. It's only nine miles—all level road—so he'll travel smoothly."

All this was very kind on the part of Doctor John, and George readily assented to the proposal. So also did Mary; and strangely enough, neither of them entered a protest against the phrase "husband" which had thus been for a second time misapplied. That is to say, they uttered no verbal protest.

But a few seconds later, when Doctor John rose to take his departure, saying to Mary—"Good-by, ma'am, I'll be over the first thing in the morning to fetch you and your husband"—I say when he thus spake, Mary, flushing all over like a peony, said, "Oh, sir, he is not my husband."

Doctor John looked at her for a second or so, curiously, inquiringly. "No?" he said at last. "Not your husband?"

There was an undefined and indefinite something in his manner, which conveyed to the ear far more than was implied by the syllabic sounds merely. Mary involuntarily drooped her eyes, and the rich bloom of modesty stole over her face and neck, as she answered:—"No, Sir! he is not my husband."

Then, defiantly lifting her head, she continued—"This gentleman is my Cousin George."

Doctor John was emphatically a man of the world; and he regarded Mary with an expression of countenance, wherein benevolence, doubt, admiration, and sarcasm were blended. And the bloom grew deeper on Mary's face. Then George spoke out:—

"See here, mister," said he, "I ain't this young woman's husband, nor I ain't her cousin—meaning thereby a blood-relation. But I tell you, she's as honest a person of the female persuasion as you'll find between the two poles of this here earth. And I'm very much obliged to you for your kind attention and so on; but don't you say one word against Mary—that's this young lady—for I don't mean to allow it. No, sirree!"

Then Mary threw herself into a chair, and vowed that she would go on to Invercargill by herself, and of course George protested. And Doctor John settled the matter in his own way by pushing Mary out of the chamber—telling her meanwhile that if her patient was agitated he would not answer for his life.

Thereupon another difficulty arose. The scarlet-faced shanty-keeper burst into the sick man's den in a terrible fury—brimful of artificial virtue and Brammagean indignation.

"What's the meaning of this?" cried the virago. "I won't have any such griffins on here. I'm a 'sponsible marri'd woman, I am——"

For answer to all of which, Doctor John took her by the shoulders and fairly ran her out of the room.—"Come now, Mother Higgins," said he, "none of your condemned nonsense with me, or I'll give the hint to Archie (the overseer of the station), and he'll have you out of this in double-quick time. What the blazes do you mean by blackguarding that girl there? Why, you antiquated feminine person of the canine persuasion—I'm blessed if I don't believe you were a bad specimen of creation before you were born, or
you wouldn't be so blessed quick to pick holes in other women's petticoats."

Doctor John had the reputation of using forcible language—very forcible language indeed.

CHAPTER VII.

WEATHER-BOUND.

Under the skilful treatment of Doctor John, George rapidly recovered from his accident. It is needless to say that Mary accompanied him to the station; that she tended, nursed, and comforted him. George made a feeble protest against her doing so; but the woman was true to her nature, and refused to leave him. Had he not befriended her—been her very friend and counsellor in the time of trouble? Wherefore then should she leave to strangers and hirelings the tasks which friendship and gratitude demanded?

Anyway, she would not do so. Doctor John looked askance at her, and his glance roved from herself to little Clutha, and thence to George Washington Pratt; but after that first interview, never a word of disparagement spoke he. Indeed, when sundry females of the lower order—employees of the run-holder ventured to express some doubts of the relationship subsisting between George and Mary, Doctor John set them down with a right good will; telling them plainly, and in unmistakable phraseology, that they were so bad themselves that it puzzled them to account for the existence of a good woman on the earth. In fact, the Doctor at last became Mary's champion to such a degree that the young men on the station declared he was in love with her.

"Perhaps I am," quoth Doctor John. "And if the feeling were reciprocal it would be all the better for me. It might be the means of making a man of me. What am I now? I am not a blackguard. No—thank God! in all my devious wanderings I have contrived to preserve my self-respect. But what am I? I was born and bred a gentleman. Eton and Oxford schooled me. I took my degrees over the head of fifty other fellows, and what am I the better for it? By Jove, I'm a wreck—a bad example, and all that sort of thing. If I had a decent, good little wife I should be twice the fellow I am now."

Slowly but surely George recovered—thanks to the unremitting care of Doctor John. All the time, mind you, he had been fed and nursed gratuitously at the station. Nothing was known of him, save so much as he chose to reveal; but he was in distress and difficulty, and there were sufficient recommendations to ensure for him hospitality and kindly treatment. Remote from towns, the better feelings of men obtain more predominance than in the busy lives of commerce, where each unwinged biped is anxiously intent on his own special honey-pot.

At last George was pronounced strong enough to continue his journey (I may say, in parenthesis, that Doctor John had been mercilessly "chaffed" by his station-mates for "prolonging the agony"—such was the phrase used by those rude young men), and it was arranged that, on a certain day, the waggonette should convey him to the nearest point of the main-road to meet the coach for Invercargill.

The day came, and therewithal the waggonette driven by the Doctor. But the fates were unpropitious. A heavy fall of snow had set in, and the possibilities of making the road in time for the coach were infinitesimal. Thick and broad were the flakes, covering the earth with a fleecy mantle, which speedily and effectually obscured all traces of the track.

"We shall have to wait till the storm is over," said Doctor John.

But the storm showed no sign of being in haste to arrive at its termination. All day long the snow continued to fall, and when evening drew her curtain over the world, all nature was buried beneath a white pall. And still the storm drave on.

George and the Doctor resorted to tobacco for comfort. The one chewed
And he lifted Mary's hand and imprinted a kiss upon it.

"I must marry that woman," soliloquised the Doctor. "I must, by Jupiter! She's just the woman for me. 'For me!'—aye, but what would the governor and the girls say to it?"

By which phrases it is to be presumed he meant his paternal ancestor and his sisters.

CHAPTER VIII.

WILL SHE—WILL SHE NOT?

Three days the snow lay upon the ground—crisp, sparkling, dazzling. Then it began to thaw.

During those three days Doctor John was continually at the hut with George. Mary took refuge with the servants in the kitchen; but the coarse jests and vulgar allusions of its inmates terrified, disgraced, and abashed her. So, as the least of two evils, she spent the greater portion of the day in George's hut. And the Doctor, as in perpetual apology for his own rudeness, treated her with as much deference as—perhaps more than—he would have paid to a Duchess.

At last the road was open. "Cheer up, old boy," said the Doctor to George. "You shall go down to-morrow."

"Well, Dea,"—thus George—"Guess it ain't quite the thing to say I'm glad, but I should tell a most voluminous darning lie if I said I wasn't. And the Pratt family never lie. No, Sir! Bet your life on that. But you've been so good to me, and Mrs Kenway and her babe, that I feel somehow kind of vexed to leave you. See here, Doc," he continued; "I've saved up a few rather handsome specimen nuggets; and if you'll only select one of them for a brooch, or a scarf-pin, or a ring, or anything of that sort, I reckon you'll be as welcome as flowers in May. Though that ain't saying much in this here part of creation, where winter comes in at the wrong end of the year. But you know what I mean, Doc."

And Doctor John accepted the proffered gift in the same spirit as it was
offered to him, without scruple or hesitation, selecting a beautiful crystallized octahedron of gold for a breast pin.

"Now, old fellow," said the Doctor, "Mary, or Mrs Kenway, as you call her, isn't here now, and I want you to answer one question.—Only one."

"Well, sir," said George, "I reckon you can't ask me anything about that female angel that I can answer anyway but to her credit."

And he uttered this declaration of opinion somewhat warmly, which had the effect ofrousing suspicious feelings in the mind of the worldly, homeless, gentlemanly vagrant to whom they were addressed.

"Humph!" muttered Doctor John. "In that case I don't think I need ask the question; you've answered it."

* * * * *

Morning in mid-winter: overhead the clear blue cloudless sky; under foot the pure white snow. The beams of the rising sun are reflected with dazzling radiance from the crystal-clad mountains; and a cool bracing breeze softly fans the leaves of the tufted flax, which peers above the winter robes whereunder old Mother Earth lies hidden. At the door of the hut—a rude structure ingeniously constructed of wattle-and-daub, there is a light wagon, piled with blankets and rugs—warm, comfortable, possum-skin rugs. Two rough-looking but well-bred horses are stamping, and pawing, and snorting after the manner of their kind, impatient to be away over the plains. Presently out comes George, limping on a home-made crutch, and tenderly supported by Doctor John. Then Mary and her child come forth, and are daintily lifted into the vehicle. And now the Doctor steps briskly up, and, with cheerful voice, and many resonant cracks of his whip, urges the willing horses on their road.

Over those beautiful plains, the destined homes of thousands yet unborn, drove Doctor John, tenderly easing the pace over the rough places, in thoughtful compassion to the invalid, and ever keeping up a flow of cheerful conversation as he went.

They halted that night at a small township, a few miles out from Invercargill. Doctor John declared that his horses would not, and could not, and ought not to go further. "They are quite fagged out," said he, "and after all it's of no consequence. I'll have you up and drive you into the town before eleven to-morrow, and the Dunedin coach doesn't start till the next day; so it's all right, and you needn't bother."

Were those horses so 'fagged' that they could not continue the journey? Who shall say? I know not. I only know that George W. Pratt retired to rest very early that night, and that Doctor John did not. On the contrary, he walked to and fro in the chill, night air, pouring forth volumes of smoke from his darkly-tinted meerschaum, and keenly suffering from unrest. Do you ask wherefore? Why it might have been from sleeplessness, or from headache, or toothache, or any other of the many ills that flesh is heir to. But he complained not of any of these. All he said was, "Kismet! Kismet! She shall be my wife. I don't care if she said 'No,' a thousand times over."

CHAPTER IX.

THE DOCTOR'S STRATAGEM.

"Now then, gentle, I must ask you to get out, and walk on a piece."

It was a cold, bleak morning in winter. A dense, white mist hid the surrounding landscape from view, and the chill air froze the vapor as it steamed from the tired jades that struggled in a weary, hopeless way to drag the heavily-laden coach through the slushy riverine mud-track, called by courtesy a road. The "insiders" had made all snug, as Jack would say, by fastening closely the leathern curtains of the vehicle. But the driver and an outside passenger were like pictures of old Christmas: hair, whiskers, eye-lashes and brows were matted together with
congelated moisture (Anglicé frost), so that, as the driver observed, in his coarse vernacular, “A man couldn’t wink without scalping his blooming eyes.”

It was the same driver that uttered the remarks wherewith this chapter opens. Sooth to say, he did not make his appeal before it had become absolutely necessary. The two animals harnessed to the coach were in the last stage of equine decay. There was a melancholy flicker in their eyes which told of the joys of colt-hood long departed, and imparted to the sympathising beholder an impression that for them the pleasures of corn crib and clover-fields had long departed, and that they would gladly lay down their weary load of life and be at rest. Much verbal objurgation, and multifold vigorous applications of whiplash, whereof catgut constituted an essential component part, had enabled the overworked driver to “tool” them to a spot whereat the creatures made a dead stand. In vain he showered upon them a cascade of strong language—a furious catacist of blows. The horses rubbed noses by way of consultation, and “re-sounded” to go no further.

“Can’t be helped, gent!” said the driver, deprecatingly, as his male passengers proceeded to comply with his request. “You see,” he explained, “this here road is in a terrible state, and there’s nothing been done to better it. I only wish I had some of them unsaved Government chaps on the box. I’m re-deemed if I wouldn’t give ‘em a treat—Git up! Hi!”

And he relieved his feelings by a coruscation of lashes, after the manner of his people.

Now, when the coach halted, the occupant of the box seat had sprung hastily off, and went so far ahead as to present but a dim, shadowy figure in the mist. He was well equipped for the journey, was this “gent”—with heavy overcoat, seal-skin cap, thick scarf, and all the customary paraphernalia of travellers who have travelled before.

The inside passengers were five in number—two miners of the ordinary type, a commercial “party” hastening back to Dunedin at the close of his winter campaign, an American who, as he stepped out of the vehicle, exclaimed, “Jehebajhbat!” and made a dead shot at the only tussock visible, and finally a woman, so haggled and swathed in shawls and plaid and wraps of all descriptions, that the only portions of her visible, were two bright eyes and the tip of an amiable nose. Need it be added that the last-named passengers were our old friends, George Washington Pratt and Mary Kenway?

Even so. They were on the road from Invercargill to Dunedin. At the former town they had parted from Doctor John. Late at night he had said to George, simply, “I am going away early in the morning, so are you. There will not be time to say ‘Goodbye,’ then—suppose we say it now.” And George had shaken hands with him and thanked him for all his kindness over and over again, till the Doctor lost his temper, and swore that he wouldn’t stand any more of that sort of thing. No, he’d be hanged if he would. Whereat George smiled cheerfully, and (prefacing the remark with a certain deliberate expectoration) he said:—

“Well, Doc., perhaps there’s them that can thank you better than this child. Ain’t you going to say good-bye to Mrs Kenway?”

And Doctor John cried — “Of course! of course!” and went in to the hotel. When he entered the sitting-room he saw as pretty a picture as human eyes ever gazed upon. Mary was undressing her child for the night, and having been romping, as mothers will upon such occasions, she was in a beautiful glow of health, with her hair floating around her shoulders in “most admired disorder,” and a whole world of love beaming from her eyes. The Doctor stood on the threshold as one entranced. Mary looked up and said to him sweetly—“You may come in, Doctor John.”
Those few words, so simply spoken, completed the mischief. Before he knew what he was doing, or Mary could understand what was going on, he was by her side—at her feet—on his knees before her—his arm around her waist—his eyes out-vieing the eloquence of his tongue—telling her that he loved her dearly, passionately—beseeching her to have pity on him—to return his passion—to be his soul’s idol—his wife. He sought to take her by a coup de main, as it were. He pleaded, entreated, wrestled for her love, as a doomed man might wrestle for his life, and Mary sat speechless—too much astonished to interrupt the burning rhapsody that found its way like a torrent from the lips of this impassioned suitor, who poured out and besought her acceptance of the life-long garnered treasures of his heart.

* * * * *

I think George must have shrewdly guessed what was going on within. He was still pacing to and fro in the verandah when Doctor John came out.

"I am going to turn in.—A pleasant journey to ye. Good night, Pratt."

That was all the Doctor said.

"Well, Sir, good night! Seems like he ain’t been having a good time of it. Not quite."

That was all George said. Perhaps they both thought a good deal. I have reasons for thinking they did.

CHAPTER X.

THE STRATAGEM REVEALED.

They walked—the male passengers, I mean—about a mile. "Do you call this walking in this country?" queried George. "If it was a little less mixed, I think I could swim it!"

And ever the box-seat passenger kept ahead. Presently the wretched track became a trifle firmer, and the driver called upon one and all to "git aboard!" and the box-seat passenger being a long way on, he naturally was the last to be taken up.

Once—twice—thrice was this process repeated, and always the box-seat passenger strode on before his fellow-travellers could extricate themselves from the leathery obstructions of the coach. George Washington Pratt was not of a plying disposition. As he said of himself—he wasn’t curious at all. Only, somehow, he always wanted to know about things. And on the last occasion, as his be-muffled fellow-traveller resumed his seat on the box, he stopped to have a look at him, after which he said to himself—murmuringly that is to say—"Oh, Jerusalem!" which being an ejaculation of weightier import than that wherein he customarily indulged, must be presumed to indicate a sense of something more extraordinary than a cool "Jehoshaphat" could possibly be suppose to include.

Presently the mists seemed to close in and to thicken. Then they resolved themselves into fine rain, then into snow. Down fell the feathery flakes—lightly at first, then heavily, then more heavily. And the lumbering, crazy old coach creaked and groaned and gave forth discordant sounds from every joint—so to speak—meaning from every panel and spring, from every nave and spoke, from each individual screw and bolt. And the horses straining their utmost, and severely testing the strength of every trace and buckle in their shabby equipments, could barely drag the cumbrous load along.

There came a point at which endurance—even equine endurance—failed. The coach was axle-deep in the snow and mud of the track, and to proceed was an evident impossibility. Down jumped the solitary outside passenger, and forth from the interior came every one, including, of course, Mary Kenway. As she stepped out, George politely assisted her to descend, and ready hands—they were those of the muffled-up stranger—were extended to receive her baby. Mary took no note at the moment of the owner of those hands, but when she had fairly placed her feet on terra firma, she turned to receive back her only living treasure.
"Thank you, Sir——" The words almost froze upon her lips. She gazed for a second on the bearer of her child, then—extreme surprise evinced in every gesture—she exclaimed "Is it you!—Doctor John!!?"

"Yes, it was Doctor John. No other than he was it. Kismet! He had followed her—sending back the waggonette to the station by a groom. He had followed his destiny.

"Oh Doctor John! How could you?"

"Only a woman could have asked such a question. Only a man could have replied—as Doctor John did reply—"How could I? Mary—I could go—yes I could go to the devil for you!"

CHAPTER XI.

NO LETTERS.

Mr George Washington Pratt was disturbed in his mind. So much was apparent to the most casual observer. Otherwise, wherefore did he so persistently walk to and fro in the verandah of the Tamora Hotel, where he and his friends were for the time-abiding? The monotonous creaking of his new Bird-of-Freedom boots was somewhat irritating; and the insipid regularity with which he discharged a shower of grape-shot at either end of his limited walk disturbed the equanimity of on-lookers. Doctor John came out and accosted him.

"I say, old fellow"—thus the doctor—"what possesses you to stalk up and down like this?"

"Well, Sir"—(with a vicious parenthetical shot)—"Guess I'm troubled in my mind. That's all!"

"Mph! what about?—what's up?"

"I am!" cries George, sharply turning on the querist—"I am; and if that there tucker is ready for breakfast, why, I'm on. Yes, sirree! I'm as hungry as a painter, and as savage as a half-starved grizzly. So jest you rouse up the old warm, Doc, and inti-
which had so dispirited her companions.

"What will you do now?" she asked—somewhat eagerly, as Doctor John thought.

"Guess I shall go straight home, ma'am, and see what it foots up to. Can't do nothing else," quoth George.

Thereupon the brightness faded out of Mary's eyes, and her face grew very pale, and she said no more upon the subject.

"Little witch!" thought the Doctor—"I see how the cat jumps. By Jove! I must get this confounded thick-headed George out of the road."

Then aloud: "Quite right, my boy! Depend upon it your letters have gone astray, or the young lady is ill. You'll be off by the first ship, if you take my advice."

"You forget, Doctor John," cried Mary, "that Cousin George has promised to accompany me so far as Melbourne on my way to—to Hobart Town."

"Not at all, ma'am," said the Doctor, "there need be no difficulty about that—I'll go with you instead."

"Oh, sir," Mary quickly answered, "I could not think of giving you the trouble. (There was a slight emphasis on the second personal pronoun.) Indeed, and indeed, I could not."

"Indeed and indeed, I'll see you on board ship though. I have not been idle in your behalf. I have been making inquiries, and—do you see that barque lying off the Jetty, ma'am?"

Yes; she did see it. So did George W. Pratt. What of it?

"Well, ma'am, that's the 'Pretty Jane,' which sails for Hobart Town direct in a few days. I have seen the skipper and made arrangements for your passage—always subject to your approval."

"Oh, thank you, sir." Thus spake Mary, but the words and her manner were sadly at variance. "I don't think I should like to go in it. I dare say there will be no other passengers—ladies I mean."

"Then you dare say what is not correct. There are three others—very respectable married women."

Mary bit her lips in sheer vexation at the Doctor's perspicacity. Meanwhile he eyed her curiously—not altogether without a sense of triumph.

"Is there any other objection you would like to make?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. It's dirty and uncomfortable."

"What is, ma'am?"

"Why, the ship, Doctor John. You know what I mean."

"I am not quite sure about that, Mrs. Kenway. In the first place, it is not a ship, but a barque; and, in the second place, it's a 'she,' not an 'it,' at all. But, in order that you may be satisfied as to her cleanliness and comfort, suppose we go on board and inspect her. What say you, Cousin George?"

Now, "Cousin George" had been in a state of mental abstraction during the whole of the foregoing colloquy, and, when thus suddenly appealed to, he responded: "Yes, sirre. Ruth must have wrote; that's so; but somehow I haven't got no letters."

Doctor John laughed outright; and Mary, colouring up to the roots of her hair, exclaimed—somewhat petulantly—"Dear me! Pray—pray don't trouble Mr. Pratt; he can think of nothing but his letters."

"Jehoshaphat!" cried George. "Reckon I've put my foot into it, someway. What is it all about?"

"Nothing," replied Mary quickly, intercepting the Doctor's explanation, "Only we are going to look at a vessel—and I thought that, perhaps, you would go with us—Cousin George," she added hesitatingly.

"Well, Mrs. Kenway, if the Doctor here can spare time to see to it, I rather think I'd like to make another call at the Post-office. What say, Doc.?"

Doctor John secretly rejoiced, and Mary pouted her displeasure. But it was so arranged. George started off on his quest, and the train stepped
into a boat, and went away to the 'Pretty Jane.' Let us accompany the latter.

Contrary to Mary's preconceived opinion, the little barque was a very picture of order and cleanliness, and the berths were as comfortable as it was possible for them to be made. One especially—a comparatively spacious cabin—was fitted up very costly, and with a certain degree of taste, which rendered it absolutely inviting. There was a gay carpet on the floor, a cedar washtand, a mirror secured to the wall, a swinging lamp overhead, books on the shelves, a cane-seated easy chair, and, by the side of the couch-like berth, with its snowy linen and warm opossum rugs, there stood a baby's cot. Mary could not avoid an explanation of surprise. She had only been on shipboard once before—when she came down to New Zealand—and, remembering the unalleviated miseries she had then endured, the contrast could not but astonish her.

"How very nice," she said, "I suppose this is for the Captain's lady."

A tidy-looking woman standing by was about to answer, but the Doctor placed his finger on his lips and shook his head. "Do you like it?" he asked. "The Captain don't carry his lady with him, and his wife stays at home."

Mary looked puzzled, but failed to remark the equivocation. "I think it is charming. The baby's cot too. How nice a cot would be for Clutha."

"Well, Mary," said the Doctor, "perhaps this young person can tell us who this berth is for."

Then the woman spoke. "Yes, sir," she said, "'tis for a Mrs. Kenway."

"Oh, Doctor John," cried Mary, "you have done this. Oh, sir, how can I ever thank you enough?"

The Doctor stopped down, and whispered two little words in her ear—a mere conjugation of a phrase first uttered in Eden, and ever since—ever more—to be repeated throughout creation. And Mary, blushing, trembling violently, sat down in the easy chair, and with a look, wherein pleasure and sadness, joy and regret, were immeasurably bleaded—burst into tears.

WHERE IS YOUR BABY, MA'AM? asked the woman.

"How did you know I had a baby?" asked Mary quickly. "Ah; I see—the cot."

"No, ma'am, not"—(she looked up at Doctor John, and, that gentleman nodding assent, she proceeded)—"not the cot. The Doctor told me. Please, 'm, I am to go with you, and wait on you, and look after the child."

"It is too much, Doctor John," said Mary, when they were once again ashore. "I must not accept all these favours from you. You know I must not—for I can never repay you."

"Yes you can," replied the Doctor: "you can give me the right to do all this and more for you. Give me yourself, Mary."

"I cannot—I cannot—God help me—you are a dear, good man, and I love you very much, but not so as to be your wife, Doctor—Never, never!"

"Well, well, we shall see. Time works wonders, and I'm not going to give it up yet. There now," continued the Doctor fearful of another irruption of tears, "don't say any more. Let us go and look for Cousin George. Perhaps he has got those letters, and then, you know, he'll be in a more cheerful mood."

Doctor John was a sagacious wooer. The mention of "those letters" had a wonderful effect in restoring Mary's equanimity.

CHAPTER XIII.

IF THIS SHOULD MEET THE EYE—

George Washington Pratt was a frequent caller at the wretched tumble-down shanty which did duty as a post-office in Dunedin in those days. He so persistently worried the clerks for "those letters," that those mee-
eyed and much-enduring official lost their temper at last, and the bland stereotyped phrase—"No letters for you, sir"—was exchanged for, "Oh, bother!" whenever George's well-known visage presented itself. So our friend betook himself of seeking other aid; and, naturally enough, he sought it beneath the flag of his country. He appealed to the American Consul, and now the matter assumed national importance. It was getting serious. George Washington Pratt was an American, and the boasted Britshers must be made to give up his letters, or St. James's would hear about it from the White House at Washington. Still the clerks held out, and produced no letters, for the very sufficient reason that they had them not. The Consul was convinced of this, and told his countryman so. But George would not be content. Like Rachel, crying for her children, he refused to be comforted. So the Consul made another effort. He interviewed the chief of the department. Then he made a discovery.

There had been letters for George—yes, two or three—and they had been detained in the office for the usual time, and as the owner did not turn up they had been sent to the Dead Letter Office, and, no doubt, were now on their way back to the writers.

This made George yet more anxious to hasten home, and as there was not any vessel laid on for the States in the Port, he secured a passage in the 'Aldinga' for Melbourne, where he could most readily take ship for New York or Boston.

Something was he disturbed by apprehensions of Mary Kenway's future. Unless her stern old father forgave her, what was to become of her in Tasmania? Doctor John communicated to him his intention of sailing in the 'Pretty Jane'—an intention not known to Mary. "I've sent a substitute up to the station," said he; "a young fellow just out from home, who wants to see the country. Gad! he'll see enough of it up there. And I've made up my mind to marry that woman; and by all the pipers that ever played before Moses in the wilderness I'll do it too, whether she likes it or not."

"Well Doc.," quoth George, "suppose it's all right. You say you mean to do the square thing by the young lady, and behave handsome. I hope you won't play off damned tricks on her, if the boss don't take to her kindly."

Hereupon the Doctor became wrath.

"What the mischief do you mean?" he blurted out. "Do you think I'm an atrocious scoundrel. Hang it, man, I want her for my wife."

"Jest so. Guess she's a right-down smart piece of walking furniture, and as staunch as hickory. But then, you see, she's dreadful simple too, and—no offence, Doc—you've got a sort of I-will-so way about you. Yes, sirree; that's a fact."

"Pshaw! nonsense! all stuff!"—cried Doctor John. "I don't blame you, old fellow—not a bit of it; you mean well by her no doubt. But come now, just to settle the matter, I'll marry her right off, if she'll have me."

"Right you are, sir; guess you can't say no fairer than that. Might I presume to make so bold as to ask—"

I ain't curious, you know—but I'd jest like to know if you have put the question to her, right out."

"Put it to her? Why, of course I have; and I'll tell you what, old fellow, it's my determination to go on putting it till she says—"Yes,' if it has to be done daily for the next half-century."

* * *

One morning when Mary was at the hotel by herself, George came hurrying in with a newspaper. "Here, Mary," he said, or rather shouted, "Here's something that concerns you. See!"

And he read from the paper the following advertisement:

"If this should meet the eye of Mary Fielding, late of Avondale,
near Hobart Town, she is requested to communicate with Messrs. Graball and Sticktoot, Solicitors, Dunedin."

"Now, Mary," continued George, "hurry up, and let us call upon these people at once."

And Mary, in a great bustle, and much excited, did "hurry up," and, accompanied by George, went straightway down to the offices of Graball and Sticktoot.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARY IN A NEW CHARACTER.

Mr. Graball was a smooth-voiced, smooth-faced, smooth-headed old gentleman. Mr. Sticktoot was a whiskered, mustachioed, perfumed, and be-ringed young gent. Mr. Graball invited Mary—"Miss Fielding," he called her—to be seated, with a majestic sweep of the hand, and a grave dignified air, befitting an archdeacon. Mr. Sticktoot bowed and ambled, and smiled after a fashion, which provoked other smiles—smiles of amusement in fact—on the part of the handsome young heiress.

Yes, "heiress." And by that word I mean to indicate Mary. It fails to the lot of but few people to carry away pleasant reminiscences of lawyer’s offices; but Mary Kenway was so favoured. She entered the gloomy "chambers" of Messrs. Graball and Sticktoot a poor widow, dependent on the kindness of strangers—Samaritans of the other sex—for the food she ate, and the mantle wherewith she wrapped her babe. She came out a comparatively wealthy heiress. Captain Fielding had died without a will, and Mary, as his sole surviving representative, became his inheretrix. The news almost stunned her. It had to be repeated more than once before she could realise it. Her first sensation was one of regret—regret for the poor lonely old man who had been deserted by her mother—whom she, too, had deserted—whose life had been desolated—whose death had been uncheered by the soothing voice of wife or child. Of course she cried. As we know, Mary—true woman that she was—was always ready with tears. But the cloud soon passed away. There had been but little heart-compionship ever between her and her father; and in despite of some faint efforts at repression, the feeling of joy at her emancipation, from the terrible thrall of poverty, obtained the mastery. "And it is really true," she queried of the smooth Graball, "that I am the owner of all my late father’s property?"

"Quite so, ma’am," bowed the old gentleman, benevolently smiling on the possessor of many golden charms; "quite so. All the Avondale property, and £11,502, placed out at good interest, on first-class securities, as my correspondents inform me. Also, there is—let me see (and assuming a gold-mounted eye-glass, he proceeded to inspect some papers)—"Yes! yes;—here it is £2,310 7s. 4d. in the Derwent Bank. Quite correct, Miss Fielding, I assure you."

"Then—I suppose—perhaps—" (she was speaking timidly, was this unw worldly woman, as if afraid of being over-bold in making such a request)—"perhaps I might be allowed—that is, I thought you might not object to my drawing a little money at once;—not much, sir, only a little."

Mr. Graball bowed with exceeding solemnity. "Certainly, ma’am, certainly! We—(he always used the 'we,' as being a pronoun of potentiality)—we shall be most happy to oblige you to the extent of say, a thousand pounds, should you require it. Our instructions, ma’am arc——"

What the instructions of Messrs. Graball and Sticktoot were will never be made known, for—to the inexpressible horror and scandalization of the old lawyer—Mary threw herself into the arms of George Washington Pratt, and, blushing rosy red amidst her tears, kissed him violently, explaining the while, "Oh, George—George—dear Cousin George! Now I can repay you for all your goodness and kindness to me.”
“See here, Mary,” said George, when they were returned at the hotel—and his face was very grave as he spoke;—“See here, Mary, this kind of thing won’t do. No, ma’am! That ancient person was clean ashamed of your doing so, and it wasn’t sort of correct for a young lady to venture on who’s got a reputation to lose. It might hurt you some—it might—that’s so.”

“Oh! George, why do you say such hard things to me?” (Of course Mary was crying—“at it again,” as George said.)

He took no notice of her inconsequential question. He had a task to perform, and he went at it determinedly. “Now you’re rich, Mary, and you want somebody to take care of you—you know you do. You ain’t fit to be trusted all alone by yourself.”

“I do know it George—I do know it. And who should take care of me but you, George; you who have saved me from want, ruin, misery. Oh! George! pity me, save me again. Take me—I can offer myself to you now. Take me with all my money—all. I only care for it for your sake; for, George, I love you; I love you dearly. And that girl—she has forgotten you—she has not written—you are nothing to her now. Come with me, George. Don’t leave me or I shall die. Take me—take me altogether, George—.”

And, sobbing, entreating thus, the impulsive woman clasped her arms around George’s neck, and hid her blushing beauty in his breast.

CHAPTER XV.

TEMPTATION.

Truly George Washington Pratt was in a position of most sweet peril,—pleasant danger. Here was a young woman, endowed with a considerable portion of this world’s gear, simple as a child, and as innocent too, and tolerably good-looking withal;—here, I say, was this woman throwing herself into his arms, and absolutely wooing him, albeit it was not leap-year. As George afterwards avowed he ‘never felt so I-don’t-know-which-way in his life.’ Ruth might have written some of those letters which had been addressed to him, or she might not. Anyhow the letters had been returned, and in all probability he was reckoned as one of the dead,—and Ruth might have been married already, or might be married before he could get back to the States. It did seem very much like tempting Fortune to cast this chance from him. For George really entertained a very warm affection for Mary, and he felt like kissing her face, and setting out in search of the Marriage Registrar right away.

But there is a Genius—good or evil, and sometimes rather mixed—some call it Fate—some Providence—which settles these matters for us as it pleases itself, without too greatly exercising our wills. And so it happened on this occasion. Before George could form any decision,—before even he could extricate himself from the dear creature who was doing the Laccan business—a step was heard in the passage, and Mary—unanswered and, be sure, very angry, turned away and walked to the window whence she seemingly became absorbed in contemplation of the scenery—a glorious combination of town, bay, and ocean,—of the works of Man and of Man’s Maker. But honestly, I don’t think Mary cared much just then for the scenery.

In came Doctor John. All ablaze was he, as usual.—“Splendid,” he ejaculated.—“Splendid! The Pretty Jane doesn’t sail till Wednesday, so we shall be able to see you off old man.”

The “old man” was, of course, George, who had arranged to go by the Aldinga, advertised to sail on Tuesday. The “we”—Ah!—who were the “we?”

Mary Kenway looked round, with a smile on her face, and asked the same question.

“Why you and I, of course,” said the Doctor. “Don’t you see, our
friend here will sail the day before us.

Whereby be, so to phrase it, 'let the cat out of the bag.' Mary said nothing; but again looked outwards, seeing not at all, with her bodily eyes; and looked inwards, seeing a very great deal, with her spiritual eyes. But said George—

“Well, now, Doctor John. Guess you've dropped off the fence for once. I was down town this morning, and I saw the Cap.—that is John McLean—Hell-fire Jack we used to denominate him down to Melbourne, because of a way he had of running stem-on into all the darned lumbering tubs that used to crowd up the Yarra and lie anyhow, all across the stream. And I tell you, he did that till the tubbers got so as to respect him, and when H.F.J. was seen a-coming up the river, blessed if they didn't clear out of the way mighty smart. Yes, Sir! However, I'm pitching a little wide. What I meant to say was jest this: The Aldinga don't sail till Wednesday either, so I guess we'll both start together.”

* * *

That night Mary sent a little note to George. I will not divulge its contents.—Never!

That night George sent an answer to Mary, the contents whereof were as follows:—

"Mrs. Kenway,

"Dear Mary,

"Madam,—

"I cannot do it, nohow. It don't seem righteous, anyway I can fix it. I've gave my promise, as a man, to Miss Ruth, and so long as I don't know that she has omitted to keep me in mind, I ain't that free that I can marry another woman. Same time, I am truly obliged for your kind offer, and supposing things were different, should be glad to accept thereof, Mary, please take my advice. You are but young, and if you don't alter, you'll die young, if you should live to be a hundred years old. You want a man to look after you, and see all right, that's my opinion. Not being a Saint—one of Brigham Young's folk, I mean—it ain't in my power to do as I wish—Ruth being honest and true, suppose. So I don't think you can do better than marry Doctor John. He's almighty fond of you, and I've reckoned him up, and I take him to be real grit, no less, you bet your life on it, Mary. And you know, Mary, I am not at all interested on my own account in this. Rather the other way.

"So wishing you all possible happiness in this here world, and whatever you would like best in the next,

"I remain,

"Yours truly,

"GEORGE WASHINGTON PRATT."

CHAPTER XVI.

"—LAST SCENE OF ALL THAT ENDS THIS STRANGE EVENTFUL HISTORY."

Gloriously shone the early sunlight upon the mountains—forest-crested—aureole-tipped—that lined their feet in the cool, blue waters of the Bay. Out in the stream lay the Aldinga, and the crew were busily getting up the anchor, accompanying their muscular exertions by most unmelodious cries and songs. George Washington Pratt stood upon the deck, making deadly aims at discomfited blue-bottles; and ever and anon taking a turn at the capstan by way of amusement. Presently, out from between the Islands which divide the Upper and Lower Harbours, there came a vessel. First, white sails glinting in the sunlight; then a crow carrying a figure-head—a sailor's beauty, green-robed, blue-eyed, black-haired, pink-cheeked;—the Pretty Jane, of Hobart Town, in fact. With every sail set and bellying out, heeling over to the breeze, gracefully dipping and rising;—down came the Pretty Jane. Close by the Aldinga's counter she steered, and on the tiny quarter-deck of the brig, two figures—those of Mary Kenway and Doctor John—stood, waring, the one a hat, the other a
handkerchief. And from the steamer George Washington Pratt responded.

They parted thus?—Not quite so. Ere long the Aldinga got up steam, and then, released from her temporary hold of earth,—her pulses throbbing, her heart beating, she went down the Bay at a pace which speedily brought her once more alongside the brig.

“Good bye, old fellow!”

“Good-bye, Doc.!”

These from the men—awaved salute from poor Mary. That was the end of it. Thus they parted; the one to return to his beloved native land,—to the love of his life,—to “home and beauty!” The other twain to Tasmania,—home of the one—hoped for home of the other.

And so, at “the Heads,” the story of their lives diverged for evermore.

And here my Story also ends. The play is played out, the footlights are dark, the orchestra is dumb, the green curtain has fallen, the audience are gathering their robes around them, and the teller of this Tale, can but bow, and bid each and all

ADIEU!

L’Envoy.

I, the Story-teller, having written so far, submitted the manuscript to a beloved friend and kindly critic. One week,—neither more nor less—I received from her a note which ran thus,

“Dear Friend,—

“Come and see me.

“——

I went.

“This will never do,” she said, striking the M.S. with her ‘fatal forefinger,’ “This will never do. Do you imagine for a moment that we are going to part with our favourites thus? George in the Aldinga steaming away to Melbourne?—Mary and the Doctor on board the Pretty Jane? All the rest of the people whom we have known, and travelled with, and (foolishly enough, I confess) sympathized with for nearly six months, sent adrift without any tidings of their fate?

No, sir; we demand to know what became of them.”

“Upon my honour,” then said I, “I do not very well see how I am to inform you of matters beyond my ken.”

She laughed a silvery laugh (of course it was silvery); she smiled a seraphic smile, (of course it was seraphic); she spoke in dulcet tones, (of course they were dulcet); and she said,—

“Consult a medium.”


Never, shall, anyone—not the wife of my bosom even know what those asterisks denote. Suffice it that I know; another knows.


In a darkened chamber, perfumed with aromatic odours, a Being reclined on a velvet couch. It was the Medium.

“What wouldst thou know?”

Thus queried the Operator.

“Tell me,” I murmured. (Be sure, I “murmured”)—“Tell me of George Washington Pratt.”

The Operator manipulated the Medium, and the Medium spoke:—

“I see a large white house with many windows, situated in the midst of green fields, dotted with cattle as in a picture. An avenue of tall trees leads from a long dusty road to the front door. A man is walking up that avenue. It is a tall man with a long, grave, oval face, wearing a single heavy tuft of hair on his chin. He is walking with a firm heavy step, and in measured strides, like one who has a purpose to fulfil. No other human being is visible. Stay:—I see a face at a window. It is that of a young woman;—of a woman in the summer of her maidenhood,—later than the early spring,—earlier than the late autumn. She looks out on the green fields with a weary wistful expression of countenance, such as might have befitted Marian in the Moated Grange.

“’He cometh not,’ she said.”

The man sees that maiden’s face, and his steps grow more elastic, his stride firmer. She sees him not yet. Ah!
She turns her gaze towards the avenue. She disappears from the window. The door opens, and a female form appears at the entrance. 'Tis she, but she transfigured. The look of weariness has disappeared; the dim despairing eyes are lighted up. 'Tis she transfigured by the power of love. She hurries down the whitened steps, and rushes down the avenue to meet the welcome guest approaching. Ah! What do I behold?

—A mass of brocade cloth and calico indiscriminately blended—slender white arms around the neck of the man, strong loving arms embracing the waist of the woman;—lips meeting lips in most delicious greeting; eyes gazing into other eyes with rapturous emotion, such as Adam might have known and felt, when first dear deceitful Eve taught the poor man the bliss of osculation.

("Upon my word then," said I, "but that's a most beautiful picture the Medium is painting; I wouldn't mind seeing that same myself, nor indeed of acting in it, for the matter of that,—always providing the Eve was a good-looking young woman. Come, now; pray inquire of the person if she perceives any other matter of interest, but not so exciting if you please.")

"I see a stout man (this is what the Medium said) coming across the pasture. His hair is white—he is aged, and moves but slowly. The man and woman do not perceive him. They see each other only—Hush! They are speaking. 'Ruth!'—the man is saying—'Dear Ruth, do you still feel sweet upon me?' And she answers—'Always, George, always. I almost thought you were gone dead; but I wouldn't listen to Seth Hoskins nor Abe Joyce, nor any one of them, George; though father, he said, when our letters came back, that I was a little foo-foo-foo.'—She is crying for very joy, and he is kissing her between the sobs by way of punctuating her remarks, and every point is a note of admiration! Now, the old man sees them. The sight seems to astonish him. For a moment he is transfixed. I hear him say, "Well, I'm teetotally derned if that ain't little George come back to my Ruth. Why how he hev grewed, sure!" He hurries up to the group. George is shaking hands with him as much as he can do so, with Ruth hanging on to his arm, as if she feared he was a vision, and would disappear from view if he wasn't properly anchored to her. And so the three go up to the great staning white house and enter in at the door, and disappear from view, and I see them no more.

"Stay!—the man George comes out to the door again. He looks around upon the landscape, aims a correct shot at an inquisitive dog, discharges a full volley at some sympathetically cooing pigeons, and he says—'Well; guess I feel right down good. That's so.' Then a small white hand touches his, and transfigured Ruth whispers "Reckon I do so too." Then George does so thrice or more, and old Squire Allan throws up the near window, and he says—'See here now, Ruth, dern me if I stand any more of this here kind of business. If you two so do any more, I'll go right straight away, and get spliced on to Widow Nipkins before you dern inexperienced young fools have got through preliminaries.

"Then they go in again—Ruth and George—and the old Squire retires, and door and window are closed, and so the vision endeth."

* * * * *

"What more would'st thou?" asketh the Operator.

"Show me now what becometh of Mary Kenway," I reply.

"In about five minutes," saith the Operator, "your wish shall be gratified. The Medium requires repose."

* * * * *

"I see,"—'twas the Medium that spoke—"I see a lady walking in a garden—a strange wild garden—a tangled forest of flowers and fruit, of
rose bushes and acacias, of long drooping willows and lofty gum-trees. She wears a black dress, and the child that toddles by her side is similarly clothed. A man is coming up the centre walk—a handsome, bearded man. He is very close to her, but she does not seem to know it. She stoops to pick a flower for the child. As she rises again the man puts his arm round her waist, draws her to him, and kisses her forehead. She does not repulse him. The child clasps its hands with infantile glee. ‘Papa! papa!’—she cries. But they heed her not. ‘See I have kept my word, Mary; (the man says this). I promised not to intrude on you again till the end of the month. To-morrow is the first of September. I have come to hear your answer.’"

"She does not speak to him, but blushes and looks down, tapping the ground nervously with the tiny foot that peeps from under the enviable skirt. Once more his arm steals unforbidden round her waist. His eyes seek hers, and he reads his answer there. This time he presses her lips.—‘Thank God!’ he cries. ‘Mine at last—dear Mary!—mine at last.’"

"‘Yes, Doctor John,’ she says now; ‘you have conquered. I have had time to think of fate. And only when I had enforced your absence for a while, did I learn how much I—love you. Ah! Doctor John,’ she continues, ‘there was a traitor in the garrison. You had won dear Clutha’s love before you gained mine.’"

"Doctor John takes Clutha in his arms and kisses her, and throws her up in the air and catches her again, and generally romps with her for a time. As he sets her down he points to the black dress, and says—To-morrow those gloomy trappings—."

"‘Shall be thrown aside’—thus Mary completed the unfinished sentence.

"‘And what date,’ he asks, ‘shall I write in the wedding license, Mary. Don’t be cruel now. I have waited long and patiently. Shall it be to-morrow or the day after?’"

"‘Do you suppose,’ she answers, ‘that a woman could or would ever get married without consulting her dressmaker? No, sir—you will have to wait; but not long, darling. Drive me in to Hobart Town this afternoon, John, and Madam Bobinette shall tell you the very earliest day that can be fixed for the wedding.

"Thus discoursing, they enter the long low verandah, shrouded by trailing plants, which runs along the entire front of a cottage at the head of the garden; and they appear not again."

* * * * * *

Once more I ask—‘Tell me now the fate of old Pegleg and his mates.”
Again the Operator performed his manipulations, and again the Medium spoke.

* * * * * *

"At the front of a rustic dwelling there sits an old man with a wooden leg. He is nursing a wee baby. A younger man is digging in the garden. He speaks to the white-haired nurse. ‘Pegleg, man, give the bairn a ride on the Third Mate.’"

"And Pegleg makes rejoinder. ‘Ho! ho! ho!—why Jim—Jim lad, what ’ll thy wife say to’t. No, no; I ben’t goin’ to fright thy wife, lad.’"

"Whereupon a young woman looks forth from the window, and says in a pleasant voice—‘That’s right, Pegleg. I won’t have my ducky darling put on that hairy monster. Jim ought to know better. Why, ’twould shake the poor little thing to a jelly.’"

"Then Jim pauses from his work, and looking towards the cottage with one foot on his spade, he laughs right merrily. And the young wife shakes her head at him, and laughs back again. And old Pegleg accompanies them with one of his uproarious belows, and baby crowns lustily in chorus, and the Third Mate puts his great hairy face over the fence, and
join in the merriment after the fashion of his kind.”

Yet was the curiosity of my friendly critic unappeased. “Surely, sir,” she said, “you will obtain the latest information touching the Commissioner and the bold Sergeant. Nay, of Maori Jack, and even of that wicked wretch—Ginger—your readers will insist on knowing more.”

Thus entreated, I appealed to the Operator. But I appealed in vain. He declared that the Medium was exhausted, and could not be troubled again that day. I went home in despair; and lo! in the passage of my house there sat a small boy, with the features of an old man, and the leer of an infant Satyr. ’Twas the inevitable P.D. waiting for “copy.”

“What,” I exclaimed to my fair friend (I had almost omitted the ‘r’) “What shall I do now?”

That commanding woman rose up, and rushed me with a word.

“Go to the Police-office. There everything is known.”

I shuddered and obeyed. And this is what I learned:

The Commissioner became disgusted with the service and migrated to Fiji, taking with him a wife of imperial presence and imperious will. He is now a prosperous sugar-planter, having only been buried by the natives twice, and burned out three times. But he is said to be an altered man. Whether it be from the climate, or the niggers I cannot tell; and I reject as absurd the popular slander that it has been brought about by the domination of the immensely fine woman to whom he is united; but the fact remains that Mr. Commissioner has become a model husband, a very pattern of submissive endurance—of mildness and of forbearance. Which is a fit and proper termination of a bachelorhood of self-willed impatience.

The bold Sergeant aspired to a loftier sphere (‘spear’ he called it) than any he could ever have hoped to attain in ‘the Force.’ So he went away to Hokitika, married a barmaid with two single children, and became a bloated Boniface.

Maori Jack got away to the North without ‘the Kawana’s’ consent, and died at the Waikato, fighting against the Pakeha, slain by the Pakeha’s rum.

As for Ginger—whosoever feels any interest in his ending had best consult the hangman, who stood by him to the last, when all else had deserted him.

And now, dear friends,—you who have borne me company for six long months ’tis my own turn to bid you farewell. My task is over, my work is done—for here endeth The Adventures of

George Washington Pratt.

The End.
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