

# Introduction

Vincent Pyke was more than an immigrant from England, renowned for his political career and his passionate advocating for the miners of Victoria and Otago. As a pioneer writer, Pyke produced literary works that captured an early part of New Zealand's history. Those early novels and literary works set in the New Zealand landscape and those also by New Zealand authors mark out the transition from the simple importing English literature to adapting their works into something that would develop into New Zealand's own national literature.

Although long forgotten or underappreciated for the half and half state between its literary ties to English novel and a fully developed New Zealand Literary identity, *The Story of Wild Will Enderby* reveals Pyke's connection to not just the early miners of the nineteenth-century, but also within his place in New Zealand history as a key figure in the establishment of modern New Zealand mining and the settlement of the Otago region.

Vincent Pyke was born in Somerset, England in 1827 to James and Mary Pike, his father a tinman and ironmonger.

Lawless, Daphne. "Vincent Pyke." *Kotare*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2008, pp. 55-64, [Kotare, 2008](#). Accessed 10 July 2016, p 55

Pyke married Frances Elizabeth Renwick in 1846, and the couple had four sons and a daughter. Pyke only changed the spelling of his name after his marriage. After working as a linen draper in the Bristol he was initiated into the Royal Clarence Masonic Lodge in Bristol in 1850. As it was from the middle-class and upwardly-mobile working class that was recruited by the Masonry, Pyke's sympathies for the striving of the lower orders was encouraged and strengthened.

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The Pyke family emigrated to Australia in 1851 and Pyke spent two years as a miner after learning of the gold rush in Victoria. He then became a storekeeper and immersed himself further into the mining community: it was here that his political career began.

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Pyke's hands-on experience in the gold rush sparked his interest in advocating miner's rights. His rhetorical skills won him the election to be their representative on the Victorian Legislative Council.

Throughout his adult life Vincent Pyke suffered from ill health, reputedly from overindulgence in alcohol and food, for which he undertook a visit to Otago in 1862 for his health.

## Caricature of MP Vincent Pyke, New Zealand Observer and Free Lance, 12 July 1890

'Caricature of MP Vincent Pyke', [Caricature of Vincent Pyke](#), (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 16-Jul-2014 - New Zealand Observer and Free Lance, 12 July 1890

It was also in this year that Otago experienced its first gold rush, and Pyke was sent back to the region by the Victorian government after the request "for a man who could undertake the goldfields administration."

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And so Vincent Pyke, former linen draper, miner, storekeeper and advocate for miner's, rights took the post of Goldfields Secretary, often referred to as the 'Goldfields Commissioner' in Otago.

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Now in a position to influence the political and legislative processes of the mining community, not a week into his appointment Pyke submitted his proposal for the regulations of the Otago goldfields. Pyke targeted most passionately the infeasibility of the previous mining regulations, such as the process of claiming an area for mining, as the requirement was for claims to be marked with wooden pegs despite the scarcity of wood in Central Otago. This particular point is satirised in *The Story of Wild Will Enderby*. Pyke's involvement in the reform of the Otago mining industry reveals the dedication he placed in the welfare of its people and his own affection for his new home.

Throughout Pyke's career he presented himself as a bold character firmly involved within the community as well as a figure that shaped the establishment of gold mining in New Zealand. Pyke also supported and published his thoughts on wider social issues such as the battle for Women's right to vote. An article titled *Vincent Pyke on the Women's Suffrage Bill* featured in the Tuapeka Times, declares his support for Women's

right to vote. He expressed his sympathy for the cause with the clear statement that “the woman is quite as likely to be right as the man, and her vote on the right side will compensate for his on the wrong side.”

Papers Past, National Library, TUAPEKA TIMES, VOLUME XX, ISSUE 1360, 15 JUNE 1887 [Tuapeka Times, 1887](#)

It is only six years later that Women’s right to vote was achieved through the efforts of supporters such as the famous Kate Shepherd in 1893.

Pyke is remembered as “a vigorous debater,” that proved him to be a formidable opponent in his political battles. Although he displayed a blunt honesty, his at times uncertain temper also attracted attention, as one incident demonstrated when he championed the Central Otago Railway in 1880. Pyke reportedly argued his case with such vehemence that he was escorted out to cool his heels. Another account of Pyke’s exuberance occurred in a debate between Pyke and his continual adversary, Richard Seddon, in which Pyke brandished his walking stick threateningly at him but accidentally struck another MP and was once again hauled from the room shouting.

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Pyke led an immensely varied career that contributed not only to the formation of mining law and the mining industry, but he also focused his attentions on the people of the settlement of Otago. Pyke “mixed freely with all, including “the poorest miners in their frosty camp”, and indeed was held in genuine affection by Central Otago’s many small mining communities.

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For his efforts in his public works Pyke became one of Otago’s most effective politicians and advocate.

Hearn, T. J, ‘Pyke, Vincent’, from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, updated 8-Jan-2014 [Pyke's Biography](#)

On his death on the 4th June 1894, aged 67, Pyke’s tombstone was inscribed fondly: “in Grateful Memory of his many public services.”

#### [Pyke's Memorial](#)

When it came to putting pen to paper Pyke chose to write not of his native England, nor of his previous years in Australia, but the place of opportunity, New Zealand, where he had achieved a challenging and rewarding position in life. It would seem natural then for him to write of the community that he was so connected to. *The Story of Wild Will Enderby*, 1873, his first full goldfields novel, is a work of fiction that balances on the line between an adventure-romance story set in the gold rush, and a historical fiction. The attention to the inner workings of a mining community is vividly portrayed within the narrative.

Pyke’s writing career began, ultimately, for fun - both for his own entertainment, and for the entertainment of his readers. It was also because of his overflow of passion and involvement within his community. His political career began in Victoria, Australia, but really gained in influence in Otago. His children also gained careers of distinction in New Zealand which only strengthened his bonds with his new land. Pyke’s appreciation for the land and the people could only have endeared New Zealand to him; evidenced through his other literary works. As a man of various talents, writing of his new home rewarded him with as much satisfaction as initiating the new mining legislation did, as he wrote both histories and guides to the region alongside his fictional work.

Pyke’s first published work was a guidebook *The Province of Otago*, 1868, in which Pyke brings to bear all of his rhetorical prowess to portray as inviting picture of Otago as possible, his audience were the potential immigrants much like he himself was. Pyke had further interest in the growing region as the Scottish settlers continued to influence the culture of Otago and according to George Griffiths, Pyke claimed to understand the ‘Lowland Scots idiom well enough to write in it.’

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In the friendly dispute the gauntlet was thrown down, and George Brodie, himself a Scottish settler, challenged Pyke to write a story for Brodie who would then send it to Edinburgh for publication should Brodie judge it worthy. Thus *Lost in the Goldfields: A Tale of the Otago Diggings* was published in Edinburgh’s *Chambers Journal*, the exact date unknown. The short story was republished in Dunedin in 1875 in *The Southern Mercury*, a journal edited by Pyke himself. This story is evidence of Pyke’s fictional talents, especially in the subject matter of the goldfields as it prefigures *Wild Will*.

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1873 stood out as a politically and literary significant year for Pyke as he moved to Dunedin after an unsuccessful run for the provincial council seat, but was elected to the colonial House of Representatives as a member for the Wakatipu region. It was also the year that Pyke published his first full length goldfields novel, *The Story of Wild Will Enderby*, and became editor for the *Southern Mercury* and *Otago Guardian* in the next year. He continued his journalistic career during the 1880s: often contributing to the humorous columns of these journals and papers while also serving as editor of the Dunedin *Morning Herald* in 1882.

Hearn, T. J, 'Pyke, Vincent', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, updated 8-Jan-2014 [Pyke's Biography](#)

Pyke's longer works include the *History of the Early Gold Discoveries in Otago*, 1887, regarded as a classic of New Zealand historiography. Pyke's *History* also gives an account of Pyke's own adventures in the South Island wilds.

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In August 1865, Pyke and a small expedition began their journey in Clyde and made their way past the Lake Wanaka region to the West Coast in the hope of encouraging the West Coast miners to settle in Otago. While largely a successful expedition, the return journey presented its own adventures as most of the party's previsions were lost and Pyke returned a much slimmer figure, which was much remarked upon his homecoming to Dunedin. In a letter to Provincial Secretary Frederick Walker the narrative of Pyke's voyage was later published which demonstrated Pyke's literary skills as his descriptive language and dramatization of events anticipated his interest in writing fiction.

However, another fictional work highlights Pyke's interesting literary career. Having already tried his hand at writing within Scottish idiom, Pyke published a novella in the Scottish dialect, *Craigielinn*, alongside other short stories during the 1880s. The story is of the pre-history of the Otago settlement, indicating Pyke's interest in not only the immediate history of the goldfields, but also the establishment and shaping of the culture of the region. Pyke's interest in New Zealand developed from his career in the politics of the mining region to his literary efforts, both fictional and non-fictional, reflecting this appreciation for the growth in the entire region from the earliest settlement, to the possibilities of the future.

*The Story of Wild Will Enderby* as Pyke's first full goldfields novel enjoyed great success at its reception. While described as a 'sprawling, vigorous and vulgar' novel critics declared that despite this, or because of this, it 'sold out three editions in its first year.'

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The favourable image of the Otago region that Pyke paints for readers is compelling, as it is not only written by a man who lived and worked within the setting of his narrative, but he also brings that first-hand account of New Zealand onto the literary stage. The sense that Pyke has invited the reader into an exploration of the gold fields of the South Island of New Zealand is sown through the descriptions of the landscape and of the reversal of men's fortunes. Pyke's intention for the novel was to create a fictional work that both entertained through its melodramatic and adventurous events and provided a glimpse of the lives of real settlers within an ever growing and developing settlement. It made for an encouraging image of New Zealand that invited more people to the land that was depicted as equally beautiful and prosperous.

The plot of *The Story of Wild Will Enderby* is both simplistic in its motivations – for love, but also complicated by seemingly unrelated events and frequent narrator asides. It opens with an exposition on the landscape and scenery of the Otago countryside. The introduction of 'Henry Grey' as a young miner places him in the landscape itself. However, the peace is broken by the arrival of the American George Washington Pratt, styled after the George Hartley who struck gold first in the region. Pratt convinces Grey to share a claim to better work it, and so the 'Co' is formed. Immediately the claim is threatened as other miners see that it is rich and not properly staked out by pegs per regulation. Pratt staunchly defends the claim and the Goldfields Commissioner is called in who eventually rules in favour of the Co. Meanwhile, Grey having resupplied in town, spies unwelcome news in the papers and which results in him almost drowning in the river. Grey returns to the claim and Pratt in sympathy tells him that he came to the goldfields to make his fortune to marry a woman still in America. The narrative goes back in time to when Pratt worked in his uncle's shop in America, where he fell in love with Ruth. The flashback ends and the fight for their claim renews as surrounding miners notice how prosperous the Co's claim is. Pratt is rumoured to a bloodthirsty desperado after he drives off thieves by shooting at them.

Book two begins with the backstory of Grey – properly known as 'Wild' Will Enderby and his disastrous romancing of Florence, a widowed governess to Mable, his betrothed, in the Australian heat. He too is revealed to have come to the Otago goldfields to make his fortune for the sake of his love for Florence. Unfortunately, his object of desire is not as faithful as Pratt's Ruth and it is the news of Florence's marriage that caused Enderby to almost drown.

In book three the narrative is brought back to Otago, the Co guard their pile. That night while Pratt investigates the rumours of a new rush, Enderby stands guard, but the cry of 'Murder' is heard and a body is heard to fall into the river. Pratt continues to follow an exploration party deeper into the country. In the morning in Dunstan, the site of struggle is found at the Co's camp and Enderby is nowhere in sight and the worse is presumed. Night once more and ignorant of the events back in Dunstan, Pratt sneaks about the new camp in upper Clutha area and he learns from a visiting sergeant about being wanted for questioning for Enderby's disappearance and comes along willingly. Meanwhile, a body is found and confirmed as Enderby by the medico

that saved him from drowning. Pratt argues his innocence to no avail. Late that night in the roughs Enderby stumbles into a shepherd's hut and learns that Pratt is to be tried for his murder in the morning and makes all speed to return – stealing the constable's horse in the process. The third book ends with ends with trial in progress and a wild looking Will Enderby arriving to declare Pratt's innocence before collapsing deathly ill.

Book Four sees John Grey learning of his nephew's illness and confession to murder and sends his son to aide him, and Mabel joins him in his journey to New Zealand. Enderby is believed to be dying and he reveals the truth of the story. While he was guarding, he was attacked by two men, one he ran off the other he hit who fell into the river. The terrified man fled but came back to help Pratt. The narrative draws to its conclusion as Enderby is left to recover in the tender mercies of Mable, exempt from the law for self-defence. George Washington Pratt continues his search for gold.

The plot, hectic and only paused by the chapters that explain past events, gave the narrative tone both of a rollicking adventure story as well as a dramatic romance of early Otago. The genre of the novel itself can be simply defined as a melodramatic romance because of both its colonial setting as well as the writing style. However, the narrative can also be classed as adventure fiction. The genre of adventure fiction blends in well with the goldfields setting as the plot of murder, mystery and the characters' aims to improve their lot in life falls provides more than enough opportunity for plot points. Especially in the context of a novel written in New Zealand, far removed from 'civilised' England, even America.

There is a real sense of the lawlessness of the goldfields as a narrative space at the end of the world, as what authority figures that feature are shown to be just a hair above incompetent. Through his direct narration Pyke reveals the issues that he had personally dealt with during his tenure as Goldfields Commissioner. Throughout the novel, Pyke outlines for the reader the administrative processes miners had to follow in order to lay a claim on a particular area of land. Obtaining the legal rights to a claim marks the first conflict in the novel and Pyke, having lobbied for the reform of regulations in this area, paints the Commissioner in an incompetent light. "The Commissioner's table was covered in dust# his ink was thick with it# his papers black with it# his temper apparently soured by it." (Pyke, 27) Authority figures in *Wild Will* are particularly satirised, George Pratt starring the noble, yet wronged hero throughout the narrative.

Furthermore, the novel also lends itself to the melodramatic romance genre as not only the love interests of the two men serve as the instigating factor for their arrival in Dunstan, the narrative also sways wildly between adventures, rhapsodising about the landscape and the moralising passages. Perhaps as the alternative to the Victorian 'detective fiction' found in England, the narrative follows the sensationalist style that transported local readers to see their familiar environment to that in which great feats of drama is possible. Jane Stafford and Mark Williams in their introduction to their work *Maoriland Introduction: "A Land Mild and Bold, Diffident and Pertinent"* introduces the discussion of nineteenth-century New Zealand literature. The topic of genre sees Pyke's novel form a blend of the romantic and the factual yet dramatized adventure and pioneer genres. Stafford and Williams summarise the trend in genre shift: "in Britain, this period shows a shift in fictional style from the realism of the first half of the nineteenth-century to a revival of romance by the 1880s."

Stafford, Jane, Williams, Mark, [Stafford and Williams](#)

They explain that authors of New Zealand novels were influenced by these ideas which resulted in styles of writing that ranged from the "almost prosaic and autobiographical and to the fanciful and romantic."

Stafford, Jane, Mark Williams

Pyke's style of writing can be described both in romantic and autobiographical terms as his goldfields stories hold factual accounts of the mining community in Dunstan Otago much like his guide to the goldfields, yet has all the drama and adventurous exploits of a romance.

Just as Pyke treats the people in his novel with sensationalist Victorian melodrama, so too does he paint a sublime picture of the Otago landscape. The idea of the sublime rises from the eighteenth and nineteenth sensibilities of the landscape painters in Europe. The treatment of landscape painting became preoccupied by the awful and terrifying beauty of the natural world. Pyke translates that tension of describing the beauty of the New Zealand landscape through the lens of a pseudo American Frontier romance. He begins with "Far away in the interior of Otago," already assigning a removed, unreachable and different space to a place that was on the other side of the world as far as readers outside of New Zealand was concerned. "A strange, wild scene. Bleak and desolate enough....Huge, unshapely masses of rock - weather beaten geological veterans - blackened and seamed and scarred by I know not how many centuries of conflict with the elements." (Pyke, 1) Pyke portrays the Otago landscape through the sublime language that conveys a sense of the geological processes that established the natural resources of which the novel revolves around. The land itself presents a place of opportunity, the prospects of finding gold and achieving a greater living for oneself.

A unique aspect of the novel is its narrative voice. While Pyke's personal style of writing is one that clearly gives a sense of writing being his hobby, it is in *Wild Will* that the tendency for his narrator to take on the characteristics of Pyke's personal views. As Pyke's livelihood was so intertwined with the workings of the

goldfields, his style of writing was also imbued with the same familiarity of how the goldfields shaped the people, which in turn fuelled his rendering of the characters. This conversational omniscience runs throughout the novel to inject the sense of a very real presence of the narrator. The reader is given the impression of Pyke's involvement as the author as narrative description often gives way to commentary from the narrator himself. The resulting tone of the narration proves his reliability through the explanations of factual descriptions or the setting as well as the processes involved in a mining community. It is clear to the reader that the narrative is told through the voice of Vincent Pyke despite the fictional nature of the character and events surrounding their actions.

Instances where Pyke breaks through the narrative events and descriptions to insert his voice within the novel go beyond simple narrator omniscience. For example, initially he places Will Enderby and George Pratt in Dunstan, a gold mining township and describes the landscape and its inhabitants from their point of view. However, he also writes from his own retrospective point of view as he makes a point of naming it Dunstan “-I prefer the old name-” in memory of the “fine, pungent dust” (Pyke, 15) by which the town acquired the moniker ‘Dusty Dunstan.’ The narrator here steps forward beyond the story and injects a temporal aspect that is used solely for the purpose of establishing the setting as a ‘pause’ before continuing with the story.

Pyke also provides for his foreign readers footnotes that detail the names and brief description of names, places and native flora. As seen in chapter three as he establishes the setting of Dunstan and especially the surrounding area. “Note - As I have no desire to mystify readers unacquainted with New Zealand flora, I append a brief description of shrubs mentioned.” (Pyke, 16) Separate from the narrative, this break in the story telling is more for the benefit of Pyke’s readers who are unfamiliar to New Zealand such as he and other prospectors drawn by the gold rush or those reading from overseas. Pyke also goes to great lengths to incorporate Maori place names for the flora and fauna, if only to add to the exotic and foreign description.

It is interesting to note that Pyke actively supported Women’s right to vote, and this is shown in *The Story of Wild Will Enderby*. This translates into the novel in the few female characters that drive the romantic plot. Both Pratt and Enderby arrive in the goldfields as a result of their thwarted love life, Ruth unobtainable without wealth in Pratt’s case and Will Enderby’s inappropriate longing for another woman, Florence, while betrothed to Mabel. At first Pyke’s portrayal of women is one of a plot device, however, the narrator casts doubt as to the simplistic characterisation as in the later chapters of the novel, a certain spirit is seen in Mabel which causes her to break from the societal norms. When Philip Grey is sent from Australia to New Zealand to aid Will Enderby, Mabel travels with him to ease her ill health. When faced with a long coach journey to Dunstan Philip refuses to listen to Mabel’s entreaties, believing himself to be in the right. This passage in the novel seems oddly disjointed from the rest of the narrative as Pyke particularly emphasises the exchange. “But Philip was deaf to entreaty, and set off by himself in the morning.... Yet as the coach ascended the hill above Dunedin - revealing a magnificent view of the town...Philip’s conscience smote him, for that he had robbed his sister of a great pleasure.” (Pyke, 206) The rest of the passage is a continuation of poor Philip chastising himself to the brink of self-loathing for his high handed manner that adversely affected not just his sister, but himself as well, “his remorse was complete, and his condemnation was great.” (Pyke, 207) On one hand the small conflict between brother and sister could simply serve as a point to add to the melodrama of the novel.

On the other hand it is the first instance of a woman treated as a character in her own right in the novel without being attached in some way as the wife, the daughter or the source of marital disharmony. After shedding the servant girl disguise, Mabel transforms not just in her brother’s eye, but also in the reader’s eyes from the timid girl emotionally abused by Enderby’s inattention, to a woman determined to achieve her goals. It is implied that through Mabel’s removal from her parents’ house in Australia, she grows in character strength and stands equal to her brother, to the benefit of both parties. Pyke says as much in his ‘memo’ below this passage that “on the whole, I am inclined to think that a man is well-pleased to be outwitted by a woman, especially when the manoeuvre tends to his own gratification.” (Pyke, 208) Pyke here makes the argument that for man to be happy, women must also be happy and suggests that their wishes are not dissimilar, which echoes his arguments in the *Taupeka Times*.

Papers Past, National Library, VINCENT PYKE ON THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE BILL., *Taupeka Times*, Volume XX, Issue 1360, 15 June 1887 - [Taupeka Times, 1887](#)

When presenting the draft to his editor, Professor Murphy Maguire, Pyke recounts the solemn tone in which the question was asked whether the events were all true or not. Somewhat flattered Pyke writes in his introduction to the republished edition, “If my rendering of life on the New Zealand Gold fields in the early sixties, was so faithful as to cause the learned Professor to hesitate to regard the story of ‘Wild Will Enderby’ as fact or fiction, I must certainly have achieved a success.”

Pyke, Vincent, *Wild Will Enderby*, Christchurch: Caper Press, 1974

(Pyke, v) Pyke’s recreation of the early days of the gold rush ‘he claims’ is faithful, some accounts borrowed from experiences of people he was acquainted with.

For example, as far as the descriptions of the region, the place names and the processes of mining are concerned, Pyke could only have written from his own knowledge as a past miner and as the Goldfields Secretary. Also, Pyke's casual use of the occasional Maori name for native plants and places is partially explained by Jane Stafford and Mark Williams in their introduction: *A Land Mild and Bold, Diffident and Pertinent*. They termed this use of local names as 'Maoriland' "The beliefs, practises and traditions of the Maori are contextualised and universalised for the European reader unfamiliar with such intriguing barbarisms."

Stafford, Jane, Williams, Mark

The inclusion of maori names gave Pyke authority as the author as he had knowledge of the places and name that results in the reader placing greater trust in the reliability of the narrator.

Stafford and Williams also note the transition of New Zealand literature during this period adapted from the "Newly indigenised, late-colonial authors could turn their minds to the modern – the brave new world of women's suffrage, innovative social legislation, and the construction of a modern, albeit still colonial, economy." Pyke's *Wild Will* definitely shows itself as a novel that is more concerned with the developing colonial region of Otago through the gold rush. The idea of the modernisation through women's suffrage and legislative reformed have been proven goals of Pyke's through his other literary and political efforts through his articles to the newspapers and his own submitted mining laws.

A review in the *Star* advertises the re-issue of Pyke's *Wild Will* as colonial literature and the opportunity for readers to read a story of the early days of the goldfields. Re-issued through Whitcombe and Tombs, the review had this to say of the novel: "There is in it much of moving incident, there are many touches of pathos, there is genuine humour, and there is throughout a naturalness which must conduce greatly to the reader's enjoyment." However, of equal interest it seems to the reviewer here is the nature of a bargain of such a novel that 'in so cheap a form' no matter the quality, will "have a quick sale and an extensive one."

Papers Past, National Library, Star, Star, Issue 6574, 17 June 1889, [Star, 1889](#)

Another lengthier review of the novel in the *Otago Witness* begins by bemoaning the dearth of quality Colonial literature and attributes this to the materialistic tendencies of the Colonialists. The reviewer rather scathingly questions whether the appearance of "an exceptionally clever work" would do well in sales as the Colonists are "so earnestly struggling for wealth that they have no inclination for other matters" or that they simply have no "faith in the talent of Colonial authors." Hardly a promising introduction to Pyke's novel, the reviewer nonetheless hopes that *Wild Will Enderby* "will disabuse the minds of those people who entertain the erroneous belief that the colony can boast of no talented writers." After outlining the events of the first book, the reviewer pronounces that the descriptions of scenery are excellent, quoting the first glimpse of Dunstan from the first chapter, "proving Mr Pyke to be an enthusiastic lover of Nature." However, this review is concluded with summary that "Mr Pyke may feel proud of his production" that the novel can "teach us to honour honesty, manliness, and perseverance."

Papers Past, National Library, Reviews, *Otago Witness*, Issue 1138, 20 September 1873, [Otago Witness, 1873](#)

After the acclaim Pyke won for *Wild Will*, his second instalment, *The Adventures of George Washington Pratt*, of the digger's adventures in Otago, New Zealand was published the following year. The focus shifts to George Washington Pratt as he was left alone by Will Enderby at the end of the previous novel and promises to regale the reader with more tales of daring adventures. Pyke begins as he did in *Wild Will* with a rapturous description of the New Zealand landscape which is purposed to generate the beginnings of national pride, at least on the part of the author himself.

Pyke establishes this idea through his setting of the scene in which Pratt and Enderby stake a claim in Dunstan. Pyke depicts a township that echoes the pioneer and adventurous spirit found in American Wild West stories. "Gold-fields, like Chinese citizens, undergo sundry mutations of name at successive stages of their growth. First comes the miner...and bestows on his camping-place.... close upon his heels follow the storekeeper and the purveyor - licenced or otherwise. These form a street, more or less crooked, and assign a more speakable application to the new township." (Pyke, 13) Here Pyke outlines the process by which one imagines the very beginnings of a township. He creates the setting for the novel from the ground up in a sense, achieving the pioneering and adventurous spirit by incorporating the development that has led to the character's situations in the narrative. An element of historical importance is emphasised through the goldfield setting as not only is it important to the narrative, the adventurous aspects are rooted in the narrative space of the goldfield, but also as it was of significance to the author himself and the significance it played in New Zealand history. The shaping of the South Island cities and source of wealth was of importance to Pyke as he himself was instrumental to economic and township growth through events such as the development of the railway to Wanaka and authorship of mining legislation.

Hearn, T. J, 'Pyke, Vincent', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopaedia of

New Zealand, updated 8-Jan-2014

A talented politician, author and advocate, Vincent Pyke contributed to the history of New Zealand not only through his public career, but also his literary works. Pyke's public persona both quick and generous revealed his passion for the improvement of miner's rights and the continual growth for the Otago region. His literary efforts in newspapers, journals, guides, and of course his novels, exemplified by *The Story of Wild Will*, were a testament to his dedication to New Zealand as his home.

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Title Page

**The Story of Wild Will Enderby**

Told by Vincent Pyke

*"To wilful men, The injuries that they themselves procure, Must be their schoolmasters."*

GEORGE ROBERTSON, MELBOURNE, and R. T. WHEELER DUNEDIN 1873

## Preface to The Second Edition.

THE favourable reception which this volume has received, both from the Public and the Press, necessitates, thus early, a reprint. I am thereby emboldened to avow my intention of pursuing yet further the story of "Wild Will Enderby." Indeed, I may honestly acknowledge that I am very unwilling to part from Will and the Blue-eyed Maiden on their very wedding day; that I am greatly interested in the sequent adventures of my friend, Mr. George Washington Pratt; that the final issue of the Young Widow's matrimonial speculation powerfully claims my attention; that the bold Sergeant, and Constable Finnegan—Lizzie, the somewhat Housemaid, and honest Janet the Cook—have so won upon me that I am loth to relegate them to entire oblivion. That—to sum up all—I have myself become so attached to these Children of my Imagination as to feel that I cannot yet afford to deprive myself of their pleasurable companionship.

Therefore my auditors and I will meet again ere many months have passed. Till then I bid them—ADIEU!

Vincent Pyke.

Wardensthorpe,

Nov. 6, 1873.

NOTE.—I have endeavoured to indicate the intended pronunciation of certain words by the use of italicized vowels. The reader is therefore requested to emphasize the vowels so printed in the book.

V. P.

## CONTENTS.

## BOOK 1.—THE SENIOR PARTNER.

### Chapter I. The Strange Tenant of a Strange Chamber.

FAR away in the interior of Otago there are three great mountain ranges, radiating northerly from the Lammerlaw—mother of mountains. To these ranges, early explorers, more practical than poetic, have affixed the characteristic names of "Rough Ridge," "Raggedy," and "Knobby." Upon the last named is our opening scene.

Rough Ridge, Raggedy, Knobby are names that are still in use today and some are used as scenic trail that provide an opportunity to visit old mining areas.

A strange, wild scene. Bleak and desolate enough, God wot; yet not without a certain rugged grandeur, such as Nature preserves even in her wildest moods.

Huge, unshapely masses of rock—weather-beaten geological veterans—blackened and seamed and scarred by I know not how many centuries of conflict with the elements;—some prostrate, some erect, others inclining earthwards; some fantastically grouped, others isolated and solitary; all scattered at irregular intervals, amidst immense tussocks of "snow grass," like relics of a vast Druidical temple. Such is the scene to which I have the

temerity to introduce the reader.

Faint streaks of light, flushing the eastern horizon, tinged with hues of gold and carmine the fleecy clouds that veiled the sun's approach. The crescent moon waxed paler, and the morning star—pendant, like a silver jewel in the azure sky—grew faint and dim before the coming morn. The wild winds were hushed, but subtle breezes, scarce perceptible to any human sense of feeling—sighed fitfully through the melancholy sedges, eliciting weird-like responses from the grim rocks around.

Presently, uprose the all-conquering sun. As his beams lighted up the scene, there rolled from out a cavernous hollow—wrought by beating tempests in an enormous fragment of metamorphic schist—(as my friends the geologists are pleased to term it)—a man.

The geology of Central Otago is made up of schist rock, or metamorphosed greywacke that had been uplifted by tectonic movement and eroded blocks of stone to form the '[rugged grandeur](#)' Pyke describes.

A young man. So much was evident at a glance. But whether handsome or ill-favoured it would have been difficult to say. For the wilderness of hair which enshrouded his face was tangled and unkempt, and hid his features from view. He was neither short nor tall, neither stout nor thin, but of good useful stature and dimensions. His attire was the ordinary blue serge shirt and moleskin continuations, indicative of the species—miner: a species not classified by Pritchard or Blumenbach, but a very omnivorous and important branch of the human family notwithstanding.

He did not appear to be particularly charmed with the prospect. He had selected his chamber on a depressed *plateau*, with an eye rather to shelter than to scenery. So that when he arose from his stony couch nothing met his gaze save the sky and the earth. But not having any one to talk to or at, and there being therefore no inducement to use strong language, he merely gave expression to his sentiments by a silent but most emphatic shrug, and then proceeded forthwith to arrange his blankets, in the form known to the initiated as a "horse-collar swag."

Horse-collar swag - referring to the closed 'U' shaped collar that was placed on a horse's neck made from leather and stuffed with straw that allowed the horse to pull heavy loads. The 'swag' is the term for a miner's possessions that he would have carried with him, slung over his shoulders.

His next performance was to extricate from the recesses of his limited wardrobe a knife, a box of matches, a cake of tobacco, and a short meerschaum pipe, black enough to excite the envy of old smokers, and foul enough to deter beginners from any further study of the Nicotian art.

[Meerschaum pipe](#) is a specific type of smoking pipe of white clay that became a form of distinction amongst men as it was seen as a sign of a 'respectable' man of the middle-class. Design and discolouration from the tobacco a form of distinction.

Having filled and lighted, he slung his "swag" over his shoulder, set his face northwards, and, following the Dunstan track, went on his way, pouring forth volumes of fragrant smoke as a burnt offering to the orb of day.

After he had travelled about three miles, he began to look about him carefully, often halting to note the appearance of the rocks, as if in search of something. Presently he came to where two rocks leaning over towards each other disclosed a deep space between. On sighting these he diverged from the track, and entering the hollow, relieved his thirst by a copious draught of water, always to be found there, even in midsummer, although this spot is on the summit of the "Knobbys."

After partaking of this slight refection, and laving his face in the cool fluid, he breakfasted sumptuously on a couple of scones, and a rough, tough greasy mutton chop, providently reserved from his last meal for this particular festive occasion. These despatched, he started in a new direction. He climbed to the top of the tallest rock, made a cushion of his "swag" and seated himself thereupon. Then he lit his pipe again.

His more immediate animal requirements having thus been satisfied, he began to be sensible of the merits of the scenery, and to feel amiably disposed to patronise it. Truly it was a magnificent view that stretched out before him like a vast panorama. Such a view, indeed, as the most prosaic biped in breeches could scarcely behold with apathy.

Nearly four thousand feet below he beheld the level expanse of the Dunstan Plain, with the great river Molyneux (the Clutha of the maps) winding through the centre, flashing back the dazzling sunlight from its surface. Clusters of snowy tents dotted the river-bank; and larger patches of white, where gaily coloured flags fluttered like gaudy flowers, denoted the sites of rival townships. In the distance they looked like mere toys of puny dimensions, and the bravest banner in that tented field showed immeasurably smaller than a child's handkerchief. Dark specks were crawling to and fro like insects on the plain, but these were men, standing some feet and inches high. Horsemen galloping ever so swiftly seemed but to move with the rapidity of snails. The clouds of dust that shrouded lumbering waggons, laden with all that commerce could offer in exchange for gold, appeared no greater than the wreaths of smoke which escaped from the observer's pipe.

Dunstan Track - The shortest viable route (175 km) for the miners to go from Dunedin to Dunstan, now Clyde.

'Tis humiliating to think how small a thing is man and man's belongings, when viewed from an elevated stand point.

Around the margins of the plain—once a lake, where, untold ages since, gigantic moas quenched their thirst—arose terraces so wondrously resembling military earth-works, that had an armed host suddenly appeared thereon it would scarcely have excited surprise. Over and beyond these, towered massive mountain ranges, four, five, six thousand feet and more above the plain—all girdled and flecked with snow on their southern peaks, and in the sheltered ravines. Northwards, St. Bathan's reared his hoary head high above his fellows.

St Barthans - Mining township established in 1863 at the foot of the St Barthans Range.

In the immediate foreground, frowned the heavy Dunstan Ranges, capped by the "Leaning Rock," showing in sharp outline against the clear blue sky; and the broad bosom of Mount Pisa, looming over the shoulder of the Carn-muir, bounded the far horizon.

Leaning Rock, Mount Pisa , Carn-muir - Mountain peaks in the ranges between Wanaka and the Otago plains.

Westward, the purple hills culminated in the Obelisk—the "Old Man," of miner's parlance.

Old Man, Dunstan - Also named Kopuwai, Obelisk, a feature of the Old Man Range.

Beyond arose the twin peaks of Ben Nevis; and far exceeding and surpassing all, the Double Cone of the Remarkables, on the shores of Lake Wakatipu.

Ben Nevis - Second highest peak in the Hecktor range.

These last, as seen from afar, shimmering in the crystal robes of winter, appeared almost as a silver cloud. But clouds, like human passions, pass by and are not: the mountains stand like the decrees of the Creator, solid, immovable, majestic;—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

## Chapter II. A Remarkable Acquaintance.

I know not whether thoughts such as these passed through the mind of our nameless friend as he sat on the rock, inhaling and exhaling narcotic fumes, for he evinced no sign of emotion. His pipe exhausted, he folded his arms, and still maintained his position. As the day wore on many people passed by; for it was the time of the great Dunstan "Rush," and a host of miners were hurrying from all parts of New Zealand, and from over the sea, to participate in the golden spoils of the Molyneux, the existence whereof had recently been made known by the now famous prospectors, Hartley and Reilly.

Hartley and Reilly - American Horatio Hartley and Irishman Christopher Reilly jointly deposited a bag of gold that weighed just under 40 kg at the Treasury in Dunedin in 1862, [Otago Witness, 1862](#) Their success sparked the Great Dunstan Gold Rush.

First came three men, hirsute and stalwart, each with blankets on shoulder, pannikin on belt, pick and shovel in hand.

Pannikin - Small metal drinking cup.

Then two, similarly accoutred, and accompanied by a huge mongrel dog, also loaded with a "swag."

Great Dunstan Rush - Diggers worked the beaches of the Molyneux (Clutha) Kararau and Shotover.

Then others, with a woman "of the baser sort," rude of speech, wild-eyed, with swaggering gait, slatternly. Then more, and yet more—motley groups of all ages and conditions of men. And each party as it passed, marking, as none could fail to do, the solitary figure sitting between sky and earth, greeted him with exclamations and phrases more forcible than flattering; with jests and jeers, and flouting mockery. But to jest and jeer no response made he; but still maintained a sullen silence.

Presently there came by a man, who carried his nationality conspicuously about him.

The new comer was tall and powerfully built. His long, grave, oval face was indicative of strong will and determination. It was just such a face as one sees in old portraits of the time when King Oliver governed Britain so wisely and so well, that loyal Stuart-loving hearts grieved that the brewer's son had not been born in the purple. His beard was limited to a heavy tuft on the pointed chin. On his square, well-set head he carried an astonishing steeple-crowned beaver hat, which bore the appearance of having been industriously brushed the wrong way.

Beaver-hat - Hats from beaver pelt were naturally water resistant and durable and could be shaped easily. Styles differed according to station such as a gentleman's top hat as well as identifying military rank.

A scarlet woollen shirt, with collar turned down, and open at the throat, disclosed a, neck and chest such as a modern Hercules might have envied. His arms and nether limbs (there is no such thing as perfection of form to be found amongst civilized men), were disproportioned to the rest of his frame—were over-long, in fact, and loosely-jointed. His pants—be sure they were "pants"—of blue dungaree, were carelessly tucked into Napoleon boots,

Napoleon Boots - Knee-length boots.

once black, but now of the brown, brownest, and adorned with soiled red knee-caps,

Knee-caps - To protect digger's knees as they panned for gold.

whereon were faintly depicted certain indefinite fragments of the "Bird of Freedom."

Bird of Freedom - American Eagle to hint at the man's nationality.

Like the other passers-by he carried a "swag," also a pannikin, also a sheath-knife. Unlike the others, he carried a field-glass,

Field-glass - Small Portable Telescope.

suspended by a strap from the shoulder, and in his belt was a small tomahawk. Evidently he was prepared to look a-head, and, if necessary, to clear the way.

As he came along the track, with a long, steady, swinging stride, his keen grey eyes glancing around to the right and to the left, he suddenly espied the man upon the rock.

"Say, stranger! you ain't struck a patch anywhere about up there, have you?"

Such was his greeting. He waited for an answer, but none was vouchsafed. He watched for a movement, but in vain. Forthwith he proceeded in a leisurely, business-like way to disencumber himself of his swag. Then using his hands trumpet-fashion, he hailed thus—

"Stone ahoy! what sort of weather is it in your longitude?"

He might as well have hailed a stone man.

The American (for of course he was an American) still in the same deliberative manner, pulled out a lump of unmistakeable "honeydew," transferred a goodly-sized plug to his left cheek, chewed away at it some time in solemn silence, aimed a well-directed shot at an unoffending tussock, and, having thus relieved his feelings, he sat down, quietly observing, "Well, I'm darned if this ain't a circumstance!"

Whether any subtle magnetic influences disturbed the equilibrium of the other's mental atmosphere I do not pretend to know. What I do know is that he once or twice shifted his position, as if restless and uneasy under the persistent scrutiny to which he was subjected. All at once he sprang to his feet and demanded with much vehemence—

"Why do you annoy me? Why don't you go on your way, and leave me alone?"

"Oho! Thought I'd rouse the British lion somehow," quoth the American.

"Rouse the British Lion" - The lion being the symbol of Great Britain.

"Well, my venerable orphan, when I see a something sitting on a rock in such high latitudes, I want to know whether it's a man or whether it's a monkey. Which is it, Sir?"

The Briton retorted in a torrent of passionate invective, whereat the American laughed—laughed consumedly, insomuch that nothing but long practice prevented the honeydew from slipping down his windpipe, and summarily concluding the argument.

It was a fair contest between Mirth and Anger, and Mirth had very much the best of it. In a few seconds the angry man descended from his lofty pedestal, and proceeded to argue the point on level ground. It may be that he contemplated a resort to the *argumentum ad hominem*; but if so, his purpose melted away before the good humor of his interlocutor. Laughter is infectious, and after sundry facial contortions, indicative of a desire to maintain a proper gravity of demeanour, he fairly 'caved in' and joined in the merriment.

"*Argumentum ad hominem*" - Term used of a conclusion based on lack of contrary evidence.

Soon, however, the old wrathful feeling resumed its sway, and therewithal a savage light, not pleasant to contemplate, glistened in his eyes.

"When you have quite finished laughing," he said, "perhaps you'll explain."

"Certainly, sir, nothing could be fairer. But I ain't quite done yet. I always laugh on principle, sir, when I get a right smart chance like this. I consider laughing one of the most important functions of the human system. It cheers the heart, recuperates the constitution, improves the countenance, and beats Perry Davis's Painkiller all to smash.

[Perry Davis Painkiller](#) - Believed to be the first patented 'Pain Killer' in 1840 that listed a number of opiates amongst the ingredients.

Say—you havn't gone and poisoned your grandmother, have you, sir?"

"Poisoned my grandmother? What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing particular. Only you do look as if you had stifled some respectable old female of a serious turn of mind, and traded souls with her afterwards."

The man of the rock answered with a scowl. Whereupon the American smiled blandly. The first shouldered his swag and made for the track: the other allowed suit.

"Now, look here," growled the Briton, "If you are going on, I am not. If you are not, I am, that's all."

"Whew!" whistled the American. "Now I call that enough to make any free citizen feel wrathy. But I'm a good-tempered man myself, I am. And I've kind of taken a notion to you, because, you are eccentric. In a

general way there's always something in eccentric folk. And when I observed you making an object of yourself on the top of that big stone, I concluded you'd be worth studying. So I mean to have your company just as far as the Dunstan. Yes, sirree! You bet!"

Then there commenced between these two a contest of endurance. The Briton sat down on one tussock; the American sat upon another. The Briton filled his pipe and smoked; the American chewed his quid and expectorated. And still along the track travelled groups of miners, with whom the American exchanged friendly salutations. But never a word spake the Briton.

But the contest was unequal. The American possessed and exercised that mental power (call it mesmeric, if you will) which is irresistible when brought to bear upon inferior organisations. It was an Armstrong battery

Armstrong Battery against a Waterloo cannon - Armstrong gun developed in 1855 by Armstrong and was used in the Maori Land Wars by the British Army.

against a Waterloo cannon.

Waterloo Cannon (Long Tom) Was developed five decades earlier and used a different system of ammunition.

"Guess you're improving company, you are;" quoth the American, after some time had thus been spent. "You would be a very valuable passenger on a China voyage. No fear of scurvy on board if you only showed the light of your countenance to the sailors once a week. Don't think they'd stand it oftener, though. You'd have to be chained up in the fore-hold, and only let out on occasions; or I am darned if I don't think you'd raise a mutiny."

This brought the other to his feet. "Who the mischief are you?" he exclaimed; and a smile rippled over his face, despite his efforts to restrain it.

"Well, now, I reckon that's the only sensible thing you've said yet. My name, sir, is Pratt—George Washington Pratt. You see, some of our people are pious, and some are patriotic. It kind of runs in families. When they are pious they mostly give their youngsters Scripture names, such as Obadiah or Nathan, or Aminadab. But they as are patriotic take a name that some great man has put a varnish on. Now, my respected progenitor had a notion that Mr. George Washington occupied the topmost pinnacle of everlasting glory, as I heard a Congress man say when he was stumping it down to Iowa. That's where I was raised, sir. So he bestowed on this child the name of that illustrious man, and I ain't seen anybody yet powerful enough to annex it."

The contest was over. The pair were travelling amicably together, when Mr. George Pratt's explanation ended.

"And now, sir," continued Mr Pratt, "might I presume to enquire how your helps label your portmantys when you make the grand tower?"

"You want to know my name? Well—Harry.

"That's an amazing short handle for a full-grown man. It jest is. Do you ordinarily spell it in one word; or do you sometimes spell it in two?"

"Oh! it's of no consequence. Call me Harry Grey. Will that satisfy your Yankee curiosity?"

"Yes, sirree. Guess it's a purser's name, but that's no business of mine. A man's got a right to call himself what he darn please in a free country. But see here, Mr. Grey, don't you take every one from the States for a Yank. Every Yank is an American; but every American, ain't a Yank, any more than every European is a Britisher. I'm from the Western States, sir, I am; and our folks don't muchly approbate being called Yanks."

"Thank you for the caution," said Harry, who was rapidly brightening under the influence of his companion's humour. "I'll take care not to call a Western statesman a Yankee again, Mr. Sprat."

"Pratt, sir, is my name. Spell it with two t's, sir, if you please. Suppose you've heard of our people?"

"Why, no," replied Harry, "I can't say that I have."

"Well, now, that's curious, that is. It's what I call a circumstance. The Pratts, sir, are an important institution in the States. They count some, they do. Orson Pratt and his she-cousin Belinda are enrolled in what you Britishers call the 'blazing scroll of fame,'

"Blazing scroll of fame" - This is a line from a patriotic ballad *The Englishman*, - 1850, as a part of a collection of 2,300 such works printed in the 19th century ranging from political addresses, courtship, crime and fashion. ([Held at the National Library of Scotland.](#)) The phrase is used here by Pratt to describe cousins as respectable people.

though why it should blaze I ain't exactly sure, except it's a case of spontaneous combustion, owing probably to too much calliper and turtle fat.

"Spontaneous combustion...too much calliper and turtle fat." - Calliper refers to measuring the diameter of a round object, usually the internal measure of a tube or pipe. Turtle fat could have been used by gun owners to clean their guns in place of gun oil in the more remote reaches of the world. The inadequacy of such a method of caring for a gun could have resulted in the 'spontaneous combustion' of the gun as Pratt puts it .

There's-a branch of our family I've heard tell in your country, sir, but they are rather small potatoes, and don't count."

Mr George W. Pratt and Harry Grey journeyed to the Dunstan in peace and amity. The American's geniality acted upon Harry's moroseness like the beams of the summer sun on an Alpine glacier, thawing his reserve, and—so to phrase it—eliciting a pleasant rivulet of conversation. And, as they waited on the bank of the Manuherikia for their turn to cross in the ferryboat, George Washington said:—

"See, here, now. I ain't got any pardner; I'm just paddling my own canoe. Suppose we pull oars together. What say?"

And the compact was sealed on the spot.

## Chapter III. Old Dunstan.

GOLD-Fields' townships, like Chinese citizens, undergo sundry mutations of name at successive stages of their growth.

Otago saw its first Chinese miners in 1866 as newer goldfields opened on the West Coast and taking the European miners with them. It is estimated that 2,000 Chinese immigrant lived in Otago by the end of the 1860s. [Te Ara - Chinese Miners](#)

First comes the miner, "*Full of strange oaths and bearded like a pard,*" and bestows on his camping-place some designation often more significant than classical.

"Full of strange oaths, and bearded like a pard." - A line from Shakespeare's Seven Ages of Man dialogue from *As You Like It*, Act II, scene vii.

Close upon his heels follow the storekeeper and the purveyor of strong drinks—licensed or otherwise. These form a street, more or less crooked, and assign a more speakable appellation to the new township. Then comes some official—policeman or what not—who, as of use and wont, makes a point of re-naming the place. Last of all, the surveyor appears upon the scene, and lays out streets trigonometrically exact in relation to cardinal points, but very aggravatingly arranged when considered in connection with the convenience of the residents, whose dwellings are intersected by lines at acute or obtuse angles, cutting off a corner here, running a street through a bedroom there, and generally making everybody concerned angry and uncomfortable. But with the advent of the theodolite arrives the era of order, and of permanent, if unsuitable nomenclature; and the variously designated township is duly mapped and gazetted, and is forthwith known only by its authorized name. So fared it with the Dunstan township.

Theodolite - A device for measuring angles, used in surveying land and laying roads.

First called "Beeftown," because of a purveyor of the flesh of oxen who dwelt thereat; next "Dunstan," that being the name of the adjacent mountain range; presently "Hartley," in honour of one of the original prospectors; and finally "Clyde," in which name it rejoiceth even until now.

When our friends, Harry Grey and Mr. George W. Pratt, made their first appearance in this township it was known as Dunstan—"Dusty Dunstan;"—an appellation allocated to it by an artful arranger of alliterative adjectives. Dusty indeed it was. The foot sank ankle-deep in dust; raising soft billows around the wayfarers, till they showed like cherubs—all heads and shoulders. Only cherubs don't wear "billy-cock" hats, nor carry "swags," as a general rule. Fine, pungent dust, intensely black and titillatory, penetrating the thickest clothing, and so pervading the atmosphere, that one inhaled it, so to speak, not only by the mouth, but also through nostrils, eyes and ears.

Billy-cock hats - Another name for a bowler hat. Rounded crown with a short brim.

There are some old residents who aver that, in the days whereof I write, this dust passed through inch-thick deal boards. I do not vouch for the correctness of the statement. But I know that although this particular kind of dust has long since disappeared—blown out to sea, probably—Dunstan is still entitled to its distinguishing prefix.

Dunstan—I prefer the old name—was truly a remarkable town. Located at the extreme end of a basin-like plain, about eight miles in length, and perhaps three miles in width,—its one long straggling, crooked street, extended along the precipitous bank of the Molyneux river, which brawled amidst rocks and reefs a hundred feet below. Beyond the township the plain narrowed to a gorge, at that time inaccessible to wheeled traffic, by reason of the huge slate splinters which blocked up the way, and so arrested the further advance of the camp-followers, who marched in the wake of the noble army of miners. Close under the lee of overhanging rocks crowded the exchangers. Of course drinking-shops preponderated. The "Harp of Erin" proffered potheen to the patriotic sons of the sod; the "Robert Burns" invited Sandy to an unlimited whiskey feast; the "Royal George" propitiated the vanity and quenched the thirst of John Bull; the "Bendigo" arrested the devious steps of old Victorians; the "Stars and Stripes" appealed to American eagleism; and the "All Nations" opened wide its cosmopolitan doors to all bibulous comers. The "Childe Harold Bowling Saloon" provided exercise for the

arms of muscular humanity; and the "Waverly Dancing Rooms" provided amusement for the legs. The "Wonder of the World" retailed slop clothing at "cost price;" the "Original Wonder" sold the like merchandise at "less than cost;" and the "Little Wonder" gave things away; and the glory of Judah was over them all. And from tavern, and saloon, and store waved flags, gaudy of hue and various in device. And the pitiless sun shone down on all from a cloudless sky; and the people trudged to and fro through the blinding dust, grimy and perspiring; and the drinking bars were crowded with the ardent votaries of Bacchus; and a lively traffic was carried on with much profit and celerity.

Down, or rather up this street came our particular acquaintances. Harry would fain have halted at one of the hostelries; but to this the American seriously demurred.

Hostelries - An inn, hotel or other form of lodging or reception space for entertainment purposes.

So they continued their way through the township and entered the Gorge, and still went on for about a mile, until they came to a little open space at the mouth of a small gully, where a tiny stream trickled amidst tall grasses, as it ran sparkling away to join, and to be lost in the river. Here they halted, and proceeded first to encamp, and then to explore the diggings and make necessary enquiries for a likely place "to set it."

The Gorge whereof I have spoken requires a brief description to enable the reader properly to follow the events of this veracious history.

Let the reader then picture to himself a vast rift or chasm—some twelve miles in length, and varying from a quarter to half a mile in width, winding between mountains which rear their loftier peaks three to five thousand feet aloft. In some places these stone giants frown perpendicularly hundreds of feet overhead—their scarred breasts rent and torn by many a convulsion of nature, and excoriated by the mightier, though more slowly operating, finger of time. In others the steep braes, scantily clothed with coarse herbage, slope gently to the ravine. From the precipices fantastic pinnacles—disjointed and crumbling, and wavering, as it were, in the balance, threaten the passer-by. On the slopes, immense rocks—arrested in mid-career untold centuries ago, await the disintegration of the few grains of sand which now restrain them from continuing their downward course. Below, the ravine is cumbered with huge fragments of the mouldering mountains; now with a confused heap of shattered rocks, and presently with enormous boulders embedded in the gravelly soil, which sometimes expands into a small flat, and anon dwindle to a narrow strip, here overhanging, and there shelving dangerously to the river.

For there is a river there—a treacherous, snake-like river; which, by some strange witchery, both attracts and repels the gazer, much as the serpent is said to affect the victim bird. Deep down in the centre of the Gorge it pursues its tortuous course, between banks sometimes high above its waters, sometimes almost level with its surface. Occasionally it glides smoothly along with an easy, graceful, undulating motion, murmuring musically the while, as it ripples on the shingle-strewn beaches, or laps against the projecting crags, which its soft touches have long since despoiled of their pristine angularities. At such times and places the waters of the Molyneux are pleasant to the eye; and their softened cadences—rising and falling with the breeze—are melodious to the ear. But the observant eye may mark, that even in these placid reaches the surface of the river is curiously agitated by circling vortices, which draw in and swallow any floating substances which chance to come anear. Whirlpools these, telling of cruel crags and sunken rocks, concealed by the smooth, false waters; whirlpools wherein the stoutest swimmer might not venture, and hooe to tell the story of their mysterious recesses.

But where the opposing reefs resist the mighty current, the Molyneux rears its savage crest, and roaring, foaming, hissing in very wrath, it dashes fiercely by the rugged obstacles to its progress. Fed by three extensive lakes—the exhaustless reservoirs of vast Alpine ranges—what force can stay or turn aside the Molyneux in its progress to the ocean? Ages ago its waters cleaved their way through the mountains which then intercepted its course; and by their resistless unceasing action was thus drained the great network of lakes, whereof the existing representatives—large as still their area—are mere "crab-holes" by comparison.

This picture of sublime desolation is unrelieved by any kindly touch from the hand of Nature.

Sublime - A sublime landscape presents the viewer with a scene that is equally awe inspiring in its beauty as well as in terrifying power.

Amidst the fissures of the rocks stunted Kowhai hold precarious tenure, and trailing "bush-lawyers," intermingled with coarse "bracken," cling lovingly to the rude stones. Fostered by the cool waters of a mountain rivulet, the Koromiko grows by the side of poisonous Tutu bushes. Upon the arid flats, patches of Tumata-kuru, and of a purple flowering broom, struggle to maintain a scraggy existence. Besides these—neither upon the scarped faces of the mountains, nor in the sheltered gullies, nor by the river-side, nor on the terrace banks—does tree or shrub greet the traveller's gaze. But picturesque savagery hath its attractions. The Dunstan Gorge is a scene such as Salvator Rosa would have loved to paint; and if it were brought within the reach of cheap steamboats or Parliamentary trains, it would be thronged with artistic visitors, and vulgarised by gaping tourists.

Salvator Rosa - An Italian painter, 1615-1672, that was remembered for his 'sublime' landscapes.

NOTE—As I have no desire to mystify readers unacquainted with New Zealand flora, I append a brief description of the shrubs mentioned:—

- —A papilionaceous flowering tree, of the *acacia* tribe.
- —Native name, Tataramon—A disagreeable bramble, very tenacious of grasp.
- —A white flowering *Veronica*.
- —A berry-bearing, glossy-leaved plant, deadly to man and to all animals—except goats.
- —Better known as "Wild Irishman"—a thorny plant, very difficult to handle.

## Chapter IV. The "Co." is Formed.

THE DUNSTAN gold workings were of two kinds—technically known as "beach claims" and "bank claims." The latter were on the gravelly river-banks which the miners sluiced away bodily for the sake of the golden grains therein deposited. The former were on the sandy margins of the river, and often extended by means of "wing-dams" and other ingenious devices far into the rushing waters. In these claims the gold was found lodged in "pockets" or fissures formed by the slate bars, which lie more or less vertically, athwart the bed of the modern Pactolus.

Pactolus - A little river in Western Turkey that carries gold down from Mount Tmolus.

Mr. George W. Pratt concluded to *locate* a beach claim.

Borrowing a pan (*Anglice*: tin-dish) from some neighbourly miners, he progressed up the Gorge trying "prospects" in many places, and at length he was satisfied to "peg out."

Peg out - Officially marking out a claim using white pegs to mark the boundary of the area that will be prospected by the claimee.

Now the regulations which governed the gold-fields demanded that the corners of every claim should be marked by wooden pegs, standing two feet above the surface—to comply with which provision was a somewhat difficult matter. For there was not any growing timber in the locality, nor indeed within fifty miles; nothing but scrub, and little of that even. And as for imported timber, so scarce was it that an empty gin-case—a J.D.K.Z., anchor-branded gin-case—was considered rather a good bargain at £2.

J.D.K.Z NZ Truth, 1926 - A brand of gin.

Yet, so unacquainted with the natural features of the country were the rulers of the Province that they put forth a regulation sternly prohibiting any miner from felling trees, so as to injure his neighbour's claim, or obstruct any stream, in the district which could not boast a shrub twelve inches high, anywhere in vicinage to the workings.

So it happened that Mr George W. Pratt, not being able to comply with the regulation, did not place any wooden pegs on his claim. But he carefully marked out corner-trenches, and set up a big stone at each angle.

Then he and Harry returned to their temporary habitation.

Next morning they furnished themselves with the indispensable. Miner's Rights, and prepared to commence operations.

**Miner's Rights** - Miner's had to get a licence, a 'right', from authorities to dig for gold on their claims. They were typically valid for a year.

But first Mr. George W. Pratt had a proposition to make.

"You see," he explained, "this is a limited partnership, though there a'int seven or more of us; and it's jest as well to regulate things on the square at once. I've known many a good Co. to bust up for want of a proper constitution."

The other agreed indifferently, and Mr Pratt proceeded to enunciate the desiderated rules of partnership; a task which he performed with an air of profound gravity—with many thoughtful pauses and interjectional expectorations. Harry meanwhile acted as amanuensis, receiving the various propositions with considerable merriment.

I picture the pair, as present to my mental vision. The Englishman, half-sitting, half-reclining on the ground, recording the "Rules" with a stubby pencil in a cheap memorandum book, and puffing wreaths of blue smoke from his meerschaum pipe, which ever and anon he removed from his lips to indulge in a shout of laughter; and the American calmly pacing to and fro, occasionally halting to deliver himself of a resolution, and treating the mirth of his companion with lofty disregard.

Memorandum Book - A notebook that was used to write a 'rough' copy of business transactions.

After this fashion were Mr George Washington Pratt's deliverances:—

"RESOLVED:—

- "FIRSTLY: That the business of this Co. be conducted under the style and title of PRATT and ANOTHER.
- "SECONDLY: That the expenditure of the Co. be strictly limited to the amount of the joint and several finances of the partners.

- "THIRDLY: That calls be made at such times and seasons as may be most convenient to a majority of the partners.
- "FOURTHLY: That any gold obtained be fairly divided between the members of the Co.
- "FIFTHLY: That the Co. shall not be responsible for any liabilities incurred without the sanction, first obtained, of a majority of the partners.
- SIXTHLY: That in all matters every partner shall have an equal voice; and if at any time the votes are even, the Senior Partner shall have a casting as well as a deliberative vote."

At this point the recumbent writer cast aside his pencil and book, ceased his cacchinary performances, and exclaimed:—

"Why, who the deuce is the senior partner?"

"Don't get wrathy, young man,"—thus Mr George W. Pratt—"I'm coming to that. You jest drive ahead, if you please, sir."

Then fixing his eye steadily on his companion, he slowly, and with much emphasis, said—

"SEVENTHLY and LASTLY: It is hereby declared and affirmed that George Washington Pratt is the Senior Partner of the Co."

And before Harry could recover from his astonishment at this unexpected *finale*, Mr G. W. P. added,—

"That's concluded; so we'll just haul down this noble residence, and make tracks for a location handier to our diggings. Now, pardner, be spry with them tent-ropes."

And thus was the Co. duly formed.

## Chapter V. A Barney.

IT so happened that whilst our friends were arranging preliminaries, other eyes had rested longingly on their claim; the tenth commandment to the contrary notwithstanding. In those days the diggings were infested by gangs of rowdies, who (whether rightly or wrongfully I know not) were designated by the generic name of "Tips." And some of these gentry so highly approved of Mr. Pratt's choice of location, that they had forthwith annexed it. So then when the Co. arrived on the ground, they found a certain Barney Roche and three others working away with an air of proprietorship very vexatious to perceive.

Harry Grey, ever impetuous, was for plunging into a promiscuous shindy, without tarrying for any explanation. But the Senior Partner gave his casting vote against "that sort of thing;" and calmly walking down to the intruders, he opened proceedings in a tone of mild expostulation, thus—

"Well, boys, when you've quite done prospecting our claim I'll trouble you to clear out."

"Indade, then," sneered Mr. Barney Roche, "twill be a long day before that same is done."

A general grin broadened the visages of his mates as he thus made replication, and they continued operations in a superciliously contemptuous manner, as who should say "We are the strongest, and we mean to stick to the good old rule that—

*They should take who have the power,  
And they should keep who can.*"

This was somewhat provoking; but the Senior Partner was equal to the emergency.

"No;" he said, very quietly, "I guess not. We located this claim yesterday, and we conclude to have it. Quit that!"

And with the word he lifted his heavily-cased right leg, kicked the enemy's offending sluice-box into the river, and five pounds' worth of deal boards went careering down the stream. Then Barney and his mates set up a wild shout, and rushed at the Co. with uplifted shovels and sluicing forks.

Sluice Box - Sluicing was the main method of extracting gold from the river and claims. Sluice boxes were narrow wooden boxes that channeled water to wash the gold-bearing gravel, separating the heavier gold and the lighter material to be washed away. [Mining Methods](#)

But Mr. George W. Pratt stepped back a few paces, and drawing his revolver, cocked and presented it, crying—

"Stand off, boys! I don't want to damage your skins; but if any man goes for me or my pardner, I'll put him in his little bed, without much singing for it."

And there was a determined expression in the eye of the American which powerfully enforced the arguments of the pistol, and cowed his opponents.

"See here," he continued, "this is our claim, and I don't mean to be euchred out of it. I'm willing to do the square thing, and I'll leave it to the Commissioner."

Commissioner was the title then given to the Goldfield's magistrates.

Commissioner - Pyke serving as a commissioner himself established regulations for gold mining.

By this time quite a multitude of people, attracted by the *fracas*, had congregated around. The rowdies were generally detested for their jumping propensities, and the sympathies of the miners were immediately enlisted on the side of the Co. So the malcontents, finding themselves out-numbered, and being daunted by the Senior Partner's plucky resistance, consented grudgingly to abide the advent of the Commissioner and his decision.

Forthwith Harry was despatched into the Dunstan to interview that high and mighty official. He found him sitting in a spacious marquee, holding his Court therein, and surrounded by a huge crowd of miners, all intent on business of their own. So he had to await an opportunity of preferring his suit.

The Commissioner's table was covered with dust; his ink was thick with it; his papers were black with it; his temper apparently was soured by it. When Harry communicated his business the Commissioner sprang up in a very tempest of wrath.

"How do you suppose I am to find time to visit your claim? I am rushed to death here. I can't even swallow my breakfast, unless I tie up the tent and post a constable outside to keep you fellows away."

Thus spake Mr Commissioner; but presently he cooled down, and promised to attend to the matter next day. And with this promise content, Harry started on his return journey.

As he passed through the township, a brazen-lunged vendor of newspapers was shouting "Hargus! Melbourne Hargus! Latest news just arrived by the Haldinger steamboat!" Harry purchased a copy, and went on his way rejoicing.

Not far, however. Intent on scanning the contents of the 'Argus,' he seated himself on a boulder by the river side, and eagerly spread out the broadsheet, still faintly redolent of printer's ink.

Argus - A figure in Greek mythology and the name of the morning daily newspaper in Melbourne that was established in 1846 and closed in 1957 and was considered to be the general Australian newspaper of record for this period.

Suddenly he uttered a loud cry—savagely crumpled up the newspaper in his hands, and threw it violently from him. A gust of wind received the rudely proffered gift, tossed it hither and thither, as in sport, dashed it from rock to rock, whirled it high in the air, and finally sent it flying into the all-absorbent river.

Then Harry repented him of his vehemence.

"I will not believe it," he cried. "'Tis a lie—a wicked, impossible lie! Can one so fair be yet so false? Her promise, too—her plighted faith—can I have made any mistake? I must go back and get another copy of the paper."

That night the Senior Partner was sorely troubled in his mind; for the envoy whom he had sent to the Commissioner returned not.

But Mr Commissioner came and made due enquiry into the matter in dispute. After he had heard the statements of either party, each began to cross-question the other, as was the manner of the period.

"Show me your pegs," demanded Mr Roche.

In reply, the Senior Partner indicated the stones set up in the trenches by the Co.—two of them only—the others were missing.

"Shure, thim's not pegs," scornfully demurred Barney. "Thim's stones. Now, your Honour—(this to the Commissioner)—see our pegs as the Regulations requires."

And he pointed triumphantly to four timber corner-pegs specially provided for the purpose.

The Commissioner saw how the wind blew, and I think he sympathised with the Co. But the Regulations were as stringent as the laws of the Medes and Persians are said to have been, and he was just the man to do his duty, however unpleasant the task might be.

Medes and Persians - Ancient Iranian peoples that was continually at war with the Greeks and were famed for their irrefutable law

So he said—

"Humph! Ah! Yes; I fear you have forfeited your claim, Mat. I must give judgment—."

"No, sir," interrupted the Senior Partner, "I don't own up to that. My name ain't 'Mat,' and I feel rather catawampish to have anybody's foot on me."

Catawampish - Or catawampus which is slang for fierce or destructive.

See, here, Mr Commissioner, jest you make them galoots show their Miners' Rights. Here's mine."

Whereupon Barney and his mates began to talk all together, making any number of excuses for the non-production of the required documents. But, like the "Player Queen," they protested too much.

Player Queen - Refers to the actress that played the Queen in Shakespeare's Hamlet, the play within the play, The Mousetrap. Queen Gertrude remarks that the Player Queen "The lady protests too much, methinks" (Act 3, scene II)

The Commissioner rigorously insisted on their compliance with Pratt's request. The assembled miners,

always jealous of jumpers, backed up the official; and it ended in an acknowledgment by Barney Roche, that he and his party had not possessed themselves of Miners' Rights. Whereupon the Commissioner adjudged the claim to the Co., and immediately rode away on his fast-trotting mare.

But the trespassers were bold and persistent black-guards, and no sooner had the Commissioner disappeared down the road, than they defiantly resumed possession of the disputed ground.

Then the Senior Partner persuaded Barney and his mates to yield up the claim without reference to the constituted authorities. And this is how he did it—

"Now, boys!" he said, addressing the admiring lookers-on, "I'm a peaceable man in a general way—I am. In my country I was taught two things: first, to observe the laws, and, secondly, to defend my rights. I've done the first; and these mean cusses don't reciprocate. And now, I reckon, I shall jest do the other."

Then facing the jumpers, he continued—"Do you mean to travel with a free ticket? Or do you conclude to be dug out at your own expense?"

But the four lifted up their voices in most dissonant chorus, and protested that they didn't care a rap for the adjective Commissioner—that they had the claim, and would stick to it—that they would not let any "dirty foreigners" take it from them—and so on, after the manner of their kind.

"Yes, I'm a foreigner, no doubt" (thus the Senior Partner), "and if you are ordinary specimens of the natives, I don't see any inducement to swap countries. You are the meanest white men ever I saw, that's a fact. Guess you were spawned under the British Lion, and very proud the noble animal must be of such darned critters. I was raised under the wing of the American Eagle, and I ain't ashamed of it. Pity you ain't owned by some sort of eagle too—French, Russian, Prussian, Austrian, or American—for any one of them birds would have learnt you better manners. Now, I'm in earnest, you bet. Will you stand by the Commissioner's judgment, and quit?"

"No!"—(chorus of the four, with sundry unimportant additions).

"Will you arbitrate?"

"No!"—(chorus repeated, with variations).

"Will you fight for it—knuckles or talking irons? Will you wrestle for it? Go Yankee Grab?

[Yankee Grab](#) - A gambling game using three dice.

Toss up for it? Play euchre for it?

Euchre - A card game.

Darn your white-livered souls! (here the Senior partner waxed warm). Will you do anything men ought to do to settle it?"

"Upon my conscience, then," quoth Barney, with leer provocative, "I'll do nothing of the sort. I'll just shtick to the claim."

"Then, by Jehoshaphat! I'm teetotally darned if I don't have you out of it before the cock crows thrice. Stand by, boys, and see fair play."

With the words the Senior Partner went for Mr Roche—caught the burly rascal by the waist and shoulder, tripped him up, and, despite his struggles, sent him rolling down the steep declivity, where, coming in contact with a rock rather harder than his skull, he lay recumbent and motionless. His mates made a joint rush at the American; but the crowd interposed to prevent foul practice, and they wisely declined single combat. Eventually the trio picked up their discomfited comrade, and with many impotent threatenings, and much objurgatory exclamation, retired from the field.

Then the multitude, true to their instincts, began to abuse the vanquished, and to laud the victor.

"Serve 'em right!" cried John Bull, with a medal-conferring air of patronage.

"Eh, mon! but it was fine the way ye grippit wi' him!" quoth Sandy, proffering his sneeshing-mull.

"Upon me sowl!" grinned Paddy, "ye done it like a gingleton."

"Jest so," said the Senior Partner, as he settled a fresh plug in his favourite tooth. "Jest so! But if there had been a few more gentlemen knocking around these diggings, it strikes me that I shouldn't have had to expend quite so much ammunition. How does it strike you, boys?"

## Chapter VI. The Quest of the "Argus."

WHEN Harry Grey returned to the township in quest of another copy of the unlucky newspaper which he had so impetuously consigned to destruction, he found that the supply had been exhausted. Not an "Argus" was to be had for love or money. In vain he sought to purchase a copy at the stores. At some, the inmates were even too busy to answer him. Others, on learning his errand, replied monosyllabically in the negative, and turned their attention to more profitable clients. At last he stumbled upon the man from whom he had made his original purchase, and who imparted the consolatory information that—"werry likely he should 'ave some more on 'em by the next coach," (in a week's time.) And he kindly offered to keep as many copies as our friend might

wish for, provided always that he there and then paid for them in advance. Harry did not feel greatly comforted by this prospect. He bribed the man—popularly known as "Argus Bill"—to endeavour to re-purchase a copy from some previous customer. In half-an-hour the newsman returned—empty-handed. None of the possessors of the coveted "Argus" could or would part with their newly-acquired stock of literature; for was there not in its pages an account of a "New Rush" to some place so far away and so little known as to render its attractions irresistibly fascinating?

In very despair, Harry told the sympathising newsvendor how he had lost the paper.

"Blowed into the river, did it? Why it might get jammed on to a rock, or washed ashore, somewhere between here and Mutton-town."

Here was a ray of hope at last—faint indeed—a mere glimmer as it were; but Harry hailed it with eagerness. For a suitable consideration, Argus Bill was induced to aid in the search. At the rear of the township the river hurries by with a ten-knot current, but a little further on there is one of those smooth reaches, whereof I have previously spoken. Much valuable time had already been lost; so it was arranged that one should begin the search at the spot where the paper had been whisked into the water, whilst the other went down the river bank for a few miles and worked upwards. Harry's impatience naturally impelled him to undertake the latter task.

Now this is what happened. Our friend Harry, having reached a point beyond which it seemed improbable that the paper should have progressed, pursued his way up the stream; scrambling over rocks, boulders, and other impediments, and ever carefully scanning the chlorite-tinted waters and the narrow beaches as he went. But the lost treasure greeted not his vision. And what surprised him was that he did not meet Argus Bill on his way. Just as he came to a bend of the river within sight of the township, a "Coo-ee!" attracted his attention to the opposite bank, and behold there stood the newsman with his hands in his pockets calmly regarding the scene.

"Heaven help me!" exclaimed Harry in the extremity of his vexation. "The scoundrel has deceived me."

Wherein Harry was altogether mistaken, for, with wise prevision, Argus Bill had crossed the river at the Town-ferry, so that both banks might be examined. He regarded the affair as a silly business—"making such a fuss about a newspaper." But, as long as the "young cove" paid him for his trouble, it mattered not to him. So having searched the left bank, as far as he considered it necessary or desirable to do so, he retraced his steps, and went over to the right bank to renew the quest.

Partly by signs, and partly by words shot from a hand-formed speaking trumpet, and half lost in their transit over the waters, the newsman intimated to Harry that "*It was there.*" This unexpected piece of intelligence sent the latter off at a run to the Ferry, where he railed at the local Charon for not putting off at once, other passengers there being none, and in return got himself abused in choice, highly-seasoned, and intensely sanguineous phraseology.

Local Charon - Figure of Greek mythology as the ferryman, taking the souls of the dead across the river Styx, usually after payment of a coin in the corpse's mouth.

Finally, he settled the dispute by paying the charges of the whole boat-load of passengers as his single fare.

Once landed on the further bank, he started off at the top of his speed "as if" (to quote the forcible language of the only half-appeased ferryman) "the very devil was after him."

"I would'nt mind laying a trifle," said this charitable fellow, when relating the story to the next cargo of passengers, "that he's been and gone and done something."

"Then, why don't you go and inform the police?" queried a logical listener.

"Police be unblessed!" growled Charon. "I ain't a-goin' to turn informer, if I knows it. Let the ruby-tinted traps look after their business theirselves."

## Chapter VII. In the Eddy.

BREATHLESS and exhausted Harry Grey reached the place where Argus Bill was still standing in the same indifferent attitude.

"Where is it?" he panted forth. "Where—"

"There!" answered the newsman, laconically, and he pointed to the river.

Harry gazed, and beheld—the river—"only that and nothing more!"

And then, despite the admonition of good old Dr Watts, his angry passions rose; and I verily believe that he would have expressed his opinion more forcibly than by mere words, only that before he had time or opportunity to do so, a white object suddenly emerged from the bosom of the water, and to all appearance it was that whereof they were in search.

Caught in an eddy formed by one of the small vortices, of which mention has already been made, the paper travelled an irregular ellipse, at one point coming close inshore; so close, indeed, that an ordinary walking-stick

would almost have reached it. Then, gradually narrowing its orbit, it drew in, and still further in towards the centre, and finally was sucked down, to be again presently cast upon the outer rim of the circling waters.

In his ignorant anxiety Harry would have plunged into the water after it; but the newsman held him back.

"Don't be a fool," said he; "the bank goes sheer down, and that water is thirty feet deep if it's an inch. And if you once gets into the swirl, the Lord have mercy on ye."

Argus Bill uttered the concluding words with the impressiveness of a Lord Chief Justice.

"You just stop here, and watch it," he continued, "while I goes up to the ferry for a pole, or a boat-hook."

With the word, he disappeared over the bank; and Harry stood on the beach awaiting his return. And again the paper came to the surface of the water, and after floating for a while, it was gathered into the vortex and disappeared,—to rise and tantalise the watcher, and descend into the depths as before.

During one of these passages, it came so near, so very near to the beach, that Harry, unable to restrain himself, made a desperate clutch at it—caught it—overbalanced himself, and fell souse into the river. The impetus of the plunge carried him under, but he quickly rose to the surface, and struck out manfully for the bank.

It was only a few feet distant, but it might as well have been a thousand miles away. Harry was a vigorous and skilful swimmer, yet he was unable to get clear of the eddy. Some mysterious power seemed to grasp his legs, and drag him downwards; much as the under-tow of the ocean draws back the half-saved mariner. Icy cold, too, seemed that grasp, as the veritable touch of Death. Struggle as he would, he could not force his way to the shore. He felt himself gradually but surely succumbing to the paralysing influence of the waters. Yet to the last he battled bravely on.

I have read, in many books, that when a man is drowning, all the events of his life pass before him. Possibly it may be so in some cases. But, as one who has undergone all the terrors of death by drowning, and, I may add, the more intolerable pangs of resuscitation, I am inclined to the opinion that this idea is a bit of purely imaginative sentimentalism. And I know at least two other men, of similar experiences, who agree with me herein.

One of these was Mr. Harry Grey, as he then chose to be called. His last sensations were those of disgust and despair.

"What," he thought, "is this to be the end of all? Am I to perish in a ditch, like a dog? Oh! Florence, will you ever know what has become of me?"

A wild cry, as of many voices—a dim vision, as of many forms hurrying towards him—a sense of irrepressible drowsiness—and, his efforts ceasing, he yielded to the irresistible power of the whirlpool, and resigned himself to the sleep of oblivion.

It would have been "the sleep that knows no waking," but that brave hearts and ready arms were near when the accident occurred. Down—far down the indraught bore his body, to cast it forth again in due course. And then a practised hand caught at his clothing with boat-hook and drew him ashore; the "Argus"—cause of all the mischief—still in his grasp.

They carried him into the township, and fetched a brisk young medico, who first discharged his duty to suffering humanity, and then, when Harry was "brought to," as he expressed it, he turned round almost fiercely on the crowd, and demanded in the name of the Prince of Darkness, "who was to pay him for his trouble?"

Some four or five good fellows at once intimated their willingness to pay the medico's fees. And one rough, much-bearded miner threw a "fiver" on the table, with an exclamation which I would fain hope the Recording Angel blotted out, even as the oath of "mine Uncle Toby" was obliterated. And when Harry faintly avowed his ability to discharge all obligations, the "fiver" was recklessly expended by its owner in "shouting for all hands."

Presently Harry cried out for the newspaper, in the recovery of which he had imperilled his life. When it was brought to him, he opened it with trembling hands, and eagerly scanned its columns. With dry eyes, staring wildly, he gazed long at one particular announcement. And this—eliminating the flourishes—is what he read:—

"At St. James' Church, Melbourne, Florence Melmoth, of St. Kilda, to Justin M'Carthy, of Tamboura, Gippsland."

"And I loved her so!" he said, moaningly. Then he turned his face to the wall.

## Chapter VIII. Flooded Out.

"MEN have died, and worms have eaten them; but not for love." Yet I once knew a man, who, from such a simple cause, became, for the poor balance of his life, a melancholy maniac.

I suppose there are few men who have not, at some period of their lives, suffered disappointment in love. Some endure it jauntily. To them it is but as a pin-scratch, scarcely furrowing the mental cuticle. To more sensitively nervous organisations, it is as the thrust of a jagged spear, lacerating all the finer feelings, till the

merciful reaction sets in, and excess of pain benumbs.

Thus fared it with Harry Grey. He arose on the morrow, very weary in mind and body; but no longer suffering from the intense excitement of the previous day. It may have been that the accident had dulled "the torture of the mind" by exhaustive effect on the physical system. Certain it is, that when he presented himself at the claim, his partner scarcely recognised him;—so changed was the expression of his features—so haggard his face—so dull his eye—so listless his gait.

Mr George W. Pratt put his own construction on these signals of distress; and, not unnaturally, he blundered:—

"Well, sir! guess you've been doing the flowing bowl till it slopped over."

Thus, Pratt. Harry threw up his hands with a gesture of deprecation.

"No, no, no!" he cried. "Don't say so. Don't think so. God knows, I've had enough to drive me to it. But, thanks to my dear mother, I was early taught to avoid the demon—drink. No: not that. Upon my honour—not that. But I've been half-drowned, and hurt—and—and—God help me! I am very wretched."

And this silly, weak, unconventional young man—very much commiserating himself—began to weep!

"Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askelon."

"Tell it not in Gaith; publish it not in the streets of Askelon" - Verse from the Bible. 2 Samuel 1:20.

Are we not men, whose eyes never should moisten in love—in pity—in joy, or in sorrow? What have we to do with tears, forsooth?

Yet there are men—aye, some even who have passed life's meridian—brave, honest men—who are not ashamed of shedding tears on fitting occasion.

The Senior Partner was a considerate man. He saw, at once, that there was more in this matter than his philosophy could find out; and his quick intellect taught him that then was not just the time to endeavour to probe the mystery. So he did the very wisest thing. Roughly, and without evincing any sympathy, he thrust a shovel into Harry's hand, saying:—

"Now you have reported yourself, you'd best wire in. \* \* \* Nearly got wired out myself during your excursion. \* \* \* Think you might heave that big stone over the bank, and then you'll get fairway to the dirt. \* \* \* Pretty easy stuff this to shift."

And so on, and so on; the asterisks marking brief pauses between the jerky sentences. And thus, not giving Harry time to revert to his recent troubles, the Senior Partner continued to give his directions, and make his remarks, until the junior became fairly engrossed with the business in hand, and forgot, for the time, his misfortunes.

There is nothing like manual labour—delving or planting, tree-felling or log-splitting—to yield relief to the over-wrought brain or troubled mind.

Between whiles, George W. Pratt told the story of his row with Barney, and Harry narrated his escape from death in the Molyneux. But never a word said he touching the cause of his immersion. The hour for such confidences was not yet. Meanwhile he wrought as though his deliverance from slavery had been at stake.

Now, the Molyneux is a capricious river. She (I think I must use the feminine pronoun) frequently enlarges her borders without warning, and anon, dwindle to her ordinary dimensions in the same fitful way. The causes are to be sought for far away amidst the Southern Alps, from the snows and glaciers of which the sources of the river are derived.

When the river is "up" the beach workings are covered and the occupants cease from their labours.

Flooding of the Molyneux - In 1863 the Molyneux (Now Clutha) rose by as much as 10 meters the 25 to the 27 July resulting in the drowning of dozens of miners asleep in their tents on the banks of the river.

So chanced it to the Co. A big flood came suddenly down, swamped their claim, and enforced idleness. Then the old trouble came back, and Harry became conscious of a dull pang of misery, which rendered him morose, sullen cynical.

The two made little excursions up and down the Gorge, and over the ranges, and when tired they returned to their anchorage; and they sat on boulders watching the flood, and they turned into their bunks and slept; and in a monotonous variety of ways, wherein was no variation, endeavoured to while away the time. And the Senior Partner revolved his plug and practised, more or less successfully, at any convenient target; whilst the other member of the Co. puffed fumes of rank tobacco from his unwholesome pipe, in gloomy silence.

Thus passed a week away. And still the flood showed no signs of subsidence.

"Hope this darned flood won't wash our claim right away," said the Senior Partner one day, as the pair sat at the door of their hut, idly watching the seething water. The claim, let me remark, was a good one, and they had already gathered much gold therefrom.

Harry's weary eyes lighted up with an unnatural lustre as he answered.

"God in heaven forbid. Better it washed away my life; what there is left of it."

"Don't be down-hearted about it, pardner. I don't feel over-much-festive, jest now, myself; but I ain't going

to pass in my checks about it. It ain't come to that yet with the Co. See here, our claim is a mighty small part of them beaches, and if we get sluiced out of one, we can darned soon get another.

"Aye," cried Harry, passionately, "but not so rich. And I must have gold; plenty of it and quickly too."

"Easy! Slow her down pardner. Seems like you're a-sitting on the valve. Better let steam off afore you bust up. It ain't no use wrestling against luck;—you bet on that. Now, I've been gold-seeking for years, and never had half the chance we happened on in that claim; and I don't feel good when I see them pesky waters playing up with it. But I shan't cave in, all the same. No, Sirree!"

"Because you have not so much at stake, as I have."

"I ain't poz about that. I've a notion that my little game is for a pretty big thing. Anyway it's for a pretty one. You see, pardner," continued Mr George W. Pratt, in a confidential tone, "I'm working for love, I am."

"And I for hate—now," said Harry, the final word dropping—as it were—from his lips involuntarily. The Senior Partner looked at him for a full minute, with much wonderment expressed in his shrewd visage. Then he said, very softly,

"Jest so. Every one to his taste, as the old lady said when she embraced her heifer."

"Everyone to his taste, as the old lady said when she embraced her heifer" - A wellerism used by or characterised by Dicken's character Saw Weller in The Pickwick Papers, which appears as a proverb however it is given a humorous or ironic twist through puns attributed to a particular speaker. Such as "I see, said the blind man to his deaf daughter who was sitting at the corner of a round table."

Hating ain't much in my line. I'm on the other tack, I am. There's a pair of eyes down to Missouri been watching for my ship to arrive every day the last four years."

Harry laughed, a scornful mocking laugh.

"Eyes watching?—a woman's eyes?—Ha! ha! Why, Pratt, they're all false—all—false as perdition."

"No, Sirree! Some of them may be as bad as you say, though that's pretty tall talk, too. I won't jest say nay to that. But if any man tells me the whole sex, that my mother and my sisters, and Ruth Allan own to, are all false, I'm bound to tell him that he's an Almighty perverter of the truth; and I ain't a-going to stand by and hear it."

"I was wrong," owned Harry, penitently. "I should not have said so. But I have suffered—you don't know how I have suffered. I am sorry if I hurt you, old fellow."

The Senior Partner was easily appeased. "Right you are. I know you didn't mean it. But don't you go around crying 'Fire!' at everybody's door, jest because your own coat tail is smoking. See here now—as we ain't got nothing better to do, I don't mind if I give you a slight sketch of my wild career. So much of it as suits my book, anyway."

But the story of the Senior Partner demands a special chapter.

## Chapter IX. The Senior Partner Tells his Story.

"GUESS I needn't say that I didn't get over-burdened with learning when I was a youngster. There was a sort of a school in our parts, kept by a dilapidated old gentleman who had seen better days, or said he had. When I knew him he was principally remarkable for the number and variety of patches on his garments, which made him look like a walking map of the United States. He had a fine old frontispiece, with a most remarkable nose of the vegetable type,—red and spongy. He used to say that it cost him close on to a hundred dollars a year to keep that nose in repair, besides friendly contributions, which didn't count. I used to attend his 'Academy,' as he called it, now and then, when I could be spared from weeding, or hoeing, or reaping, or whatever was mostly a-doing on our place. And that warn't too often, you bet. My old dad strictly obeyed the first commandment, as delivered to Adam; and he went on obeying to such an extent, that there was more mouths than meat to home sometimes.

First Commandment to Adam - God told Adam and Eve to populate the Earth. Genesis 1:28.

"However, I picked up a little knowledge here and there, just as chickens pick up their food; and when I got to be about sixteen, the boss sent me down to Jefferson City, Missouri, to mother's brother—old uncle Sol—who kept a dry goods store, and happened to want a lad that he could lick without any fear of consequences. He took a good deal of trouble to teach me what an insignificant little cuss I was; and it took me some pains to learn it, I tell you; but it couldn't be done at the price. George Washington couldn't lie; and I wouldn't defile the name my father gave me. No, sir! So when folks asked about things, I always used to own right up to the truth. Then Uncle Sol, he'd come by with his sweetest go-to-meeting smile on, and he'd push me aside, and excuse my ignorance, as he called it; and he'd lie, and lie, and lie away, till I'd begin to feel as if I was the liar, and not he. He was a very gifted man was Uncle Sol. He had a sleek, oily way with him, and a soft-spoken tongue that nobody could resist. I remember an antiquated she-woman coming into the store, and asking for some sort of French muslins, and I told her that we hadn't got none jest then; and Uncle Sol he came

along looking as though angels was small potatoes to him; and he gave me a sly kick on the shins, as made me think the devil wore boots, and sent me to the far end of the store, weeping and gnashing of my teeth. And I'm darned if he didn't talk that old Madam over, till he made her believe that home-made huck-a-back suited her complexion better than the foreign stuff she wanted.

"Home-made huck-a-buck" - A type of linen that was made through an uneven weave. Most towels nowadays have a similar feel.

And when Deacon Gamble's Miss came in for some kid gloves, and he didn't happen to have none, he held forth to that degree, that she went away in two-fifteen, penitent and rejoicing, with six pair of black cotton stockings in her reticule. Yes, sir, Uncle Sol was powerfully gifted, and a right-down smart trader.

"And yet he was a liberal man, after his way. I've known him give away a whole month's profits, got by lying and scheming, to relieve a destitute family. You see, human nature is an awful deal of a puzzle. He donated a considerable pile of dollars to the church once, and insisted on their allowing him two-and-a-half per cent discount for cash. And when Parson Huckleberry got noosed, Uncle Sol sent him a whole heap of blankets and things, and fixed him for half-a-dollar for the carriage.

"Well, I learned a few items of general commerce with Uncle Sol, you believe it. And if I could only have got over that unfortunate trick of mine of telling the truth, I might have been a well-to-do merchant to-day, and maybe a deacon to boot,—who knows? But I'm afraid that trick of mine ain't easy to be cured; and I think my case should be a warning to all progenitors not to name their children so as to hinder their getting on in the world. Comparisons ain't nice, that's a fact.

"And though the old boy used to introduce his shoemaker to my notice more frequently than I thought desirable, don't you think he warn't kind either, in his way, which is what I might call a peculiar striking way—that's all. He'd put his hand so close to my head sometimes, that he'd mesmerise me for half-an-hour; and before I'd got over it he'd go and do something or other as made me wish he'd mesmerise me stronger. He'd keep me on at night fixing things, and putting them square, till I used to sleep standing. And then he'd set me down on my marrow-bones, and go praying around, while I dreamed the happy hours away, till he had to rouse me by what the doctors call external applications. And next morning, Uncle Sol would say—'George, you ain't fit to go into the store to-day, I know you ain't. You'll be doing of mischief; I know you will. Go and have a holiday, George. You can take this package out, and you needn't come home till you feel sprightly.'

"And as I was leaving, he'd call out, 'Say, I shall deduct a day's wage—of course I shall.' But he always managed to forget it when he planked down. The first time we overhauled accounts I put him in mind of it, and he jest gave me the infernalist booting ever I got, and called me a pesky young idiot, with many other honorable mentions, which my native modesty don't allow me to recapitulate. That's what I got, owing to being named after Mr. G. Washington.

"I stayed on with Uncle Sol four years or more, when matters eventuated in a crisis, which came about this way:—

"One of our best customers was Squire Allan, who had a big farm about four miles out of Jefferson, and used to come in with his daughter Ruth now and then. He and Uncle were sworn friends, both in peace and war, as one might say. They belonged to the same church, and always went for the same platform. Seems they had been mates like when they were boys a'most, and they came out west together. The Squire's wife died soon after Ruth was born, and he never got noosed again, so she was his only child; and as the old boy was supposed to be pretty warm, there were a heap of bucks after his daughter. But I reckoned a sight more of herself than I did of the dollars. She was quite a girl when she first come to the store, but she grew into one of the most splendiferous young women ever I saw. I ain't a-going to draw her picture; but I tell you what, pardner, it's painted somewhere about my bosom in the best enamel, as nothing ever can rub out. Bless her dear little soul! I used to sit opposite to her at meeting, and feed my eyes on her pretty face, all soft pink and white—like peach-blossom and cream—till I got to complain that Parson Huckleberry's sermons were too short by half. And when she'd come tripping into our store, holding up her riding-suit with her dainty little hand, and asking for something or other with her soft voice, that sounded like the echoes of a flute, I used to think that if there were any angels of a superior sort in the Great Emporium up above, it must be a mighty pleasant place to locate in.

Great Emporium - Heaven.

"Well, to cut a long story short, I fell in love with Miss Ruth; and one day, when the Squire and Uncle Sol were settling the election ticket in the parlour, and Ruth were cheapening calicoes in the store, she says to me:—

"Be you sure them colours is fast?"

"Yes, Miss," says I, 'as fast as the roses in your cheeks, and the love in my heart.'

"She gave a start at that, and the roses faded suddenly out, and she bent down her head, and her fingers kind of trembled as they handled the calico. And, you bet, my heart went pit-a-pat like winking, and the strength

seemed to go out of my knees, all to once.

"And both of us were so silent for about a minute that I could hear my heart thumping away like a steam-engine.

"Oh, Mr. Pratt!" says she at last, in a low bird-like voice, 'whatever do you mean?"

"I mean,' says I, plucking up my courage, 'that I'm desperately in love with you, Miss; and if you don't reciprocate, I'm a gone coon, that's all.'

"Oh, you are, are you?" says Uncle Sol, coming out of the parlour, 'Then I reckon the best thing you can do is to pack up your traps, and go right straight off; for I wont have it on my conscience to have sech an owdacious perverter of youthful innocence on these here premises.'

"Right you are, Solomon,' chimed in the squire. 'Young man,' he went on to me; 'Do you calculate as I've growed this here gal to throw her away on a store clerk, after sixteen years' scientific cultivation. No, Sirree!' says the old boy, looking wicked about the eyes. 'And I'm eternally derned,' says he, 'if I don't give you the all-firedest cow-hiding ever bestowed on mankind, if you try off any more of your blessed nonsense on my daughter.'

"Come along, Ruth,' says the squire, when he got his breath again. And she got up from the chair she were sitting on, looking as white as a ghost, and then the colour came rushing back, like the coming in of the tide; and she put her little hand in mine—yes, sir, Uncle and her old dad notwithstanding, as the lawyers say—and she says 'Mr. Pratt,' says she, 'I'm very sorry for my father's rudeness and bad temper, and I shall always be glad to see you, and—and—'

"And then she broke down and burst out crying, and the squire he hurried her off, and uncle Sol stormed and raved at me till I felt as if I was the darndest mean white that ever cheated a nigger, I did, Sir.

"Well, next day the Boss calls me aside into the parlour. 'George,' he says, 'you ain't quite such a goney as I thought.'

Goney - a simpleton

No you ain't. Squire Allan is worth twenty thousand dollars if he's worth a cent; and that's a pretty comfortable thing to marry, even though there is a plaguey gal strung on to it. You go in and win, George, and you can count on me as your backer.'

"No, uncle,' says I, 'I ain't on—not in that line. I don't care a red for the old party's dollars, but I do care pretty much for the gal, and I mean to win her fairly if I can; but I won't have any living man to say that I courted her for her dollars.'

"Well,' he says, 'Wa-a-l! you are a fool after all. 'Git!' he says, and I got.

## Chapter X. Ruth's Wooing.

THE Senior Partner paused for a minute, and a bright smile—inborn of pleasant reminiscences—flickered over his countenance.

"Uncle Sol didn't have to tell me twice," he continued. "I went the same day. I travelled down to Lovely Vale—that was the Squire's place—hoping to see Ruth once more before I made tracks. Jest as I came in sight of the homestead, I saw a blue cotton gown, stooped down by the side of a cow, and I knew somehow that that was Ruth doing the milking business. And the cow stood there chewing the cud, and looking as happy as such a stupid animal could look, so that I almost felt as if I'd like to be the cow myself. So I went up and spoke.

"Good evening, miss,' said I.

"She gave a little scream, and a start, and the blessed old cow jumped away, and kicked over the pail: and there sat Ruth, holding her sides and panting, while the bloom came and went most beautiful in her face.

"What a fright you gave me, Mr. Pratt,' she cried.

"Don't call me Mr. Pratt,' I said. 'Call me George, do now!'

"Well, George, then,' she said, after a little. 'But what *do* you want here? And see, all the milk is spilt and father will be main and angry with both of us. *Do* go away now, *do*!"

"And she got up and shook her feathers—her dress, I mean, and preened herself like a pretty bird; and she tried to put on a stiff upper lip, but it warn't no use. She hadn't learnt the affected goings on of the city misses, and nature would have its way.

"So I said, 'Ruth, dear, I'm going away, and I mean to make money for your sake; and when I come back will you marry me? I know I ain't much to brag on, but I love you, Ruth, and all creation would be a black blank speck without you. So jest give me ono word—only one word, Ruth—ever so small a word—or I think I shall jest go right away and drown myself—I do really.'

"I had got her hand in mine, by this time, and she gave me ever so gentle a squeeze, as she stood trembling there, looking like a shy young fawn, with the long lashes hiding her downcast eyes. And once or twice she opened her rosebud lips to speak, but no words came; and I could see that her bosom was rising and falling as

though there was a tempest somewhere thereabouts. So, to encourage her, I said;—

"Dear Ruth, only one little word."

"And with a great gasp she looked up, and her eyes met mine; and, though the whisper from her dear mouth was fainter than the sigh of the spring breeze in the pine forest, I knew that she loved me. And I can't say exactly how it happened, but the next minute my arm was around her waist, and her arms were about my neck, and I was stooping down, and she was standing on tip-toe, and our lips came together in a long sweet kiss, that took my breath, clean away, and landed me on the other side of Jordan.

"Ruth seemed to feel good too. But the next moment she pushed me from her.

"Go away, do!" she says. 'Whatever will folks think of me?'

"Darn all the folks on earth!" said I (and I felt as if I'd like to lick a few score or so, jest by way of counter-irritation). 'I'm going to see the Squire and arrange preliminaries. Sorry you spilt the milk, Ruth; but its done now, and there ain't no use in crying over it. So jest you give me back that kiss you borrowed, and I'll apostrophize the old man right away.'

"I'll apostrophize the old man" - apostrophe meaning the act of addressing some abstraction or personification.

"When the Squire learnt what was on, he was furious, you bet! He went rampaging up and down, and a-foaming and cussing, till the air grew hot, and there was some proximate danger of the shingles busting out in a blaze. However, I've always observed that them noisy, roaring fellows blow off steam, and slow down soonest. It's your quiet, easy-going men, that keep the pressure up longest, and are the most dangerous to collide with.

"Squire Allan, he exhausted his boiler in pretty smart time. And then he comes up to me, shaking his fist in my face, and yells out:—

"'Dern you! How are you a-going to keep my gal? Tell me that—dern you?'

"'Well, Squire,' says I, 'I ain't able to build much of marble halls for Ruth jest now; and I've got too much respect for her to invite her to squat in a mud-cabin; though my private judgment is, that the geology of our habitation wouldn't make very much difference. But I mean to push my own way in the world, and we're both young, and can wait a few years; and I'm on to make a man of myself such as you needn't be ashamed to call your son.'"

"Right!" says the old boy. 'That's good! I like that. Make yourself, young man, and by the Eternal, you shall have her.'

And he called in Miss Ruth; and I've a sort of remembrance that I enjoyed that evening more than any other particular part of my existence on this sublunary sphere. And the handsome way the Squire went off to sleep, and the high-toned manner in which he snored, was a credit to him as a man and a parent. I think he must have had some remarkably pleasant dreams; for I observed that his whole face beamed with ripe smiles, on several different occasions.

"Well, next day, I set out to seek my fortune. I was quite done with the dry-goods business, where I felt like a buffalo harnessed to a go-cart. So I went lumbering for a while; and I took a fit, and had a go in at the mines down to Nevada. But the luck was dead against me. Then I had a run to Victoria, and went in at Bendigo and Dunolly and Moliagul; but I didn't strike on a patch nowhere. However, the thoughts of Ruth kept me going. I heard from her regularly; and Uncle Sol, he wrote to me twice to come back, and he'd give me over the old store. But no, Sir, I shan't do that. I said I'd make myself, and I mean to—yes! When I heard of these new diggings, I was at Pleasant Creek; and I sold out and came down straight. And now, pardner, the luck's turned, and I reckon I'm homeward bound, if the river don't annex our claim.

"And that lets me out," said the Senior Partner.

## Chapter XI. "Convey the Wise it Call."

NOT only did the river not annex the claim, but, falling as suddenly as it rose, it renewed it, by filling up the wrought-out portion with a fresh deposit of gold-bearing sands. The Co. were soon at work with zeal and alacrity, and, to render themselves more secure from other possible irruptions of the capricious waters, they removed the "washdirt" to a spot above flood-mark, where they could afterwards sift the golden grains from the soil at leisure. This gave them an advantage over the less intelligent miners around, who first sneered, then marvelled, then applauded: the last, however, only when, themselves flooded out, they marked the Co. steadily at work. Then, indeed, they were fain to acknowledge the force of the scholarly old maxim—"Knowledge is power."

One day it chanced that our friends were busily engaged at the sluice-box, whilst every one around was perforce idle owing to the rising of the river. Quite a crowd gathered to watch their operations, and to express various opinions, such as idle men ever have time to pronounce on the doings of their neighbours. Some

commended the foresight of the Co.; others good-humouredly bantered them on their haste to get rich.

Said one, "That must be blazing rich stuff, mates, for you to heap it up that fashion."

The speaker was a short, square-set, bullet-headed man, well on the shady side of forty, with long greasy locks, once black, now iron gray. His face, denuded of beard and whiskers, showed blue and stubbly from infrequent shaving; and he bore a peculiar expression of countenance which indexed him as a wanderer from the prison-island of the Southern Ocean: an indescribable yet easily recognizable expression, Speaking, as plainly as a printed book, of Port Arthur, "chains and slavery." He was further remarkable for a certain vicious obliquity of vision, which did not tend to improve his personal appearance.

"The prison-island of the Southern Ocean" - The man was a miner from the Australian goldfields.

"Well, stranger," said the ready-witted Senior Partner, "guess you ain't altogether on the wrong scent. This stuff is so mighty rich, that we've got to work jest to knock out tucker, while you boys can afford time to go mooning around. That's all."

He of the greasy locks grinned sardonically, and answer made he none; but, with his comrades, continued his saunterings.

Next morning, when the Co. went to resume their labours, they made a discovery: a portion of the piled-up washdirt had been removed in the night-time.

"That's the smooth-faced Vandemonian cuss," quoth the Senior Partner, after having carefully revolved the question; and he ejected a copious libation to the Nicotian gods, as he delivered his opinion.

Vandemonian - Of belonging to or inhabiting Tasmania. Or rough and unmannerly behaviour.

"That's the smooth-faced Vandemonian cuss. I'll go an eagle to a red on that. Yes, sirree! See these here boot-prints? Toes turned inwards. Comes of wearing cast-iron ankle-jacks.

Cast-iron ankle jacks - iron bands on a prisoner's ankles.

Learnt that, much, anyway, over to Bendigo."

Loud and violent were the ejaculations of Harry. Mr George W. Pratt allowed him to "blow off steam" without interruption. When the process had induced exhaustion, the Senior Partner quietly remarked,—

"I say, 'ditto' to that pardner, and give my casting vote with the 'Ayes.' So that's settled. Now, you stop here, and go on liquidating these shining sands, while I jest take a look around, and fix the bearings of that pesky somnambulizer."

Somnambulizer - A sleepwalker, or condition that is characterised by walking while asleep or in a hypnotic state.

He "spotted" his man about a mile away, down the river, and with him two others, not quite as greasy, but fully as Vandemonish in appearance. When the Senior Partner first sighted them, one—the inquisitive youth of the previous day—was washing off a pan of earth; whilst the others, squatting on their haunches, eagerly awaited the result. Their faces being towards the river they did not observe the on-looker.

"How much?" queried one, as the operation drew to a finish.

"Over an ounce," responded the operator.

"Ounce be blowed! Why 'tain't worth the trouble we took about it, Jimmy."

"Ain't it? Why, I've seen the time as I'd have choked a blessed man for less than half o'that."

Just then, a noise, as of rain pattering on the pebbles near by, arrested their attention, and, looking up, they espied the Senior Partner.

Instantly, their features assumed a cowed, scared look, such as hunted animals—quadrupedal or bipedal—wear, when danger is nigh.

They hurled a surly "Good morning!" at him. It was not his policy to betray suspicion. So he merely replied,

"Morning, boys. River seems going down fast." And exchanging a few inconsequential phrases, he strolled on indifferently.

When he was well out of hearing the Three vented their annoyance by mutually reproaching each other in language hugely incarnadined, and black with devilish oaths.

Meanwhile the Senior Partner pursued his way along the river-bank, and by dint of indirect inquiries he became acquainted with the nicknames of the three worthies; for all of their tribe; although possessed of as many aliases as a cat has lives, reserve these for the exclusive benefit of policemen, magistrates and juries. Amongst themselves they are best known by some *soubriquet*. Thus he, of the greasy locks, was distinguished as "Flash Jimmy," another, who had, at some period of his career been a purveyor of intestinal luxuries answered to the name of "Tripes," and the third was denominated "Ginger," in honour of a shock head of hair of a dirty brick-dust hue.

Of their reputation, the miners spoke with bated breath; for these men were a terror to all well-disposed people. The general impression seemed to be, that Jack Ketch had been "slued" (*anglice*—robbed of his dues) by the trio. Further, he learnt that they lived apart from all others—dwelling not in any hut, or house, or tent;

but in a curious subterranean abode, fashioned out of, or rather under, a huge flat rock, the one end of which was firmly embedded in the river-bank, whilst the other end overhung the beach. The front was built up with rough stones; and thus was constructed a semi-cavernous chamber, serving for "but and ben"—for kitchen and bedroom alike. All of which the Senior Partner carefully noted.

There were then many, and there are still some of these quaint abodes extant. I know of one such, wherein a man and his family dwelt for several years. He had gradually enlarged the cavity, until he could boast of three apartments; and he and his wife assured me, with charming conjugal unity, that it was "the most comfortablest 'ouse as ever they lived in."

And, indeed, it must be conceded, that a habitation, *sub terra*, is preferable to a castle in the air.

## Chapter XII. The Night Watch.

"SAY, pardner, we'll have to take watch and watch till this here pile is cleaned up, else them darned thieves 'll have mostly the whole heap from us."

So spoke the Senior Partner. Unto him his interlocutor made replication thus:—

"Why not work at it all night? We might manage it with a few bush lanterns, and finish it all by to-morrow night."

[A bush lantern is constructed by placing a candle within the neck of a clear glass bottle, the bottom of which has either been knocked off by a sharp scientific tap from a practised hand, or more artistically removed by pouring in a little cold water, and then thrusting the bottle end-wise in a fire.]

"No, Sirree! I don't vote for that. Man ain't a machine, that's a fact. You can't grease his cranks, fill his boiler, fire him up, and make him went as you can an engine. No! I want rest—I do. Guess you're the same. So I give my casting vote against the amendment, and declare the original motion duly resolute."

The night season at the Dunstan is peculiar. After sunset it becomes very dark for a while; then, without apparent cause, light diffuses itself with increasing intensity until midnight. During this interval, a bright red glare often shows on the hill-tops against the distant sky, and ever to the south or south-west. This is usually ascribed, by unaccustomed beholders, to bush fires; but it is really due to electrical agencies. Frequently the magnificent Aurora Australis streams upwards to the zenith in broad bands of yellowish white, and pale green, and fiery red—a gorgeous spectacle, such as never presents itself to the dwellers on the coast.

Aurora Australis -The Southern Lights that can be seen in the South Island, usually in the winter months between July and August.

And shooting stars traverse the skies in such prodigious numbers, that the gazer incontinently concludes that a lively stellar frolic is going on somewhere overhead. I do not know any place in the Middle Island so well suited for an inland observatory as the Dunstan or Upper Clutha terraces.

Middle Island - Referring to the South Island. The North Island and Stewart Island as the framing Islands.

The Co. kept watch. Mr George W. Pratt was on duty till midnight; then Harry relieved him, remaining on guard till daybreak. But the thieves came not.

Now their modes of watching were diverse. The Senior Partner rolled himself in a dark blue blanket, and laid himself down under a rock, whence he could command a view of the claim. Harry, on the contrary, paced the beach in the clear night-light, so that he could be seen a hundred yards off by any one possessed of ordinary optical powers.

The following night they exchanged watches. Harry, as before, marched fiercely up and down. At midnight he aroused the other member of the Co.

But the Senior Partner resolutely refused to stir.

"I ain't a-going to trouble keeping any watch," he said, or rather shouted, in a very loud tone of voice. Never before had Harry heard him speak so loudly in ordinary converse.

"Then I must," cried Harry. "I shall not fold my hands and go to sleep whilst a lot of wretches are waiting to steal the gold—the gold"—(this crescendo; then diminuendo)—"the gold that I want so badly, and must have."

"Easy, pardner! Put her helm down—hard-a-port, else she'll bump, she will. Reckon this is my watch, and I'm responsible. Them wretches, as you righteously call them, have annexed a part of our stuff, and didn't happen on the best of it. No, sir, not by a long chalk. But they ain't a-coming for any more, for it didn't pay. So, in your humble cot reposing, you can take your rest in peace, pardner."

Contention was in vain. The Senior Partner declared his proposition to be voted by acclamation; and as Harry was very tired and weary, he easily gave way, went off to sleep with his mouth open, and soon gave forth sonorous evidences of the soundness of his slumbers. And ere long Mr. George W. Pratt breathed loudly and stertorously in chorus.

Then there occurred a strange thing. Out from the deep shadow of a propinquitous rock, stepped a man. No

sound of footfall made he as he moved stealthily towards the tent occupied by the Co. One—two—three—four—five minutes he stood near it listening to the somnolent sounds that issued therefrom. Then he stole back to the covert whence he had emerged.

As he retraced his steps the Senior Partner quickly rolled out of bed, ready clad in blue woollen shirt and dungaree continuations, with dark coloured socks on his feet, and a soft felt hat, curiously fashioned into a mask, on his face. Cautiously he crept to the door of the tent, and peered through a small round hole in the canvas. And this is what he saw:—

Three men, this time, came from behind the rock, and glided, one after the other, noiseless and ghost-like, towards the river, in the direction of the Co.'s claim. One by one they passed out of sight over the bank; but before the last disappeared, he remained awhile with his head on a level with the edge, gazing around, as if to assure himself that they were unobserved.

Little did he imagine that, at that moment, his life was in imminent jeopardy. He saw not the dark figure, lying flat on the earth only a few paces distant, or he mistook it for a block of stone. Yet it was with difficulty that the Senior Partner restrained himself from pulling the trigger of his trusty Colt; and so, without more ado, ridding the earth of a scoundrel.

Giving the vagabonds sufficient time to get down to the beach, the Senior Partner crept to the top of the bank and looked over. The trio were examining the sluice-boxes.

"Ho! ho!" chuckled the watcher. "Do they think we're such innocents as to leave any gold for nighthawks?"

And, in fact, the boxes were most faithfully cleaned up every afternoon. So the prowlers got nothing in that direction.

Then—all oblivious of the listener—they held a consultation in muffled tones.

No. 1.—"Best get another lot of wash-dirt."

No. 2.—"Curse the dirt! Tain't worth taking."

No. 3.—"Better that than nowt."

In accordance with this final utterance, they went to the heap and therefrom filled three bags which they had brought with them.

Then there arose a dispute concerning the return route. Eventually they shouldered the sacks, and moved away along the beach. As they filed past the spot where lay the Senior Partner, a pistol-shot awoke the slumbering echoes of the Gorge, and the thieves incontinently renounced their plunder, and fled in terror, scattering as they went.

## Chapter XIII. A Wonderful Shot.

THE noise brought out Harry. "Why did you not awake me?" he asked. "We might have caught the rascals.

"Suppose we had; what then? Waste no end of time attending Court, and perhaps have to go down to Dunedin to prosecute. No, pardner, that game don't suit yours truly. As to waking you—why, you'd have spoiled everything with them hasty ways of yours. Now, I guess they were about last night. 'Twixt twelve and three is the ordinary time for them cusses to prowl around, and there was you parading in the clear light, kicking over the stones, and smoking your pipe, and they watching you all the time. I caught a glimpse of one of the skunks, shunting behind a boulder, jest before you came back to the caboose tonight. So thinks I, I'll play 'possum a bit, and I rayther calculate that I've made it appear tolerably injudicious to levy on the joint and mutual property of this Co. That nice little party won't come on to our claim again, I reckon."

"Why, you haven't shot either of the fellows, surely?" queried Harry.

"No fear of that," replied the Senior Partner, grimly smiling. "They all skedaddled too mighty quick for that. But you bet there's a hole in one of them bags they dropped in such a mighty hurry."

And on investigation it was so found. And strange to say, the ball had passed *through* the bag—a result entirely unanticipated by the Senior Partner, who had naturally supposed that the gravel and sand would have arrested the progress of the bullet.

Next morning, rumour spread the news that "Yankee Joe"—as the Senior Partner was ignominiously dubbed—had shot *at* a man. Before noon the preposition slipped out of the story, and he was regarded as a blood-thirsty desperado who had actually *shot* a man; in which belief many of the miners remained, and, for aught I know, still remain, even unto this day. If then, any of my readers remember the incident which (under assumed names) is here related, I pray them to accept my assurance that our American friend is entitled to the full use of the preposition aforesaid.

It was observed that "Flash Jimmy" did not inflict his presence on the British public for some time after that night; and when he next appeared he carried his left arm in a sling. It was only a flesh-wound, however, and he was soon ready again for any villainy that might most forcibly command itself to his attention.

One day, during the period of this worthy's retirement, our old friend, Barney Roche, made his appearance

at the Co.'s tent. He made no reference at all to past difficulties. Indeed, his conversation, if not intensely improving, was of the most confidential and friendly description. Of the weather and its changes—the river and its caprices, its going up and its going down—did Barney sweetly discourse for the full space of half-an-hour.

At length—"I hear," he said, "that ye've been throubled by thieves lately. It's a shame, then, so it is, that an honest man can't be allowed to live in peace. But I'm tould that ye served them out fine. Is it threue, now, that ye shot one of the dirty spalpeens in the very act of robbing your sluice-box?"

"No, sir, it ain't exactly true that I shot him. But I reckon the ball circulated around his body six times, commencing at the top of his head, where it cleared a nice little track, and winding off at his toes, which it teetotally devastated of nails, barring the off-side little one, which happened to be out of the line of fire."

"Oh! Mother of Moses!" exclaimed his astonished auditor. "How the devil could one ball do that now?"

"Why, don't you see," exclaimed the Senior Partner, with unfaltering facial muscles, "it was fired out of a patent spiral - twist revolver,—a most beautiful weapon, sir; works on the high-pressure circumbendibus principle, and would send a ball clean round a tree, or a rock, after any galoot that might be dodging behind. You can bet your life on that!"

The tale went round the diggings. Some scoffed, some laughed, some seriously doubted; but all agreed on one point, namely, that Mr George Washington Pratt was not a man who could safely be meddled with. So the Co. were left in peace thereafter—for a time.

## Chapter XIV. Gold on the Brain.

MESSIEURS "Pratt and Another" did not sell their gold as they obtained it; not more, that is, than sufficed for their daily wants. They were jealous lest by any means the value of their claim might be divulged. To all inquiries they responded in terms of mild depreciation; and when they visited the township, a few modest pennyweights—all the ostensible results of their labours—were disposed of, rather ostentatiously than otherwise.

Pennyweights - Pennyweights of gold are a measurement of gold. For example Hartley and Reilly's gold dredging company in Clutha River recovered 786 ounces 10 pennyweights of gold over within a week.

The weighty balance they "banked," not with the incorporated institutions of New South Wales or New Zealand, nor with any other of the customary recipients of the golden harvest; but in the floor of their tent, in the bosom of Mother Earth, hoarded they their treasure. A number of small chamois - leather bags, each containing a week's earnings, were placed within a large canvas bag, and this was deposited as described, and very carefully concealed, so that no trace remained on the surface to indicate its whereabouts.

Chamois-leather bags - Chamois-leather bags - Sometimes also known as wash-leather. A porous, supply leather favoured for glove-making and bags.

These precautions were not in vain. By most of the neighbouring miners, they were regarded as two industrious young men, who worked very hard for a bare living—"just knocking out tucker," as the phrase went. As a result, the adjacent ground was left untouched; so that the Co. were enabled to work claim after claim of a really rich beach.

And still fresh accumulations were added to the golden hoard, by these busy human bees. As it increased, Harry became proportionately restless and excitable, until at last the Senior Partner began to doubt his sanity. At the slightest noise—indeed, at any imaginary noise—Harry would start up from his bed and rush forth, exclaiming that thieves were trying to rob them. His feverish condition was only too apparent. The glow of health forsook his cheeks—his eyes gleamed with unnatural lustre—he ate his food mechanically—he seemed never to tire of work—he slumbered fitfully. The Senior Partner took alarm.

"What on airth makes you so eternally nervous?" demanded he, one fine moonlight night, during the forepart of which Harry had thrice disturbed him with false alarms.

"I know I am nervous," said poor Harry, "and I'll tell you what makes me so. You are a good old fellow, Pratt—the best old fellow I ever met with—and I'm bursting for want of some one to unburden my mind to. So if you don't mind listening to my story, I'll make you my father confessor."

"Right you are, my lad! Fire up, and drive ahead."

And the Senior Partner composed himself to listen.

Then Harry told his story, but with so many pauses, and so much periphrasis, that I prefer to relate it after my own fashion.

End of Book I.

## BOOK 2.—THE YOUNG WIDOW,

# Chapter I. Committed to the Deep.

*"How gallantly, how merrily, we ride along the sea!  
The morning is all sunshine, the wind is blowing free;  
The billows are all dancing, and sparkling in the light,  
Like creatures in whose sunny veins the blood is running bright."*

*"How Gallantly, how merrily, we ride along the sea! / The morning is all sunshine, the wind is blowing free; / The billows are all dancing, and sparkling in the light, / Like creatures in whose sunny veins the blood is running bright." - The first stanza to a Broadside poem titled *The Admiral, or The Return of the Admiral*.*

*Published 1750-1800,*

UPON just such a morning as the ballad writer graphically describes, the barque Theseus—eighty-two days out from Liverpool—sighted Port Phillip Heads.

Theseus - Mythical king of Athens who is most well-known for his heroic quest into the Labyrinth which housed the Minotaur.

She was a vessel of evil repute;—so evil indeed that few men cared to ship in her. A former captain had killed two of the hands, and, by cruel treatment, had caused a boy—a mere child—in sheer desperation, to leap overboard; for which offences he—the captain—was all too mercifully hanged when he touched the shore. The sailors avowed that the murdered cook haunted the galley, and that the other victims were still to be seen on stormy nights, hovering about the blood-stained forecastle. And men who—knowing nothing whatever of the piteous story—had been shipped as AB seamen, oft-times came hastily down by the back-stays in trepidation, with blanched faces and trembling lips, averring that more hands than went aloft had aided, or had seemed to aid, in reefing top-sails, or furling the top-gallant. And many a stout heart that never quailed at danger, beat tremulously when its owner was asked to look over the side at night, lest the ghastly face of the drowning boy should meet his gaze. Truly the Theseus was of evil repute.

Yet on the morning whereof I write, she went bowling gallantly along, with all her canvass spread to the favouring gale—gracefully dipping and rising with an easy, swan-like motion, as if no deed of crime had ever been perpetrated, no innocent blood been shed upon her deck. The crested waves surged musically against her bows, and rippled playfully around her counter; and the bright blue, cloudless sky above, was outrivalled by the bright blue sea beneath.

Ahead, the bold outline of Point Nepean showed grim and grey in the garish sunlight. But it was land—land!—that sight so rejoicing to the eye and heart, after many days' weary wandering in the great wilderness of waters; and anxious faces turned eagerly towards this first vision of the home of their adoption.

Upon the deck of the Theseus the passengers and crew were assembled—all reverently uncovered. At the leeward gangway a long deal case, covered with the glorious Union Jack (fittest shroud for Briton, be he mariner or landsman) was supported by four sturdy tars. The captain—a venerable white-haired gentleman—stood upon the poop-deck; and by his side sat a woman with handkerchief pressed close to her face, and sobbing as though her heart would of a verity burst asunder.

Loud and clear rang the sonorous tones of the bareheaded captain:—

*"We therefore commit his body to the deep, to be turned into corruption, looking for the resurrection of the body when the sea shall give up her dead!"*

*"We therefore commit his body to the deep..." - Words from the Anglican Common Book of Prayer usually reserved for burial at sea.*

The Union Jack is drawn aside—the rough coffin is thrust over the gangway. There is a sullen plunge in the waters—a plashing of waves against the vessel's side—the dead has been committed to the deep.

A cry—a shriek of anguish, broke from the tearful woman, as she half-rose from her seat. The movement disclosed a face, pallid, but of infinite beauty. The next moment she tottered, and would have fallen, but that ready arms caught her, and bore her fainting to her cabin.

And the dancing waves closing over the dead man, tossed their white manes skyward, and gambolled merrily in the sunlight; and the lady lay in her cabin weary and sick at heart, as one bereft of her dearest friend—of her dearest and her best beloved.

*"Tis better to have loved and lost,*

*Than never to have loved at all."*

*"Tis better to have loved and lost,/ than to never have loved at all." - Written by Lord Alfred Tennyson in his poem In Memoriam A.H.H. OBIT MDCCCXXXIII: 27.*

Thus sings the Laureate.

Laureate - A poet can be appointed the office of Laureate, noting their distinction as poet.

But not in the hour of anguish, when, sore-stricken by the loss, can we so philosophize, most sweet Bard!

What nook is there on earth or sea where cynics are not? Scoffers there were on board the Theseus who hinted that the young widow was a splendid actress.

Soon the Theseus, wind-propelled, struggled in the "Rip," dreaded by bilious land-lubbers, and not greatly approved of by experienced mariners. Like a vessel drunk, she reeled and staggered through that treacherous passage. Then between the "Heads" she passed, weathering Point Lonsdale in safety, carefully avoiding the hidden dangers of the "Pope's Nose," and finally bringing up in the vicinage of Sandridge, at the far end of the inland sea known as Hobson's Bay.

On board the Theseus there was a good man and true. I thank God that there is at least one such everywhere. Of the salt of the earth are these. But for them, and their occasional self-revelations to us, we might well despair of humanity. They rarely preach; they merely practise. They vaunt not their own exceeding goodness; nay! they shrink from any public manifestation thereof, letting not "the left hand know what the right hand doeth;" but they traverse the world doing good.

"The left hand know what the right doeth" - Matthew 6:3.

Angels are they: not such as are depicted in puny attempts to portray the unportrayable; but angels with sturdy legs, and stout arms, and rough hands, it may be. Angels in unmistakeable coats and very real trousers—Pickwickian seraphs, and Cheeryble cherubim—good Samaritans, who pass not by "on the other side."

Pickwickian seraphs - Mr Pickwick a Dicken's character from Pickwick Papers.

In this particular instance the Samaritan was a Melbourne merchant, one of a body of men whom I am fain to believe will bear favorable comparison with the merchant-class of any other city in any other part of the world.

Samaritans - Were cultural group against the Jews and featured in Jesus's parable of the Good Samaritan who saved and cared for a beaten Jew.

Mr. John Grey had been to England, to make large purchases in his particular line of business, and was now returning to his home in Victoria.

Acquaintances are much more quickly made, and confidences are more readily bestowed, at sea than on shore. It is therefore not surprising that Mr Grey was familiar with the brief life-story of the dead man. Charles Melmoth, a young lawyer of fair professional repute, had married his beautiful wife for love. But fees came in slowly, and love, divine though it be, will not pay the prosaic bills of butchers and bakers. So, before the family purse was quite empty, he packed up his law-books and bade adieu to England, trusting to achieve in the Colonies the success denied to him in the land of his birth. But ere the Theseus reached the Line, hectic flushes and laboured respiration told that consumption had "marked him for its own." His wife and he, still hoping against hope, tried to believe that the genial Australian climate might restore him to health. It was not so to be. The fiat had gone forth. Gradually Melmoth sank under the cruel disease. For several weeks he was confined to his cabin. At last, even in sight of the shores of the promised land, the end came, and his fainting spirit passed away from the sweet bondage of life.

With all delicacy Mr Grey inquired into the circumstances of the widow. She was indeed forlorn. Not one friend had she in all Australia, and but very few pounds in her pocket. So, after a little proper conjugal consultation, he offered the bereaved woman a home under his own roof as governess to his daughter,—a post for which she was well suited. And thus it happened that Florence Melmoth became domiciled with the Grey family.

And the scoffers said that the interesting young widow had played her cards very well—very well indeed.

## Chapter II. A Game of Croquet.

"Now, Will, that was unfair—you know it was. You regularly spooned that ball. Why don't you make him play fair, Mabel?"

"He is Mrs Melmoth's partner, not mine. Ah! Florence, I think you like to see him cheating us."

"No, indeed;" responded the lady thus addressed. Then, with a slight shrug of her superb shoulders, she

added, in a demi-tone, and in French,—"The game is not worth the candle."

And Will answered—

"Yet the game goes on. Poor candle!"

Let me here briefly describe the scene, and the actors in this domestic drama.

And first, having regard to dramatic propriety,—The Scene and its accessories: St. Kilda—not the island of that name, but a suburb of Melbourne:—

A fair large villa, standing in its own grounds, with cool wide verandah, around the pillars of which the purple blossoms of the dolichos mingled in wild profusion with white clematis and scarlet passion-flowers. At the rear, a hedge of geraniums half hid, half revealed an orchard, wherein the blossoms of the peach and apricot emulated the bloom of the apple and the snowy wealth of the pear. In the immediate foreground a tiny lawn was surrounded by belts of many-hued flowers, and by shrubs gathered from divers lands. Beyond glistened the waters of the bay, athwart which tiny skiffs, and variously-rigged schooners, and stately ships, were sailing to and fro.

The Time was sunset. The distant peaks of the "Anakies" were yet crowned with golden glories, while their base was already veiled in a purple haze. Tiny wavelets murmured musically as they lazily toyed with the shining sands of the beach. The air, tempered by the soft sea-breeze, was redolent with the heavy perfume of flowering acacias and the aromatic odours of the eucalyptus. All the senses save one were gratified: the sense of tasting alone was unsatisfied. So fared it with our first mother, even in Paradise; so fares it often with her children still.

The Actors stood and moved upon the lawn. They were playing croquet,—that game which is a crystallized vision of coquetry and flirtation, wherein the hoops represent circumstances, the balls represent men, and the mallets, women; whose pleasure and practice it is to impel their happy victims, willy-nilly, *i.e.*, by roquet or croquet, into the "irredeemable pound of wedlock."

They were four in number: Annie and Mabel, daughters of Mr John Grey; Mrs Melmoth, and Cousin Will.

Of Annie, the youngest, I will only say that she was in her earliest teens, and no more interesting than school-girls of a similar age usually are. (I admit that I once entertained a different opinion on this matter, but it was at the time when my moustache and my judgment were equally immature.)

Of Mabel Grey I must speak more at large. Here is her picture.

Seventeen years of age, rather short of stature, with dark blue eyes, and hair that shimmered with a golden sheen in the departing sunlight, as the long tresses rippled over her simple dress of white muslin; with soft, ruby-red, pouting lips, and complexion dazzlingly fair; with well-developed throat and bust, and the neatest of feet and ankles, displayed to the best advantage by the exigencies of the game. Such was Mabel Grey—a child already alive with every natural womanly instinct—matured as only the natives of warm climates can mature at such an age. I have never seen more beautiful young women than are to be met with in Collins-street on any fine afternoon. The worst of it is, they ripen too early and wither too rapidly. Lovely at seventeen, they are too often loveless at seven-and-twenty. Of course, there are some glorious exceptions. Some women never grow old.

And Florence Melmoth—how shall I describe her? I have postponed doing so until the last moment. It is no longer possible to delay it.

A large, ripe, rich beauty. A beauty with lustrous sloe-black eyes, and glossy raven-black hair; with creamy white skin, with full rounded limbs, and large but shapely hands and feet; with pearly teeth, and pink, shell-shaped ears; with a voice capable of multifarious inflections, and whose tones she well knew how to modulate.

Sloe-black eyes - Having dark bluish/purplish eyes.

Such was Florence Melmoth at the age of twenty-five, as developed by the sunny southern climate.

In dress she was an *artiste* of the first order. White muslin might do for golden-haired Mabel, but for *her*, velvet was the only wear. And her judgment was correct. Robed in a purple gown, clasped with a black band and silver buckle, and surmounted by a plain white linen collar, with cuffs to match, devoid of all ornament save a massive golden cross, pendant from a necklace of pearls—the young widow looked and moved every inch a Queen. Envious beholders of her own sex strove to conceal their jealousy beneath flimsy tissues of depreciatory criticism. Men raved about her, and sought her society, and valued her smiles. Some there were who affected to deprecate her style and her manners, and even her physical attractions. But these were people whom she had snubbed, and stared out of impudent gallantries.

And now for the fourth of the party—Wild Will Enderby.

He was clothed in a cricketer's suit of white flannel, with white boots, and a straw hat swathed with an Indian puggery. As he stood on the green turf, leaning on a croquet mallet, you would have recognized that indefinable something which tells of station life—a bucolical appearance, better understood than expressed. In age he was evidently some years younger than the beautiful woman at his side. As to his features, beyond dark

grey eyes, and Grecian nose, pray picture them to yourselves, Messieurs the Readers. For he had so allowed his hair to encroach upon his face in the customary bush fashion, that the more indicative features, such as the mouth and chin, were entirely concealed from observation.

## Chapter III. Sister Sarah's Son.

"WILD WILL ENDERBY!" Yes; that was his *soubriquet*—bestowed upon him in sportive mood by his schoolmates in those young days when, in rural Somersetshire, he led the way in all feats of "derring-do" and mischief. Was there a "barring-out," or a "breaking of bounds," or an orchard to be plundered, or a fight to be got up, or any other matter of fun or devilry on, be sure Master Will Enderby was to the fore.

Derring-do, barring-out, breaking of bounds - Derring-do refers to a heroic act, derives from the word daring. Barring-out was the locking out of the headmaster of a school as a prank.

He was the only child of John Grey's only sister—a pale-faced, characterless woman—who, having spent much of her short life in unmerited adoration of the sinner—her husband—devoted the remnant thereof to the worship of her son. When quite young she had married one of that indefinite class, the members of which, hovering between commercial respectability and landed gentility, were known by the vague and much-abused title of "gentlemen." Gentlemen with a few hundreds a year, who aped the traditional absurdities, and, in a small way, imitated the traditional wickednesses of the Fourth Georgian era; who chatted familiarly with grooms and their congeners, contemned the shopkeepers, condescended to the farmers, patronised the miller and the brewer, nodded to the doctor and the lawyer, and bowed obsequiously to the squire and the rector. Forty years ago these drones of society were numerous in the rural districts of England. But in this, as in other matters, "the whirligig of time hath brought about its revenges," and it would, I think, be difficult to find many such in the "Merrie England" of to-day. Like flies, when summer time has passed, they have disappeared from the surface of society by the mere force of circumstances. I fancy the first blow to their inconsequential existence was given by the penny post. I am sure that the railway has annihilated them. For which let us be thankful.

At the time to which I now refer, these "one-horse gentry," (as my friend Mr. George Washington Pratt would rightfully have termed them,) were in the full swing of their underbred village importance.

"One-horse gentry" - Wealthy enough to rise above middle-class, but as Pyke scathingly determines them under the "much-abused" title of "gentlemen."

And to one of these, poor Sarah Grey, while yet a mere child, had yielded the treasures of her loving heart. To do her parents justice, they objected to the match, but they offered no positive resistance. Mr. Enderby's dashing assumption of mosaic gentility dazzled their eyes somewhat, and their daughter's tearful pleadings had borne down the scale. So at seventeen Sarah Grey became the bride of William Enderby, to find herself—the brief delirium of the honeymoon past—the neglected wife of a heartless scamp. Heaven, in its mercy, decreed that her trials should be but of short continuance. Within three years she became a widow. A career of unbridled dissipation had done its work. He died, bitterly bewept by the woman whose life his own life had desolated. Cards and dice, wine and—(yes, I must write it) women, had stript him of nearly all his possessions, so that scarcely enough remained to scantily furnish the table for his much enduring and still loving widow.

Women, the cynics say, love best those who treat them worst. I cannot go the length of fully endorsing this saying, but I have known many verifications thereof. Truth is often found in most startling paradoxes. When strong affection really exists in either man or women, there is a luxury in suffering for the beloved object, which renders pain a pleasure. Mostly, however, is this antithesis exhibited in the passive principle—the female. The male, or active principle, revolts from such effects of such causes, or when it yields we rise superior, and term it—"effeminacy," thus showing that we recognize it as an attribute of woman only.

Mrs. Enderby suffered none to blame her husband. She resolutely closed her eyes to his thousand and one sins of omission and commission, and quarrelled—so far as such a meek little thing *could* quarrel—with every one who ventured to whisper a disparaging reflection on the memory of the departed. She even caused her blind reverential love to be carved in stone, and recorded on his tombstone that he was "a kind and loving husband. and an affectionate father."

*He* a kind and loving husband! *He*, who had left his wife to the lonely solitude of her chamber, whilst he wasted the hours in fierce revelry with boon companions and unholy jades? *He* an affectionate father, who had never noticed his son, save to curse him for crying? Let us charitably hope that Heaven has pardoned the graven lie, born of so much love.

There was only one child, fortunately, and this child named after his father, now became the object of his mother's idolatry. For him she pinched and starved that he might have every luxury her limited means could procure. For him she went without fire in the cold winter nights, and often without meat during the day. For him she turned and re-turned her gown, and denied herself new flannel, and darned her gloves, and kept a stiff

upper lip withal to the outer world; so that amongst her short-sighted neighbors she got the name of 'Proud Madam Enderby.' When young Will grew old enough she pinched yet harder to provide the funds for his education; and I verily believe she would have been starved to death but for the delicate kindness of the few friends with whom she still maintained intercourse. She never complained. Why should she? Had she not Will? And was he not all the world to her.

So Will passed his boyhood unchecked and unrestrained. With much of his father's wilfulness, he had all his mother's kindness of heart. Had the current of his energies been skilfully directed then, the latter quality might have so modified the former as to have rendered him a useful member of society—possibly a great man, *certainly* a good one. But no fault could his mother see in her darling, any more than she had seen fault in that other darling—her husband. The natural result followed. Will Enderby grew up self-willed, passionate, impatient of control; but also kind, affectionate, and unselfish. He could not deny himself anything whatsoever which he desired and could by possibility obtain. But he would place his slenderly-provided purse or his personal services, even to the risking of life itself, at the disposal of anyone whom he loved or cared for. And withal he maintained a proud sense of honour, which stood him in good stead in the hour of temptation; enabling him to steer clear of many of the rocks and shoals, and sunken reefs, wherewith the Sea of Life abounds.

To mould and fashion the conflicting elements of such a nature, so as to fit it for encounter with the fiery ordeal of the world, stern lessons were necessary. The first came early. When Will was only sixteen years of age his mother died, leaving him the poor salvage of his father's fortune, and with her last breath enjoining him to seek the aid of her Brother John.

So it happened that one morning, as John Grey sat in his counting-house in Melbourne, a strange youth, with a manner curiously compounded of shyness and audacity, presented himself to the astonished merchant. He further presented a small letter of credit, and a large letter of love, indited by the trembling fingers of his dying mother.

Therein she intimated her approaching end, and committed the orphan to her brother's charge, adjuring him, by the ties of childhood, to be a father to the fatherless. And honest John Grey unhesitatingly accepted the charge. Thenceforth Will Enderby was to him as a son. Finding him averse to office work, he placed him, as cadet, on a cattle station in which he held an interest. The free gipsy life of the bush suited Will—as he phrased it—"to a T." Never was he happier than when, mounted on an unbroken colt—the equine parallel of himself—he strove for mastery, till the panting animal was reduced to obedience and submission to the will of his fiery rider; or when, as at mustering seasons, madly galloping over the plains, he chased the wild cattle, waking the echoes with the crack of the long stockman's whip, which none could more dexterously flourish than he. But such an existence was ill-calculated to fit him for the real battles of life. The sense of power gained over the brute creation rendered Will Enderby yet more masterful towards humanity; and the respect, even in-born of the admiration of physical excellence, (howsoever exerted or displayed) wherewith his bush comrades treated him, completed the dangerous lesson.

Perhaps it was well for him that he paid frequent visits to his Uncle's house at St. Kilda. The quiet tone of civilised society, the enforced abandonment of boots and breeches for more conventional costume, the presence of ladies, and the thousand and one refining influences which tend to humanize and elevate—(sometimes, alas! to enervate)—were intensely beneficial. But from these visits Will ever returned to the station with renewed zest for the freer life of the bush.

Say what we may, there is a strong tendency to savagery inherent in the human race. "If you scratch a Russian," says the proverb, "you will find a Tartar underneath the skin."

"If you scratch a Russian, you will find a Tartar underneath the skin" - Proverb that has been attributed to Napoleon and was a rather narrow view of the Russian people.

But is the proverb only applicable to the Russian? How say you, gentlemen, the learned expounders of psychological profundities?

## Chapter IV. The Play and the Players.

LET us go back to the croquet party.

"Oh dear!" cried Annie, distressed, child-like, beyond measure at losing the game, "we must change partners, Will. You and Mrs. Melmoth are too many for us. Now, this shall be it, you and Mabel shall play against us two."

"Nonsense, Annie," said Will imperiously; "I prefer the present arrangement."

And, as he spoke, his eye sought that of Florence Melmoth, with such an eager expression, that she drooped the long silky lashes, softly murmuring, "So do I;" and, as Mabel marked the interchange of glances, the colour faded from her cheek, and she dropped the mallet and turned away; and, with an evident effort to appear quite

unconcerned, she said,

"I don't care to play any more to-night."

But the irrepressible Annie was not to be so easily denied.

"Oh yes, *do*, Mabel! just one more game. Come, dear, take your mallet and begin." And Mabel yielded, and took the mallet, and began; but in a weary, mechanical way. Will, too, played carelessly—almost sulkily; and so Annie gained her heart's desire, winning the game easily.

"Oh! how jolly!" cried the girl, clapping her hands in gleeful delight. I knew we could beat you."

"Yes, Annie; I am no match for Mrs Melmoth."—Thus Mabel.

"Nor for Mr. Enderby either, I think," responded that lady.

Again her eyes met those of Will Enderby—again the silky lashes drooped—again Mabel paled. Then a cloud of conscious silence overshadowed the group.

Annie looked from one to another with amazement.

"What on earth is the matter with you all? Are you playing at cross-questions and crooked answers?

Just then the shrill whistle of the steam-engine was heard, and a moving wreath of smoke rising beyond trees in the direction of the City, indicated the approaching train.

"That's Papa's train;" shrieked Annie, and away she started to the gate to meet the expected comers. Mabel took the opportunity to disappear, leaving Will and Florence together on the lawn.

"Dear Mrs. Melmoth"—began Will.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Mrs. Melmoth, in her grandest manner, "will you be good enough to collect the implements?"

And gathering her flowing robes about her, she swept past the young man with an air of utter nonchalance.

Presently entered Mr. Grey with his son Philip, a steady, well-trained young fellow, to whom the father looked with confidence to maintain the reputation of the firm in days to come. Annie danced around them rejoicingly, and a chorus of young voices shouted 'Welcome!' as they came up the lawn; and Mrs. Grey came smilingly into the verandah, and Wild Will stepped forward with alacrity to greet his Uncle.

It needed no seer to tell that John Grey was the idol of his family—the domestic divinity of the family altar.

"Good evening, mamma!"—this was an osculatory parenthesis—"Bless you all, dears! Ah! Tom, you rogue! keep your hands from picking and stealing. I'll empty my pockets by and bye. Take care, Nelly, or you'll tumble baby into the rose-bush. How dy'e do, Will? Bless me, how well you're looking. How's the run doing? I rather thought you'd have been busy mustering just now."

"No, Uncle, that's done. A capital muster we had too. We rounded up a mob of a hundred and thirty head, that have been running wild since they were steers, and had never been seen since."

"Ah! good! good! Well done, lad! How did you manage to get hold of them?"

"Why, you see, the drought has dried up the holes on the Parroquet Creek, and they had to come out into the open for water. So I and two or three of the hands laid in wait one night, and cut them out at sunrise, when they came down to drink. Such fun, Uncle! Ned Soames was charged by a wild bull, and got his horse gored badly. He'd have been gored himself to a dead certainty, only for his luck in being pitched into the tea-tree scrub, where the bull couldn't get at him."

"Fun, eh! Humph! Don't see the fun. But dinner's waiting. Tell me all about it by and bye. Why, bless my soul! where's Mabel?"

Mabel was nowhere to be seen. Strange to tell, the question stayed the torrent of Will's loquacity.

There was no Mabel at the dinner table that evening. She had a bad headache, mamma reported. "All that nasty croquet," commented Annie. "We'll not play any more, Mrs. Melmoth."

"Certainly not, dear, unless you please. Young ladies should never play at games that harm them."

"Then why do you play," persisted this terrible child. "I'm sure you looked as if you were going to faint, once or twice to-day. Cousin Will noticed it, I know; for I saw him looking at you ever so. Didn't you, Will?"

Will, thus adjured, blushed violently,—he had a trick of blushing on occasions. Mrs Melmoth gazed curiously at Annie, sipped a little sherry-and-water; then, "Ah, yes! I felt rather warm."

And she shot a trenchant glance at Will Enderby, who forthwith commenced such a furious assault on the viands before him, that one might have supposed he had fasted for a month.

"Don't you think those heavy velvets unsuitable for the season?" asked Mrs. Grey.

"Perhaps so," said Mrs. Melmoth, indifferently. And the next morning she came down to breakfast arrayed in a daring yellow cambric, which made her complexion show more ravishingly fair than ever.

"How well that dress becomes you!" said Will admiringly.

"Thank you, Mr. Enderby. Now, a flatterer would perhaps have said—how well the wearer becomes the dress."

And she smiled upon him—a soft bewildering smile—such as the fabled Syrens of old might have smiled, to lure the mariner to destruction.

"But, Mrs. Melmoth, you know what I mean."

"Yes; I think so." And the languishing eyes dwelt for a moment upon his. "I think so. But why not speak plainly. Hush! Good morning, Mabel. What a lovely day it promises to be."

## Chapter V.

*"FOLLOW a shadow, it still flies you;  
Seem to fly it, it will pursue:  
So court a mistress, she denies you;  
Let her alone, she will court you."*

*"Follow a shadow, it still flies you;/ Seem to fly it, it will pursue:/ So court a mistress, she denies you;/ Let her alone, she will court you."* Ben Jonson's poem, *That Women are but Men's Shadows*.

SAID LIZZIE the housemaid, to Janet the cook:—

"Well, 'tis a down right shame, so it is, the way that fine madam goes on wi' Master Will; and he a-going to marry Miss Mabel too. She ought to be ashamed of herself—the brazen hussy."

Said Janet the cook, to Lizzie the housemaid:—

"Aye, Lizzie, ye're richt there, but I'm thinkin' she disna ken what shame is. An' to see her glowerin' at the laddie wi' thae saucy big black een; an' he daidlin' aboot at her beck and call, like a bit collie dog at his maister's heel, is a weary sight. An' it's my opinion that the jade disna care the snap o' a thumb for him."

As a rule our servants know more of our domestic affairs than we know ourselves. Mabel may have had her fears, and Mrs. Grey her doubts; but they were not nearly so well acquainted with "the goings-on" of "Madame" and "Master Will," as those other two women in the kitchen.

It was quite true that, as Lizzie the housemaid said, Will Enderby was to be married to Mabel Grey. That matter had been settled by the young folks, and acquiesced in by the old ones, long ago. It was simply a question as to the time when Hymen, as represented by the Registrar, should legally rivet the matrimonial fitters.

Hymen, as represented by the Registrar - Hymen is the Greek God of marriage.

And Mr. Grey disapproved of early marriages; as, remembering Sister Sarah, he had sufficient reason to do. Meantime the courtship went on as a matter of course, and with the usual consequences.

*"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart;  
Tis woman's whole existence."*

*"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart;/ 'Tis woman's whole existence."* Extract from Lord Byron's *Don Juan*, 1824.

To Mabel, her engagement with Will was an abiding source of "maiden meditation." She had no thought, no eyes for any other man. She loved as no woman can ever love twice—some not at all—with a pure simplicity, unswayed by interest, and unborn of passion. To her, in her quiet home, with its pleasant surroundings the one absorbing idea of her young life was, that *she* was Will's and Will was *hers*. The possibility of any alteration in this position of affairs never occurred to her. The world was all before her, and ever the central figure of the landscape was Will Enderby.

Was there ever a paradise into which the serpent did not enter? I fear not.

By what lures and wiles—by what artillery of tender glances, what sorcery of half-spoken words—by what art of retreating when he advanced, and advancing when he turned away, Will was beguiled from his allegiance, it matters not to tell. The long engagement wearied him. He *did* "love her once," as poor Ophelia pleads.

Ophelia - A character from Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*.

But the toy easily gained soon loses its charms, and nothing so easily dulls or deadens love in restless souls, as the absence of difficulty. Everything had been too smooth for Will Enderby. There was nothing to struggle for, or with, and he undervalued the gift accordingly.

When, therefore, the handsome widow began to practise her arts upon him, the chamber once tenanted by Eros was empty.

Eros - Greek god of love.

At any rate, Eros was just on the point of moving out, and required but little external inducement to vacate the premises. And just as easily and as thoughtlessly as Will permitted the one tenant to escape, did he receive

and welcome the other. The attentions lavished on him by Florence Melmoth enchanted him; her moods of careless indifference incited him; her beauty of form and face enthralled him. She did as she pleased with him. He was no more a free agent than is the victim of mesmeric power. After all, was she not the 'operator,' and he the 'subject'?"

He was the younger by some three years or so. But that only the more certainly rivetted the chains of his willing bondage. The girl best loves the man who, stooping from the elevation of superior age, condescends to her. The boy is most easily fascinated by the matured charms of a woman older than himself.

When Mabel Grey first began to perceive the change in Will's manner I know not. Probably she could not have told. The revelation must have dawned upon her very gradually, and she resented even to herself her own fears. To doubt Will's faith was to banish the sun from her entire universe. No; Will was only "flirting with the governess," and she was "a little foolish thing," to be jealous of a woman "old enough to be his mother." (N.B.—Women are rarely accurate arithmeticians in matters of age.)

And so the game went on. Did the widow love the boy? I think she had a kind of love for him, as a toy wherewith to amuse her leisure hours when no better sport offered—as a child to be alternately caressed and spurned as the humour suited; as a lay figure whereon to practise her arts of coquetry. In all and each of these capacities he was dear to her. As a partner, with whom to walk through life hand in hand, she cared not for him at all.

In truth, as often it occurs, this superb creature was soulless—a beautiful animal merely, without heart or conscience—the very incarnation of Self. What mattered it to her if she wrecked the life of one man, more or less? It was only another scalp to adorn her girdle. As to considering whether her conduct was in accordance with the dictates of honour, or the principles of gratitude, I don't think she was capable of comprehending the meaning of such phrases.

Now, the particular circumstance which had aroused the righteous indignation of Lizzie Housemaid occurred in this wise:—

Entering the breakfast parlour hurriedly, "to clear away the things," she had chanced upon "Master Will" and the widow in curious juxta-position, if I may venture so to express it.

Here is Lizzie's evidence in full:—

"I didn't know as there was anybody there, so I opened the door, all of a suddint-like; and there were Madam, who but she, a-standin' by the fire-place wi' Master Will. And I see his arm round her waist; and if she hadn't been a-kissin' of him, I'll eat that there flat-iron, red-hot, without salt, I will. I was goin' out again quick; but she says, says she, 'Come in, you can clear the table,' says she, as cool as a cucumber. And then she begins to talk about the weather, as innocent as the cat that stole the cream. But thinks I to myself—'I've got my weather eye open, my lady, for as simple as you take me.' And I tell you what, Janet,—as sure as eggs is eggs, there's more between them two than you or I knows on. I've a precious good mind to go and tell the Missus all about it. But Lor'! there, she'd never believe me."

"No,"—quoth the cautious Janet; "dinna dae that. Ye should never scald your fingers in ither folk's brose. Brose- A Scots word for a form of uncooked porridge. Atholl Brose is also an alcoholic drink.

But she's an awfu' limmer, nae doubt."

Limmer - Scottish word for scoundrel or prostitute.

(MEMO.—All through the piece, you see, these dragons of chastity never blamed the *man*. It was still Eve, the temptress, and Adam, the tempted.)

Either the sage counsels of Janet were neglected, or Mrs Grey's suspicions were otherwise aroused. For on the same night, that worthy lady administered to her spouse a mild dose of "Caudle," touching the impropriety of allowing Master Will to waste his time in Melbourne.

Caudle - A British hot alcoholic sweetened drink likened to eggnog.

And the result was, that next morning he received "marching orders" for the Station.

## Chapter VI. The Pic-Nic.

JOHN GREY was not a man much given to holiday-keeping, for he was "diligent in his business," and in a general way regarded holidays as mere interruptions. But there was one day upon which he regularly closed his office and devoted himself most heartily to pleasure, and that was the anniversary of his wedding-day. I do not believe that any commercial temptation could have induced him to neglect that annual festival. Upon that day he and his wife, his sons and his daughters, his manservants, and his maidservants, and the stranger within his gates, made merry and rejoiced exceedingly. The usual programme was a pic-nic in the morning, and a dance in the evening.

Dwellers in the interior of any country take their holidays by the side of the glittering, dancing, health-inspiring ocean. Dwellers by the sea-side make for the leafy solitudes of the forest.

Therefore, on the great family anniversary, in the year 1861, John Grey and his surroundings—(to Anglicise a Gallicism)—got into a railway carriage at Spencer-street, and sped into the country.

To Anglicise a Gallicism - To make a French word phrase 'English'.

When the voyager enters Hobson's Bay, one of the objects which first attracts his attention is a squarely set mountain bounding the Northern horizon. To the unpractised eye, and upon a clear day, it seems only a few miles distant. This is an optical delusion, resulting from the wonderfully diaphanous atmosphere, wherewith Australia generally, and Victoria in particular, are favoured. The mountain whereof I speak is known by the very applicable name of Mount Macedon;

Mount Macedon - Mountain near Melbourne in Victoria, Australia.

so designated by Sir Thomas Mitchell, in pursuance of a train of thought, which induced him to confer on the next inland range the name of Macedonia's greatest monarch.

Sir Thomas Mitchell - 1792-1855, A surveyor and explored the Australian interior and also a fellow author.

Thitherward the Grey family bent their way. At Sunbury they left the train, and—some in wheeled vehicles of the primitive formation, others in saddle—started across country for the selected spot.

A wild glade, ("gully," the colonists call it,) where the long trailing branches of the "weeping gum" afforded shelter from the mid-day heat; where "peppermint trees" shed their balsamic odours; where golden and silver "wattles" scattered May-blossom fragrance, and the wild "sarsaparilla" climbed the stems to mingle its gorgeous purple bloom with their silken yellow tassels.

"Weeping gum, peppermint trees, wattles, sarsaparilla" - Weeping gum, peppermint trees are native trees to Australia.

A little creek dauntered lovingly amidst reeds and sedges, to fall into a miniature pool; and resting therein awhile, stole forth to murmur on its devious way till again absorbed into the quiet bosom of another broad expanse, wherein its brattle ceased. And so, from pond to pond, the stream, born of the mountain, sped on to join the river, the river to mingle with the sea, the sea to vaporize the atmosphere, the atmosphere to supply the streamlet in the mountain. Eternity is represented by a circle without beginning or end. Is life—animate or inanimate—other than endless? I remember a country churchyard, upon the rich green grass of which the Rector fed his sheep (quadrupedal, be it understood), and fine fat sheep were they. I was only a boy at the time; but since I have become a man, I have often self-debated the question,—Whether, in eating the Rector's mutton, I may not have unconsciously absorbed some portions of the tissues of my grandmother, who—peace to her ashes!—was buried in that very luxurious pasture.

By the side of the creek, the Grey party—metaphorically speaking—pitched their tent. Of course they lit a bush fire. They rolled huge logs into it, and piled branches of the odoriferous gum-trees on it, till it blazed high up into the brilliant atmosphere. Not that warmth was requisite, for the sun shone from a clear blue sky. But it was the proper thing to do under the circumstances, and they did it with a will, and with much hilarity. And they generally did "the days we went a-gipseyng, a long time ago," after the fashion of Old England.

A-gipseyng - Travelling by wagon train.

On such a day, of course Cousin Will was there; as also were several other persons, who—having nothing to do with this story—I shall not introduce to the reader.

Bar one!—as the horsey men put it.

The "one," in this instance, was a tall handsome specimen of an Irishman; and his name was Justin M'Carthy. He was the owner—always subject to the tender mercies of the Bank of New Guinea—of Tamboura Station in Gippsland, and the (nominal) possessor of a smiling homestead, and of "cattle on a thousand hills."

I have specified this "one," because he was indirectly the means of bringing matters to an issue between Will Enderby and Florence Melmoth. The gallant Irishman constituted himself the *cavalier servente* of the young widow, who sooth to say, seemed not ill-pleased with his attentions.

Cavalier servente - A professed gallant and lover of a married woman.

Rather she encouraged them, and smiled sweetly upon him, and brought to bear upon him the dangerous artillery of her eyes—all greatly to the discomfiture of poor Will, whom she snubbed, mercilessly, and, I fear I must add, maliciously. Mabel Grey, on the other hand, was in that mood which is sometimes sarcastically described as "gushing," and "dear Will'd" that young man to an extent that frightened, whilst it soothed him.

Soothed him by its implied flattery, its open avowed love for him; frightened him by forcing him to analyze his heart and, for the first time, seriously to consider his relations towards these two women—so diverse in themselves and in their belongings. Long years after, when Will looked back upon the events of that day, it seemed to him that angels had battled with demons for his soul; and the demons were very near gaining the final victory. As the widow and the maiden sat beside each other on the grass they might not inaptly be compared to the Spirits of Good and Evil;—so bold, so wily, so sensuous the one,—so fair, so innocent, so pure the other.

Did he propose to himself to break his plighted troth to Mabel and to take to his heart the governess? His

cousin's tears, her mother's reproaches, his benefactor's anger,—could he brave these for the vain trick of Florence Melmoth's smiles? He dared not pursue the thought. At one time—partly swayed by resentment, partly influenced by the goodness which lay dormant within him—he half resolved to return to his first allegiance, and to whistle down the wind all traitorous thoughts and sensations. But the next moment he was enthralled by a glance of the lustrous eyes; and the wondrous fascinations of the enchantress resumed their perilous sway.

It was the "Scene in a Wood near Athens" over again;—Demetrius pursuing Hermia, and Helen pursuing Demetrius.

"Scene in a Wood near Athens" - Act I Scene I to Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

## Chapter VII. Under the Wattles.

THE mid-day repast, with, its fun and frolic, was over; the dance on the grass had ended, and each and all had betaken themselves to such amusements as most attracted them:—the youngsters to bobbing for cray-fish, the young men to cricket, the oldsters to the enjoyment of the *dolce far niente*.

Dolce far niente - Pleasant relaxation and carefree idleness.

The ladies, with some gallant attendants, either walked and talked, and flirted, as ladies can and will do in Australia, quite as pleasantly, and as gracefully as their sisters in Europe; or sought refuge from the burning heat in the grateful shade of a huge granite cliff, whereunder they were able to appreciate the Oriental metaphor which likens a righteous man to "the shadow of a rock in a weary land."

It was truly an enjoyable day. Summer had not yet so far advanced as to embrown the herbage, or parch the earth. The sky was embroidered with a few fleecy clouds, and a soft balmy breeze faintly fanned the cheek—no more. It was a day for love, and loving thoughts, and kindly recollections; and good honest John Grey smoked his cigar with a time-honoured old crony, and talked of days gone by, with a mind at ease as to the days yet to come; and all the while his daughter's peace was being wrecked, and he wist not of it.

Brilliant-hued parrots and golden-crested cockatoos hovered in the tall trees, and flocks of green paroquets flew screaming overhead. Underneath a group of feathery acacias, "Wild Will" lay on the ground, gazing upwards on the fair face of his bewitcher with the intense adoration characteristic of his ardent nature. And Florence, bending low, listened to his passionate rhapsody of love and devotion, with a half-dreamy smile and many tender glances; and the fragrance of her breath stole over him, and the soft murmur of her voice thrilled him, and her silken hair, wafted by the zephyrs, played upon his forehead, and his ecstacy was complete.

Zephyrs - Light winds from the West, gentle breeze.

For the time the poor boy dwelt in a Fool's Paradise,—fleeting and unreal as the visions of the night.

It is not my intention to weary you, oh reader! with the soft nothings uttered by this amorous pair. If you have ever been "in love," you can easily imagine them. If you have not, pray extend your practical knowledge. 'Tis a delicious fever—while it lasts.

Unseen by the lovers, a laughing kingfisher

The "Laughing Jackass," or "Settler's Clock," of the Colonists.

sat perched on a branch above them—quiet and motionless, but regarding with its keen eye the scene below. Nor was he the only watcher.

One of Will's hands was linked in the hand of Florence—the other, unrepulsed, encircled her waist.

"Tell me, darling, tell me that you love me!" entreated the boy.

"I do love you!" responded the woman. "I love you dearly."

Her disengaged hand caressed his hair; their eyes met in loving dalliance; and, moved by irresistible impulse, Will pressed her—nothing loath—to his bosom, and their lips met in a long, passionate, lingering kiss.

"Ha—ha—ha—ha—ha! Ho—ho—ho—ho—" laughed the bird overhead, and scores of his fellows took up the cry till the forest re-echoed with sounds of demoniacal mirth.

The lovers started apart in confusion. There was a slight rustle in the grass—a gleam as of a white skirt, and Mabel Grey stood before them.

No longer a child, but a woman, stood the maiden there—scorn flashing from her eyes, and wrath convulsing her bosom. Will shrank, abashed, from her gaze; and even the imperial Melmoth was, for the instant, reduced to the submission of silence.

"You have stolen him from me!" cried Mabel. "You have robbed me of my love! Before you came between us he had no other thought than of me. How dare you do this? You have M'Carthy and a dozen others in your train. Are not these enough? I had but one—you, Will, only you. And she has taken you from me now. She loves you, indeed! She doesn't know what it is to love. She is playing with you as she plays with all the rest—as the cat plays with the mice. Woman! how dare you do this? My father gave you a home in his house when there was no other roof to shelter you—when you had not a friend in the world. And this is the way that you repay him. Will, she is deceiving you! Leave her and come to me, dear Will, come!"

The widow got up and shook out the folds of her dress with an air of superb disdain.

"Dear me, Miss Grey! I am sorry to see you so excited. Don't you think you had better go to your mother?"

To which insolent speech the maiden replied nothing; but, laying her hand on the arm of half-repentant and wholly-perplexed Will Enderby, she said in soft, pleading tones—

"Dear Will!"—and the moisture welled up, without o'er-brimming the beautiful bright blue eyes—"Dear Will, I know how that wretched woman has befooled you to pleasure herself. She cannot love you as I love you—as I have always loved you. Say you don't mean it, Will, and I will forgive you everything!"

Ah! Will; had you listened to that gentle pleader, how much trouble and vexation of spirit would you have saved yourself and others! But not so is the soul of man purified. It is only in the crucible of affliction that the true metal is purged from the dross.

His evil genius prevailed—"I cannot, Mabel!" he cried, "I cannot do it. I do love her—God help me! and sorry though I am for your sake, I cannot give her up. No! not even for you Mabel!"

"Sorry for me, Will! Is that all you feel? Then I am sorry for you. You will as surely repent this day at the sun shines in heaven above us. In future we are only cousins! As for you, Madam!—for you, I have no feeling, but that of unmitigated contempt."

With which Parthian shot, Mabel turned her back upon the scene, and walked away.

Parthian shot - A sharp remark in departing, getting the last word.

"Silly child!"—sneered Mrs Melmoth. But the sneer was unheeded. And again the king-fishers shrieked devilish discord, and the bull-frogs in the adjacent lagoon barked hoarsely in chorus, and tree-locusts lustily chirped, "O-hoe! ohoe! alrite! alrite! ziz! ziz! ziz! ziz!

That night Mabel threw herself into her mother's arms; and with many tearful sobs told the story of her young life's misery. And the mother soothed her, as only a mother could. But none the less did she resent the wrong that had been done to her child.

## Chapter VIII. Cast Forth.

"GOING away, Mrs Melmoth? Why, bless my soul!—what is the meaning of this?"

"It is by Mrs. Grey's desire, sir. You must ask her the reason."

"But I don't understand it. What's it all about? There's Tom, and Nelly and—and the rest to be educated. Why are you leaving us?"

"I am not responsible for Mrs. Grey's caprices, sir."

"Caprices?—Oh! come—come. There's no caprice about my wife, you know. A more sensible woman never lived. I must look into this, Mrs. Melmoth. I think that you know, but you don't care to tell me. I really must look into it."

And John Grey did "look into it," but took nothing by his motion. For Mrs. Grey, influenced by Mabel—who in her heart secretly treasured the hope that her lover would return to her when her rival was removed—would not divulge Will's infidelity. Florence Melmoth had her own reasons for remaining silent on that topic. So that the matter might have remained an unfathomable mystery but for Will's reckless impetuosity.

Travel-stained and haggard, that young gentleman one day burst into his uncle's office.

"What is this you have done?" he panted forth. "You have cast her out—driven her out into the cold world to perish, for all you care. This is your Christian charity, is it?—And all because she loves *me*."

"Chut! chut! Dear me! Why, Will! Will!" cried the merchant, "what on earth is the matter with you? Are you mad? Bless my heart! I believe you've been drinking."

"I am neither mad nor drunk, sir. I've not tasted bite or sup since I heard of it. I've been in the saddle all night, and I want to know what you have done with her."

"*Her!* Who do you mean?"

"The divinest creature of her sex," cried poor Will. "You know very well who I mean. Don't pretend you don't know. Where is she—Mrs. Melmoth?"

"Whew!"—and John Grey's eyebrows became hugely elevated.—"So that's the little game, is it? Why you young rascal! you are engaged to your cousin Mabel, my daughter, sir—my daughter. And you've chosen to make an ass of yourself with Mrs. Melmoth. Eh! get out of the office, sir, before I kick you out."

And in the plenitude of his paternal wrath honest John ordered his sister's son to depart for a region, the atmosphere of which is popularly supposed to be excessively sultry.

I think there must have been a little "scene" in John's usually peaceful household that night. "For," said Lizzie Housemaid to her kitchen crony, "when I went in with the things, there were master a-walkin' up and down and a-ravin' as I never seed the like a-fore. And Missus she were a-sobbin' with her handkercher up to her eyes, quite pitiful. And when I ast her what were the matter, she never said nothin', but just shook her head; and Master he spoke out angry to me and told me to mind my own business; as I'm sure I don't want to be meddlin'

with nobody's business, only I can't a-bear to see folk in trouble. Poor Missie! she never come down to dinner at all; and when I went up to her room to call her, she had the door locked, and never give me any answer; and then Missus comes, and says as how I mustn't disturb her. But I know what it's all about. It's that nasty Jezebul mischief-making Madam's doings—I'll lay my life on it."

Jezebul - A shameless or morally unrestrained woman.

"A'weel, Lizzie," quoth Janet, "the hizzie's awa' the noo, deil speed her! Sae we'll just let that flea stick in the wa' ye ken."

## Chapter IX. Farewell!

IN some way Will Enderby discovered the whereabouts of Florence Melmoth. He flew to her; he cast himself at her feet; he vowed his unalterable love. Sooth to say, she received him but coldly. She even reproached him as the cause of her expulsion from the house of his uncle. She strove to shake him off, more earnestly than she had previously striven to lure him on. But he would not be denied. He pressed his suit with irresistible ardour, such as only highly excitable natures can display. Then her heart relented towards him. She soothed and pacified him, and bent over him with words and phrases of soft endearment; and, for a brief moment, the fond youth was again supremely happy.

For a brief moment only. Soon the prosaic realities of the position re-asserted themselves. Will offered to marry her forthwith. The widow reminded him that he had no means of maintaining a wife—that love would not fill the larder—that, in short, they must wait for better times.

"I shall always love you," murmured the cajoler—"always, darling!"

"But will you wait?"—thus Will.

"I am young and strong, and I can work—oh! how hard shall I work with such a prize in view. Life would be worthless without you, my own sweet love! Be true to me—for any sake, be true to me, and I will make for you a home, my birdie, where you shall dwell in peace and pleasure all the days of your life."

"Dear Will! But how is this miracle to be accomplished? All my days have I wished for such a home—I would wait long for it—with you."

"I will go to New Zealand—to Otago. There are gold-fields, newly discovered, and very rich. Only last week the Aldinga came in with a rich freight and glorious news. I have thew, and sinew, and muscle, and I will cast my lot there. Fortune will smile upon me;—I will compel her smiles. Only promise to be true to me, and in a few short months I shall return to claim you as my bride. Promise me this, Florence, and I go away satisfied."

"I do promise it!" And she sealed the promise with her lips.

With her full rich rosy lips—with her false Judas lips.

Judas lips - Referring to the betrayal of Jesus by Judas in the Bible when Jesus told the disciples that the one who would betray him would kiss him.

How false, judge ye!

Scarcely had the enamoured youth left her presence, when she soliloquized thus—

"Dear fellow! He is awfully fond of me; but it's getting rather a bore! I'm glad he's going away. Going to make his fortune at gold-digging. Ha! ha! What an absurd boy it is. I wish some one, with a pocket-full of money, would love me half as much. By-the-bye, M'Carthy will be here presently. Jane (this to the servant), if that young gentleman calls again, be good enough to say that I am not at home."

Will took his passage on board the Aldinga for Dunedin. As the vessel passed Queenscliff, she was hailed by a boat, and a letter was handed up for "Mr. William Enderby."

Queenscliff - Township in South Victoria, Australia.

It contained bank notes of the value of £50. There was not any letter; but the address was in feminine hand-writing.

"Dear Florence!" cried Will, kissing the superscription. "She has sent me this out of her slender purse, to help me on the road to fortune. Well, some day I will return it with compound interest."

"I know I'm soft"—muttered John Grey, as he took his customary seat in the railway carriage—"I know I'm awfully soft to give Mabel that money. But she pleaded so hard for the young scamp. And then, he's Sister Sarah's son, after all. Well, well!—It's done now, and can't be helped.

## Chapter X. Harry Grey Resolves to Wait.

THUS it happened that Wild Will Enderby came to Otago. By Hope sustained, he endured wet and cold and toil, and all the manifold privations of the miner's life. He wrought from dewy morn till dusky eve, ever delving for the treasures which still eluded his pursuit. At Gabriel's and Wetherstone's

Gabriel's and Wetherstone's - Gullys that attracted a lot of miners in hopes of rich claims.

—at Waitahuna and Waipori—he sought in vain for the golden grains which should win for him the smiles of the cruel idol whom he so blindly worshipped.

Waitahuna - Was the site of the Chinese gold-mining settlement from 1866.

Then the Dunstan rush broke out; and as—solitary and heart-sick—he travelled thitherward, it so chanced that he fell in with Mr. George Washington Pratt, to whom, as "Harry Grey," he told his story.

"I loved that woman!"—cried. Will, in conclusion. "My God!—how dearly I loved her! And see—how she has broken faith with me."

With the words he held out to the Senior Partner a much worn and mutilated newspaper—it was the Melbourne "Argus," so dearly rescued from the river)—and pointed to the announcement of Florence Melmoth's marriage with Justin McCarthy.

"Well, Mr. William Enderby," said the Senior Partner composedly, "do you know it jest strikes me that you're a mighty poor judge of womankind anyway. Can't you see that that darned handsome she-painter has been fooling of you right through? Seems to me you may thank your stars that you ain't her bonded slavey, nor like to be; for such women as that don't make first-class wives nohow. Why, see here;—I'd sooner have one smile from that little blue-eyed cousin of yours, than a whole heap of slavering kisses from the other. And you 'ain't been on the square with Miss Mabel neither. No, sir! you've been playing it pretty low down on the gal; that's a fact."

"I see it all now. I have been a fool—an ass, and I am rightly punished for my folly. I don't know what is left for me except to pitch myself into the Molyneux, and so have done with it."

"Don't you think you might as well 'wait for the waggon' that we'll 'all take a ride' in some day, whether we like it or not? It's all a matter of taste, pardner; but to my mind you'll be more comfortable lying high and dry on the bank, than if you were feeding the eels in that watery ditch, below."

Will did not reply on the instant. Starting from his seat, he strode hastily to and fro, seeking by mere motion, to subdue his nervous agitation. The Senior Partner, meanwhile silently revolved his plug. Presently Will halted, and through his clenched teeth ground forth the sudden exclamation—

"Curse her!"

"Amen!" quoth Mr. George W. Pratt. "Right you are, pardner, nothing like blowing off steam, now and then, when the safety-valve is overweighted."

"I'll work on now," said Will (as we must henceforth call him). "I'll work on till I've made my pile; and I'll send her back her fifty pounds, and tell her what I think of her—the jade!"

"Make your pile, and welcome, pardner. The quicker the better, seeing I shall make mine jest about the same period. But don't you work to spite Ma'am Florence. Do it to pleasure Miss Mabel, jest as I'm doing it to please my Ruth. And as to the fifty notes—well, I told you I hadn't been muchly at school; but if I can't cipher that up, I'm a Dutchman. That money never came from the governess—you can bet your life on that."

"What?—do you think so?"

"Think so? No, sirree! I don't think so; I am sure of it. Your good old uncle, or else your aunt sent that money; not a cold-blooded plaster-of-Paris image, like that darned widow you're so mighty sweet on."

New light seemed to dawn on Will Enderby.

"By Jove! I believe you are right," he said. "I never thought of that before. Yes, she has fooled me throughout. She drove me to New Zealand to get me out of the way; and then—Aye, I know her now. Pratt, you have cleared away the mist which has too long blinded me. But stay, suppose this announcement (and he struck the offending paper violently) suppose this announcement should be a lie! That fellow M'Carthy may have inserted it himself to delude me. Such things have been done, you know."

"Still hankering after the flesh-pots of Egypt! Well, pardner, there's no fool like a fool in love.

Flesh-pots of Egypt - Originates from Exodus, but refers to luxurious self-indulgence or bodily gratification.

And you are the softest young punkin ever George W. Pratt set eyes upon. Jehoshaphat! Well; take your own way. But if I were you (which I'm specially thankful I ain't), somehow, I should feel like writing home, right away, jest to know how matters actually stood."

"You are right, old friend. I will write. But by Heaven! I won't believe that Florence Melmoth is false—I will hope against my fears, till I receive an answer from Melbourne."

"And in the meantime, do you suppose you'll pitch yourself into the Molyneux? Or do you suppose you'll procrastinate it to a more favourable opportunity? The river's rather dirty jest now. Better wait!"

And he waited.

End of Book II.

# BOOK 3.—THE PROSPECTORS.

## Chapter I. Fresh Fields and Pastures New.

As summer advanced, floods in the Molyneux became more frequent, and the water level became permanently higher, so that it was with much difficulty that the beach claims could be wrought. The Co. suffered severely, for their best ground extended far into the river; and at last all operations were, perforce, suspended, until King Frost should once more chain up the mountain torrents in icy bondage. The Regulations provided for this contingency; and the miners, having duly registered their claims as "protected," scattered themselves over the country in search of "fresh fields and pastures new." Nokomai and the Nevis, beyond the lofty Carrick Ranges, and "Campbell's," on the far side of the loftier "Old Man," or Obelisk Range, became favourite summer diggings.

Nokomai and the Nevis - Both Valleys that were settlements for miners that later became sheep and cattle stations.

But the great attraction was a wild glen, afterwards famous as Fox's,—otherwise the Arrow River. Mystery—most seductive of influences—invested this locality with illimitable charms. At the time whereof I write, its very whereabouts was an unsolved problem. All that was known was, that a party of miners was working in some remote spot beyond the mountains. "Distance lends enchantment to the view," and busy rumour whispered that the prospectors were gathering gold in fabulous quantities. In search of them there went out men to the east, to the west, to the north—never to the south, for it was believed that the anxiously sought Tom Tiddler's ground was yet farther inland than the Dunstan.

Tom Tiddler's ground - a place that is seen as no-man's-land that resources can be taken with no interference.

For a long time all endeavors to trace these prospectors were in vain. And this was all the more vexatious, because some of the party would occasionally come into the town for provisions and disappear again, leaving not a trace behind. Sometimes green hands would start away with them, deluded with the hope of being led into the promised land. But it ever ended in unprofitable wanderings in the wilderness. Crafty old bushmen followed them for miles, only to lose them at the end. The credulous and the "knowing ones" shared the same fate. Some camped out with the prospectors at night, and in the morning—lo! they were not. Others "spotted them," at dawn and missed them at sundown, and still the golden mystery remained unsolved.

Mr. George Washington Pratt ruminated much, consuming an inconceivable quantity of "plugs" in the process. He silently revolved these stories of the prospectors and their "Will-o'-the-Wisp" propensities, and having arrived at a conclusion, he convened a meeting of the Co. to discuss the matter.

Will-'o'-the-Wisp - a thing that deludes or leads astray.

First, duly voting himself to the chair, he proceeded to expound his views thus:—

"See here, pardner, these here boys don't go fooling around for nothing. I've been putting two and two together, and I find they make four, pretty much as they used to do. They've struck a big old placer somewhere, you bet. They are on heavy gold, too, for I saw some of the stuff that they traded away down to the township with one of the providers of garments for the Gentiles.

Gentiles - Non-jewish person.

Yes, Sirree! I saw that gold and handled it, and I'll lay a level bet that it came out of a mountain stream; for it's coarse and water-worn, just as I've seen it in California."

Said the junior,—"They were traced twelve miles up the Kawarau before they were lost last time."

"Yes, and the time before they were tracked thirty miles up the Molyneux. I've a kind of notion that they're digging somewhere at the back of Mount Pisa yonder. And by Jehoshaphat! I'll run them down if they show up again before next full moon. I observe they always come along either at new moon or in the last quarter, so that they can calculate to skedaddle in the dark anyhow. Say, pardner; I propose that I have leave of absence on urgent private business next time the prospectors visit our noble city. You concur? Right you are! So it's resolated accordingly. Enter it up in the records, if you please, Sir, and we'll get it confirmed next meeting."

About a week after this conversation, Mr Barney Roche dropped in for a gossip, as he was now frequently in the habit of doing. For the Irishman was too genial to bear malice on account of the dispute wherewith his acquaintanceship with our friends commenced. Indeed he greatly respected the Senior Partner, for the neat and able manner in which the latter had argued the question of title on that occasion.

"Well, boys," said Barney, "is it the grand news ye've been hearing?"

"No! What is it?" asked Will.

"I spelled over last week's paper," said the Senior Partner, "and the only news I could discover was that sugar was up two cents a pound, and there wern't no square gin in the market. That's all."

"Oh! To the devil wid your sugar and your square gin. Shure its gould I'm telling ye of."

"Yes! Glad to hear it. Havn't seen much of late in these parts."

"Listen, now! That ould Fox is in again wid one of his mates, and they've brought a bag of gould, as much as the two could carry they say,—not a word of a lie in it,—and it's off they'll be again in the morning. So me and my mates, and Sandy McCorkindale, and Tim Whelan, and a few more mean to follow them whin they go out, and we'd be glad if yerself'd go wid us, because we all know ye're a 'cute man, and its the likes of yez that's wanted in this business."

"Thank you, sir, for your esteemed opinion," said the Senior Partner, "but I ain't on."

"Oh, bother!" persisted Barney, "there's a tidy fortune for all of us if we find these new diggings. Come now, say ye'll join us, and here's the hand of a man that never went back on his friend."

The Senior Partner did not take the proffered hand. To have done so would have been to pledge his companionship in the proposed expedition. But he said:—

"See here, mate, I'll tell you what I conclude to do. I'll jest go down to the township with you, and take the bearings of these here prospectors, and I'll shape my course thereafter accordingly."

Forthwith he took a reef in his belt, stowed away a fresh plug in his upper starboard locker, hoisted his beaver on the maintop, and cracking on all sail, shaped his course for the township with Barney as consort.

## Chapter II. What the Stars Witnessed.

IT was late in the evening when the Senior Partner returned, but the Southern Cross was still high in the heavens, and the silvery light of the young moon lingered lovingly on the mountain peaks. The winds were still, and silence reigned supreme, save where the brawling river battled unceasingly with the stubborn rocks.

"It ain't Fox at all," said the Senior Partner in reply to Will's queries; "it's jest two of his mates. But they're on gold anyhow,—they don't say no to that. And there's a whole mob of fellows shepherding them."

"Do you intend to go with them?" Will asked.

"No, sir, that little game won't suit this child. I mean to worry through by myself. See now; you jest bide here, and work the merry sluice-box, and let me follow the trail. I've a notion that one man is better than a crowd for this kind of thing. You leave it to me, pardner."

"I'll do nothing of the sort," cried Will vehemently. "The claim—what can be got at of it—is nearly wrought out, and I'm weary of these eternal rocks and beaches. I go with you, Pratt."

"Amendment duly moved that you don't, and I give my casting vote in favour thereof. So that's settled. You'll jest stop where you are pardner, and keep the ball a-rolling, while I prospect after these darned foxes. Too many hounds spoil the sport."

"But *I will* go, Pratt. Do you think I can go on fossicking in patience here, while you are running down the game? No, no, old fellow; it will not do, I must go with you."

"Well, pardner, I say you must not. It's been duly resoluted contrary, and the rules of the Co. will have to be maintained in their primitive vigour. Yes, sir, that is so."

Will lost his temper—always an easy matter for him. He sprang to his feet, and the blood flamed scarlet over face and forehead.

"I have had enough of your absurd rules," he exclaimed passionately. "I'll not stand any more of this nonsense. Who are you, that you order me to stay here? I tell you I will not. If you go from this without me, I'll go by myself, or I'll join Roche's mob. I will not remain here. Do you think I am a fish or a frog. Better that we parted at once. At once, I say! Let us dig up the gold and divide it, and then each man can travel his own road."

The Senior Partner did not immediately answer. I think he was rather amused than angry. Certainly he did not exhibit any indications of the latter feeling. For a time he discussed his plug in silence; Will meanwhile fretting up and down the narrow limits of the tent. At last the American spoke.

"Been treading on to the tail of the British lion, I guess. Well, when that noble beast gets riled, the eagle can spread his wings and soar right away; and that's jest what I reckon on doing. I ain't a-going to have my calculations capsized by any of your darned meddling. No, sir! Don't you believe that. And as to the gold—What in creation is that?"

With the word he darted out of the tent. His practised ear had caught a sound—faint, indeed, but ominous. It was the sound of a footstep on the earth without.

The only living object discernible was a vagrant horse, industriously cropping the herbage on the hillside; and after a brief survey the Senior Partner returned to the tent. "It was that noble Arabian," said he.

Yet for one moment he was but a single pace distant from the form of a man who lay recumbent amidst the rocks. Presently this man arose, and, with cautious step, approached the habitation of the Co. The last rays of

the moon had disappeared, and the evil bird crouched in congenial darkness. Long and patiently crouched he behind the tent; and not a word that was exchanged between the partners escaped him. For once the Senior Partner was outwitted.

And they exchanged many words. But Will's impetuosity availed nothing against the granitic resolution of Mr. George W. Pratt. Interesting as the discussion was to the listener, it is not necessary that I should repeat it here. Let me simply give the *finale*.

"Right you are, pardner!" thus the senior partner. "Glad you've done sitting on the safety valve; thought you'd bust right up jest now. Now you've slow'd down, we can talk righteously. Best dig up the root of evil to-morrow, and lodge it at the Camp. Safest there, pardner. You see some of these darned night hawks might hover around and get scent of the plunder. You can paddle away by yourself for a spell, and if any inquiring friends leave their pasteboard for this child, tell them that George Washington Pratt is gone into the country for the benefit of his shattered constitution, leaving his bereaved partner to lament his early loss."

"I'll do it," said Will; "though it's awfully hard on me. I detest being alone. How long will you be away?"

"Well, I ain't able to mention the precise date of my return jest now. But if I don't bestow the light of my countenance upon you within a week, you may bet that I'm located on a good claim somewhere, and you can trade away the tent and fixings, and get all ready to make a fresh start."

"But how on earth am I to find you?"

"Jest you leave that to George W. Pratt. I'll send you sailing directions; you bet on that."

And so it was finally arranged.

"And now," quoth the Senior Partner in conclusion. "I'll turn in for a snooze till our foxy friends waltz along. You keep watch on deck, pardner, and rouse me out whenever they heave in sight."

Mr. George W. Pratt composed himself to sleep, and Will Enderby addressed himself to the task of watching. As an essential preliminary, he filled and lighted his pipe. Then he passed out into the bright starlight.

Whilst Will was cutting up the tobacco, the crouching listener arose from his position, made a few noiseless paces in the direction of the river, then swiftly disappeared over the bank. "Ho! ho!" he chuckled when he found himself in safety on the beach. "By the living jingo!—I'm in luck's way to-night."

And he rapidly pursued his way down the river. Presently to him came another.

"What a precious long time you've been," growled the new-comer. "I was just coming to look after you. I thought as how maybe you might ha' been grabbed by the Yankee. Well, what's up? Do they mean to hook it to-night?"

"The Yank is going," responded the other; "but t'other stops behind. But I've dropped on to a better lay than the new rush. What do you think? Bless'd if they don't plant their gold in the tent, and the young 'un is to dig it up and take it into the Camp to-morrow."

Then there ensued a colloquy between these men, wherein they discussed a problem not to be found in Euclid, of which the essential points were:—Given a bag of gold (lying somewhere in the bosom of Mother Earth) A B, and a long sheath-knife C, to find the angle of incidence.

Long time Will watched and waited. The Southern Cross was dipping to the horizon, and the jewelled belt of Orion sparkled brightly overhead. Suddenly two human figures approached. One of them led a loaded pack-horse. Silently and steadily they passed by the tent and proceeded up the Gorge. Then Will awoke the Senior Partner.

"Jest a I expected," said that worthy. "They've eucher'd Roche's mob and got clean away. Now, Sirree, I'm on the war-path, fair and square, and if I don't overhaul these new diggings, pardner, I'll chuck up my hand, for I shan't be worth a cent as a Senior, that's a fact."

Will was over-mastered by excitement. "By Heaven!" he cried, "I shall go mad if I am kept waiting here, while you are having all the fun to yourself. Do be reasonable, old fellow. Let me accompany you."

"I am reasonable, my young and cheerful friend. I'm so teetotally reasonable that I'll jest throw the whole thing overboard if there is to be any more negotiating about it."

That night some dwellers on the Western side of the Molyneux were startled from their slumbers by a noise, as of angry voices in high dispute. Hastily rushing forth, they beheld by the starlight the figures of two men on the other bank, struggling as for mastery. Now rolling on the earth, now erect, they wrestled fiercely with each other, and ever as they contended they neared the precipitous brink of the river. "Help! help!"—and the despairing cry awoke the echoes of the George. One of the figures was seen falling—falling downwards, towards the boiling waters.—"Murder!"—Thus, from the depths, rang the shriek of the doomed man. There was a dull thud—a surging splash—then all was silent. The other figure stood awhile motionless, as if peering into the abyss. Then throwing his arms skyward, he uttered a yell as of a wild animal in pain, and turning, disappeared from sight amidst the recesses of the mountains.

And "the stars in their courses" shone placidly down from the unclouded sky; and the turbulent river swept

on, chaunting its hoarse resounding song of triumph, and the terrified beholders watched and listened in vain for further token of conflict.

"The stars in their courses" - Judges 5:20.

Half-an-hour afterwards a number of men came hurrying along the Gorge. It was Barney and his mates.

As they passed by, Barney called loudly on each member of the Co., but answer received he none. The tent was deserted.

"Ah, thin!" said Barney, "they've stole a march on us, boys. Shure, he's a wonderful cute man, is that Yankee."

## Chapter III. On the Trail.

THE scene opens on a rolling plain, flanked by the rocky "spurs" of the ever-present mountains; a plain of unequal surface, broken by "terraces," and water-courses, and of varying width—irregular. Here the river runs almost level with the land, coursing around tiny islands, and flowing in many ana-branches, or "back-waters," as they are termed. Amidst these the native flax flourishes in wild luxuriance, and even the cantankerous Tumatukuru attains considerable magnitude. The pale green waters, untainted by earthly pollution, roll smoothly over a pebble-strewn channel, which spreads so widely from bank to bank, as to allow of the traveller crossing on horseback—sometimes even on foot—at certain well-known fording places.

On the Eastern bank stood two tents, between which blazed a huge fire. At the rear of the uppermost tent, a horse was tethered out, and near at hand, on the ground, lay a pack-saddle.

Around the fire were a number of men, blue-shirted and hirsute. Miners these, no doubt. In truth they were none other than the Prospectors and their pursuers. The former, impeded by the pack-horse, had been overtaken by Barney Roche's party; and thus brought to bay, they had camped for the rest of the night.

"Well, boys, you have trapped us fairly, and I throw up the sponge. I am going to turn in, and in the morning I'll show you the road to Fox's. Throw some more scrub on the fire, Tom, to keep it alive. We shall want to make an early start."

The speaker was a cheery-faced Englishman—one of the Prospectors.

"Begorra, thin,—(and the voice was the voice of Barney)—the devil a turn-in I'll take. We got a hoult of yez now, and I don't mane to lose sight of yez again this blessed night;—barrin' I think it's mornin' already."

And indeed a faint flush in the Eastern horizon heralded the advent of day.

There was one spectator of this scene of whose contiguity none were aware. It was the Senior Partner. Ensconced in a flax-bush within a few yards of the fire, he quietly marked the proceedings of both parties.

The Englishman entered the tent as if to rest; and "Tom" continued to heap the green scrub on the fire with such zeal, that the distant rocks glowed in the fierce light, and a huge volume of smoke ascended to the heavens. And still, in friendly fashion, he laughed and chatted with the pursuers, as he bustled about now fetching more fuel, now stirring up the fire, till it roared and crackled, and sent forth fresh clouds of blinding smoke.

The Senior Partner slightly shifted his position, so as to bring the Prospectors' tent more within the range of vision. Then he saw the cheery Englishman crawl from the rear, and fasten the pack-saddle on the horse. Next he proceeded to load up, always keeping under cover of the friendly smoke. This completed, he freed the animal from the tether-rope, and moved away up the plain, or "flat."

The Senior Partner, still sheltered by the flax plants, followed at a safe distance.

"Wé-ká! wé-ká! wé-ká!"—Three times the plaintive cry of the "wood hen" was heard. It was a preconcerted signal. The Englishman had forded the river.

Then "Tom" yawned and stretched himself, and said, "I'm tired out. Good night, boys. Be sure you wake us early in the morning."

And having thrown on another armful of scrub, he also disappeared within the tent. A few minutes after, he emerged, as the Englishman had done, at the back, and hurried to the river. From amongst the bushes he drew forth a "mokihi," on which he crossed the river in safety and re-joined his comrade.

For the benefit of the unlearned in such matters, let me here explain that a 'Mokihi' is constructed of 'Koradies';—*Anglice*:—the flowering stalks of the flax,—three faggots of which, lashed firmly in a point at the small ends, and expanded by a piece of wood at the stern, constitute the sides and bottom of the frail craft, which, propelled by a paddle, furnishes sufficient means of transport for a single individual.

The Senior Partner watched awhile, and noted the course taken by the Prospectors. "The Lord hath delivered them into my hands," he said. Then he prepared to follow them.

The task was not an easy one. Close to the bank there was a deep channel, wherein the cold smooth river glided all too swiftly for any but an expert swimmer to venture the passage. In vain the American, unacquainted with the fording place, sought for shallower waters. But he was not to be beaten. That would have been 'a

circumstance' such as had never occurred to his imagination.

A little way beyond the tents, was one of the small islands whereof mention has been made. Here he resolved to make the hazardous attempt.

At first he cut a quantity of the broad flax-leaves, each five or six feet in length. Of these he made a line, knotting the blades together by a series of 'sailor's hitches.' The centre of the line he fastened to the stem of a Tumatukauro bush; one end he secured around his waist, the other he held free in his hand. Then he boldly let himself down into the stream.

Twice he essayed to cross to the island, and twice the current carried him away, and drove him baffled back.

"Guess it's got to be done, anyhow." That was all he said.

Loosing the flax-line, he made a careful survey of the locality. At one point the curvature of the land forced the stream against the island; whereas his previous efforts had been made where the waters swept inwards towards the bank. Here then he made the next experiment. He made fast the flax-line again, and for the third time he ventured into the river. As he had calculated, the current now aided his endeavors, but the strain on the line was excessive. He struggled on, half-swimming, half-floating, till within a yard of the island. Then suddenly a knot in the body-line gave way, and he had only the loose end to hold on by.

He made a desperate effort. Inhaling a huge draught of air he plunged forward. The action caused the line to slip from his grasp, severely lacerating his hand as it passed through his clenched fingers. Already the remorseless flood was sweeping him away, when he clutched a low-bending bough of Manuka scrub, and by its aid drew himself ashore on the island.

His troubles were now over. On the far side of the island, the waters, though swift, were shallow. Here his length of limb stood him in good stead. Without hesitation he waded through the stream and safely reached the farther bank.

Nothing suspecting, Barney and his friends waited patiently till the morning sun shone full on the smouldering embers of the fire. Then he went over to the Prospectors' tent.

"Now, boys!" he cried, "it's time yez were stirring."

Of course there came not any response to this civil adjuration.

"Be my conscience, thin," quoth Barney, "but it's mighty sound ye're sleeping."

He parted the folds of the tent and peeped in. The tent was empty and bare. One object only met his gaze. It was a hieroglyphical drawing in charcoal on the back of the tent,—a skeleton sketch of a human figure with out-stretched digits, pointing an impossible thumb to a supposititious nose. Barney viewed it aghast. Soon he gave vent to a howl of anguish. He danced an impromptu measure around the tent, and administered to the front pole a kick, which hurt the pole not at all, but hurt his own foot very much.

"Och! by this and by that," he cried, "they've chated us entirely.—Ah! the deludherin' hounds! Shure they're gone, the devil knows where. The curse of Cromwell on them, the dhirty spalpeens, that they are! What'll we do now, boys?"

The only answer to which melancholy query, was a chorus of maledictions, couched in the most terse and vigorous phraseology of the Three Kingdoms.

## Chapter IV. From Information Received.

AT early dawn two miners presented themselves at the Camp. They aroused the sleepy policeman on duty, who woke up the reluctant Sergeant, who ventured on the bold step of disturbing the slumbers of the Commissioner. To him they imparted so much as they knew or had seen of the midnight struggle as herein-before narrated.

Then commenced a species of mental tooth-drawing, wherein the officials proved themselves to be experts of the first water.

"What were their names?"—John Edwards and Philip Trewartha. "Why didn't they give information before?"—Because they couldn't get across. "How was that?"—Why the ferrymen were gone to bed they supposed, and the boat was on the wrong side of the river. "Did they try?"—Yes, they did try,—they had been cooeying ever since daylight. "Could they tell who lived near where it happened?"—Well, yes; they thought it was a big Yankee—Yankee Joe *he* was, and he had a young fellow called Harry for a mate. Didn't know his other name.

All this and much more was extracted from the men by the combined efforts of the Sergeant and the Commissioner.

"Take a constable, Sergeant, and go with these men to the place. Make all enquiries, and report to me!"

And the Commissioner resumed the broken thread of his repose.

The Sergeant was a man of action. He started forthwith, and was faithfully guided by the miners to the

indicated locality.

There a strange scene presented itself. Inside the deserted tent of the Co., the contents were scattered in wild confusion. The bunks—rude structures of bush-poles, with flour-bag sacking—had been torn down; and clothing and blankets were heaped pell-mell on the floor. On removing these it was apparent that the ground had recently been disturbed, for it lay in untrodden heaps and hollows. Moreover, a pick lying amidst the litter, was encrusted with fresh earth; and the newly broken blade of a sheath-knife was found in a corner of the tent.

Externally there were undoubted evidences of a struggle, for marks as of heavy bodies rolling in the dust were yet visible. A dark object lying on the rocks below attracted the Sergeant's attention; and, on descending, he found a felt hat with a name written inside, thus:— *Harry Grey, W. E. 5. 9. 62.*

A few paces removed, lay the torn sleeve of a blue serge shirt, and—more ominous still—there was a white quartz pebble—a small boulder rather—stained darkly red; painted, so to speak, with a broad splash of blood.

The Sergeant collected his evidences—the hat, the shirt-sleeve, the quartz, the pick, and the fragmentary knife. Then, leaving the constable in charge of the tent, he made a domiciliary visit to every habitation in the vicinity. But other information obtained he none. So he returned to the Camp to render his report.

"Very unsatisfactory," commented the Commissioner. "There has been foul play: no doubt of it. Something must be done, Sergeant. It can't be allowed to rest here. Leave the constable at the tent. Tell him to keep inside, and to watch. Something may come of it. And, Sergeant—keep these fellows under surveillance. They know more of this matter than they choose to tell."

"No, Sir," answered the Sergeant, (who had a strong *penchant* for long words, which he did not always render correctly), "from information received, I find they are quiet decent men. The ferryman corroborated their narration, as to their coming over this morning. I've made inquiries, and they were not on this side of the river all yesterday."

"Very well; then find the Yankee. This seems to be his mate's hat. Where is the fellow? Find him. Sergeant—find him!"

"What way am I to find him, Sir?"

"That's your business. Found he must be. He can't have got far away. Find him at once, Sergeant!"

The Sergeant saluted, and went forth upon his quest.

Into the township he went, and there he learnt, first, that the Senior Partner—otherwise Yankee Joe—had been seen on the previous day in company with some men who had proposed to follow up Fox's mates; and secondly, that he had gone away by himself early in the evening, not waiting for the others, who had left at a later period.

Half-an-hour thereafter, the Sergeant was in the saddle and away. As he passed the tent of the Co. he interviewed the constable.

"Has anything recurred?" he asked.

"No," said the constable; "barrin' an ill-looking fellow as come by and axed what was up. And when I tould him, he said the people that lived here didn't join horses very well; and the tall one—that's the Yankee—shot a man dead some time ago. (Shure, he's a great blackguard, that same Yankee, by all accounts.) And he informed me that a friend of his heard them quarrelling about some gould when he was passing by last night. And no doubt that's been the row."

"Why didn't you arrest him?" demanded the Sergeant, whose ideas of Magna Charta and the liberty of the subject were rather vague.

Magna Charta - Meaning the 'Great Charter' Granted by King John June 15 1215. Most famous of the clauses is the 39th which allows for justice and trial for all 'free men.'

"Shure thin, I had no orders."

"Orders, indeed!" exclaimed the Sergeant indignantly. "Orders is it? Are you not cognicent of the fact, that it is your duty to arrest every man, woman, and child, likely to give evidence of an offence against the peace of the mind of Her Majesty, her crown and dignity? Constable Finnegan, I'm ashamed of ye!"

"Faix, I'd have a fine tintful thin; for every sowl that comes along pretends to know something about it."

The Sergeant ignored the reply.—"Which way did the man proceed?" he inquired.

"Up the Gorge."

"And what like was he?"

"Like a digger, sur."

"Constable Finnegan, you're no better than an omadhaun.

Omadhaun - Foolish person.

The evidence is purlocating through your fingers. Describe him. Was he tall or stout?"

"Indade he was. He was five feet three, maybe."

"Was he dark or fair?"

"Shure he was black as night, barrin' his beard."

"And what colour was that?"

"That's more than I'd like to say, for he was clean shaved."

"That's suspicious. No honest man shaves now-a-days. What way was he dressed?"

"Dressed is it?—Not at all to speak of. Only a blue shirt and trousers, just like any other digger."

"Constable Finnegan, the force is going to the devil. (Here the sergeant mounted his horse.) Keep strict watch; (This from the saddle)—and if that fellow shows his visage again, apprehend him on suspicion of being an accomplice. D'y'e mind me now?"

With, which parting injunction, fiercely enunciated, the bold Sergeant rode on his way.

## Chapter V. A Double Ambush.

LET us follow the footsteps of the Senior Partner.

The course taken by the Prospectors skirted the base of Mount Pisa, traversing the bare, shelterless plains of the Upper Clutha, as the country about the junction of the Kawarau is termed—a country unpleasantly devoid of timber, both on the plains and on the ranges. Yet for many miles the Senior Partner followed, unobserved; sheltering sometimes in shallow creeks and sunken hollows, sometimes behind swelling rises, or the jutting points of mountain spurs. About noon the Prospectors halted at the mouth of a deep gully, where a pellucid brooklet chattered (to use a Tennysonian phrase) over the grey sands, as it sparkled merrily in the cheerful sunlight. Concealed behind some friendly clusters of the beautiful Toi-toi grass, the Senior Partner looked on. Apparently they were about to prepare for dinner, for they lighted a fire, and "slung the billy."—(*Anglicé*: a tin vessel used for preparing tea—the indispensable concomitant of all repasts, and chief luxury of the dwellers in bush land.)

Suddenly they quenched the fire, scattered the brands, and hurriedly retreated up the gully out of sight.

"Guess there's a screw loose somewhere," muttered the Senior Partner. "Wonder what on earth gave 'em that scare!"

The cause was soon apparent. A crowd of men were coming up the plain. It was Barney Roche's mob. The hoof-prints of the pack-horse indented in the soft mud of the river bank, had afforded a clue to the Prospectors' track; and they were now in eager pursuit.

Further concealment was impossible. The Senior Partner recognised the fact, and his course was decided. He moved boldly out into the open ground, full in sight of the pursuers. He heard the shout which greeted his appearance, but he heeded it not. With long deliberate strides he went on past the gully, on past terrace and creek, till having rounded a broad spur which hid him from view, he climbed the slope with cat-like activity, and, gaining the summit, threw himself down on the ground.

He waited some time expecting the men to pass by. But he waited in vain. Amongst the party were old bushmen, to whose experienced eyes it was evident that the Prospectors had not crossed the creek. For there were no prints of horses' feet on the other side; whilst the still smoking fire-brands revealed the recent presence of the hunted miners. Accordingly, the pursuers halted, and proceeded to explore the gully.

Somewhat astonished at their non-appearance, the Senior Partner ventured across the spur, cautiously moving from rock to rock. When he obtained a view of the gully, no sign or sound of human life was perceptible. The pursued and the pursuers had alike vanished from sight in the tortuous recesses of the ravines.

"Well, I'm darned," soliloquised Mr. George W. Pratt, "if this ain't the smartest game played by full-blown men. Poker ain't a circumstance to it. It's jest Moses in the bulrushes, with the Egyptians busting theirselves, trying to excavate the infant prodigy. Reckon I'll locate myself on this here spur for a spell, like a lonely sparrow on the house-top. They can't get over that big hunk of stones without leaving tracks, on account of the snow; and if the diggings are hereabouts, they're jest fixed like beavers in a trap."

An hour or more passed away, and still the American remained at his post of observation. Then he heard voices as of many men, seemingly coming down the gully. At the same instant a moving speck on the summit of a far-off rock attracted his attention. Levelling his field-glass, he saw that it was a man. Evidently there was another watcher in the field. His ready instinct told him that this was one of the Prospectors.

Here let me assume the author's privilege, and narrate what occurred, as it afterwards became known to me.

The Prospectors—alarmed at the approach of Barney and his party—forced their way far up a small branch of the main gully, to a spot where dense scrub afforded a secure covert for horse and man, whilst the rocky bed of the creek left no tell-tale traces of the direction which they had taken. Here they remained until their pursuers gave up the search, and returned to the nplai. As the sounds of pursuit died away, the Englishman clambered up to an overhanging rock, whence he could mark their farther proceedings, and he thereby revealed his presence to the Senior Partner.

But Barney's party were not easily baffled. Notwithstanding their fruitless search, they still felt convinced that the Prospectors were in the vicinity. Accordingly, they proceeded to invest the enemy's stronghold. In other

words, they encamped at the foot of the gully, determined, as Barney said, "to see it out."

So here were a score of men watching two, two watching twenty, and one man watching all. Said the Senior Partner to himself, "This here game is getting rather mixed."

It soon became evident to the Prospectors that all exit from the gully was cut off. Hour succeeded hour, and all the parties to this triangular contest of bush strategy remained quiescent, waiting each for the other to make the first move. Towards sundown the Senior Partner observed the figure on the rock descend there-from into the gully.

"Guess they're going to lead a fresh suit now," said Mr. George W. Pratt. "Don't suppose they'll ante up to these galoots, so I'll jest take another hand myself."

Carefully keeping out of sight fom below, he climbed still further up the mountain towards the Prospectors. They, meanwhile, unloaded the horse and concealed his burden of flour, tea, sugar, and other similar comestibles in a convenient recess of the impending rocks. Then they turned the animal adrift, and struck across the spurs which intervened between the gullies and the open plain.

Their course led them within a very brief distance of the spot where the Senior Partner lay perdue. But they saw him not. Hundreds of men, indeed, might have lain concealed behind the massive boulders which cumbered the mountain side.

He allowed them to descend into the plain. Then he followed—always at a distance. As they rounded a point, the American moved up to it, and there remained until they had again passed out of sight, when the same process was repeated. And thus they went on exultant, with the Senior Partner ever on the track, yet never in sight.

Ere long they came to a shallow river: I may as well say at once that I refer to the Cardrona. Crossing this stream, the Prospectors still held on their course till the grey shades of evening superseded the glories of sunlight. Then they halted.

They halted at a shepherd's hut—a dreary edifice—windowless, with walls of mud, standing beneath the shadow of a gloomy terrace, in a chill valley, over which the faint light of the segmentary moon cast a dim radiance. As they approached this outpost of civilization, several collie-dogs—open-mouthed and loud-voiced—ran forth to meet the strangers.

[I have sometimes thought how glorious a thing it would be if the political watch-dogs of the human flock were as faithful guardians of the trust reposed in them, as are the canine conservators of wethers, ewes, and hoggetts. Nevertheless, even the best of dogs cannot always prevent the sheep being shorn.]

The inmates of the hut came out. A brief parley ensued, then the Prospectors entered. The door was closed—the dogs, their duty discharged, retreated to their several lairs, and silence reigned supreme—save where the stream murmured a faint lullaby in its rocky bed.

## Chapter VI. In the Toils.

THE Prospectors were housed for the night. The Senior Partner sat down on a stray boulder, and self-debated the position. Somewhat after this fashion went the argument.

"They were up all last night—they can't do without rest—therefore they'll stop here till morning. What will their next move be? Will they go back for the tucker? (*i.e.*, provisions)—or will they go on without it? They want the tucker—they went into the Dunstan purposely to get it. Guess they'll go back for it. Anyway, I'd best wait out here, and see which way they travel."

So he coiled himself in his blankets, refreshed his plug, and patiently abided the issue.

Truth to tell, he was becoming weary and exhausted. He had taken but little provender with him, and a solitary biscuit was all that now remained of his store. He thought, somewhat hungrily, of the savoury mutton-chops which the Prospectors were probably enjoying, and his stomach yearned for those dainty viands. The temptation to enter the hut and share therein was powerful. But he had set himself to do a certain thing, and with true honest courage, he quelled all mutinous thoughts, and resolved to do it.

As he lay thus, bravely enduring, the quick tramp of a horse coming up the valley arrested his attention. How little do we know of the mysterious impulses that hold sway over us. Without consciousness of the wherefore, the pulse of the Senior Partner quickened in unison with the hoof-beats of the coming messenger of fate. He raised himself to listen. Onward and nearer, and nearer still, came the horseman. With rapid strides he passed. Straight to the hut he rode, regardless of the yelping dogs, swung himself swiftly out of the saddle, and threw the reins over the neck of his panting steed.

The unusual noise aroused the inmates; so that even as he dismounted, the door was thrown open, and the bright fire-light streamed out upon the desolate waste. Before a word could be spoken, he entered the hut and closed the door. Then he cast a sharp, suspicious glance around the interior.

For a brief space, no word was spoken. With his back to the door, and with pistol in hand, stood the bold

Sergeant,—for he it was. A fierce fire blazed in the rude chimney—fairly eclipsing the feeble rays of a melancholy tallow candle, which, unsnuffed and untended, glimmered over the fragments of a truly pastoral feast, where rude tin pannikins of coarse black tea, flanked iron plates cumbered with half-picked bones. The shepherds and their guests—the Prospectors whom we wot of—had risen to their feet at the entrance of the Sergeant, and now faced him, wonderingly. They marked his silver buttons, and tacitly conceded to those emblems of authority that deference and respect for law and order which is such a characteristic trait of the true Briton, to whatsoever order he belongeth.

The Sergeant briefly stated his errand. He was in pursuit of 'a person' called Yankee Joe, who was known to have left the Dunstan in search of Fox's diggings. Had they seen 'anything of a man' answering his description?—which description, howsoever obtained, he rendered with marvellous accuracy.

No, they had not seen him; no such man had passed that way, &c., &c. (Chorus of confirmatory negatives, delivered in tones of variously modulated aggrievedness). These men felt themselves injured by the supposition that they had even seen a man who was 'wanted' by the police. Moreover they had no relish for being interrogated at the muzzle of a pistol. For here their respect for law and order was sadly at variance with their sense of the fitness of things.

Whatever sins they might have had upon their consciences, this evidently was not of them. The experienced Sergeant saw this at a glance. He dropped the pistol into its case, and moved from the door.

"What's the matter?" asked the Prospectors. "What has he been doing?"

"Well, boys," quoth the Sergeant, easily gliding from the authoritative into the confidential mood,—"There has been a most barbarous crime perpetrated at the Dunstan, and from information received there is ground for believing the offender to be the man known as 'Yankee Joe.' Listen, now; the killing of one snake would likely cause the death of fifty little vipers which might have been bred of the mother snake. Just in that same way the apprehension of one criminal might hinder the perpetuation of fifty offences. Now this Yankee—Pellat is his name—is a desperate person; and I tell you it is your bounden duty, if you know anything of him, to make a clean breast of it."

The rising night breeze whistled shrilly around the hut, penetrating the crevices and causing the miserable candle to flicker most ignobly. The dogs yelped furiously, and a shepherd arose to quell the tumult. A step was heard, the latch was lifted,—the Senior Partner entered the hut.

So sudden was his appearance that even the bold Sergeant's loquacious propensities were temporarily checked.

"I'm on for one;" said the Senior Partner, with his accustomed coolness. "Guess my breast ain't muchly in the way of wanting cleaning. Good evening, gents. I am George Washington Pratt, I am. Sorry to intrude on this festive occasion; but it seems to me my name has been disrespectfully handled by some of you. Was it you, Mister?—(This to the Sergeant)—You ain't left your card on me, so I can't mention your name rightly."

Having thus spoken, he deliberately seated himself on an inverted bucket, and discharged a liquid shot at an aggravating knot in the back-log.

The Sergeant stepped across the floor, and laid his hand on the American's shoulder.—"You are my prisoner!" he said.

The Senior Partner shook himself free from the policeman's grasp, much as a Newfoundland dog shakes off the unwelcome paw of a too familiar terrier.

"Supposing you were to tell me what it's all about. It ain't a conundrum, is it? Because if it is, I give it up."

The Sergeant rose to the dignity of the occasion.—"Don't answer me in that dericive manner," he said. "By virtue of my authority, I arrest you in the Queen's name on a charge of murder."

"Well, Sir, do you know it rather strikes me that your Queen ain't a very well informed young person,—that's a fact.—Say—what's this here foolishness about?"

The Sergeant looked round aghast—horrified by this irreverent reference to the talismanic name which to his strictly-trained official mind was as a fetish to be bowed down to on all occasions.—"Men," said he, "I take you all to witness the *ri bald* and nefarious language in which this—('fellow' he was about to say, but he caught the peculiar gaze of the American, and substituted a less offensive phrase)—in which this person has spoken of Her Gracious Majesty; and I call upon you as good citizens to aid me in making the arrest."

And again he moved towards the Senior Partner, on hostile thoughts intent. The others also crowded round confusedly.

The Senior Partner waved them away.—"Hands off, boys!" he cried, now fairly at bay. "The first man that lays a finger on my shirt will have a mighty smart chance to hunt grass. There's a pretty copious mistake here I reckon. Perhaps, Mister, you don't mind mentioning the name of the party that you're addle-headed enough to suppose I've killed. It would be a sort of ease to my mind, you see, as I ain't in possession of the information myself."

The Sergeant produced his warrant.—"Here is my authority to arrest you, Joseph Pellatt, *alias* Yankee Joe;

suspected of having wilfully and of malice before-thought killed one Henry or Harry Grey at the Dunstan Gorge on Tuesday last. It's all in proper form, so you had better go easy."

And he held out the warrant for inspection.

The Senior Partner listened as one stunned by a great shock. The blood forsook his face, and with staring eyes, dilated nostrils, and lips apart, he stood speechless and horror-stricken. His extreme emotion was interpreted by the spectators as an evidence of guilt. They recoiled from him—from this Cain, denounced as the slayer of his brother—with horror equal to his own. Even the accustomed Sergeant saw only the terror of a detected criminal.

The intense silence that followed the reading of the formidable document was painful. It was first broken by the Senior Partner.

"What?" he gasped. "Will—Harry dead?—Killed? And I suspected of being his murderer? My God Did you say that?"

Despite his thorough belief in the American's guilt—a belief which was the natural outgrowth of the professional atmosphere of suspicion wherein the worthy Sergeant lived, and moved, and had his being—he could not but be affected by the evident distress of the prisoner.

"Yes," he replied, "that is the offence you are charged with. Indeed I hope you'll be able to prove your innocence. At present things look very black against you."

And he produced a pair of handcuffs. Pratt heeded them not till the Surgeon attempted to fasten them on his wrists. Then the touch of the cold iron roused him. He drew himself up to his full height, and firmly compressed his lips.

"I'll go with you, Sir," he said very quietly. "You needn't put the bracelets on me. I'll be peaceable enough, never fear. Harry dead! Murdered! Poor Harry! You'll please pardon me, Mister, and gents all; you see I was very fond of poor Harry."

And the strong man bowed his face upon his hands, and wept like a child.

## Chapter VII. Flotsam.

A little way above the Dunstan township, a solitary negro stood upon the beach, industriously labouring at his vocation. He was what is termed, in mining phraseology, a "hatter,"—meaning one who works by himself. The despised African had no mate. Alone and unaided he scooped the wash-dirt into his cradle, which he vigorously rocked with the left hand, whilst with the right he ladled water from the river into the "hopper," or sieve.

There was a fresh in the river that day, and the stream was laden with occasional drift-wood, brought down from the forest at the head of the Lakes. Many pieces were floated into an eddy near at hand whence they were carefully drawn out by the African, and laid aside for the purposes of fuel.

Thus, with one eye intent on the cradle, and the other scanning the flood, the African toiled away merrily in the sunlight, ever and anon enlivening his work by chaunting snatches of favoured melodies,—

*"Buffalo gals are you comin' out to-night,  
To dance by de light ob de moon?"*

*"Buffalo gals are you comin' out to-night,/ To dance by de light ob de moon?"* - A traditional American folk song published as *Lubly Fan* in 1844 by [John Hodges](#) a minstrel

"My golly! Here's a big fellow comin'."

He cast aside the "dipper," and hastened towards the eddy. He had caught a glimpse of an apparently large log, tossing and drifting in the troubled waters.

Before he reached the spot, the seeming log had been drawn in and sucked down by the vortex. The African, gleefully anticipating a prize, patiently awaited its reappearance.

Round spun the eddy with ceaseless hiss and roar. The African, with hook in hand, stood upon the brink, ready for action. Suddenly confronting him, the head and shoulders of a man shot up out of the water perpendicularly.

"Gor-a-mighty! What de debbil's dat?"

He turned and fled, yelling loudly, in a very agony of terror. Up the river bank he scrambled, and hurried down the Gorge to the nearest tent.

Some miners seated therein were discussing the midday meal. To them he imparted the occurrence. They simply anathematized the negro as a fool for not pulling the body out of the river; and having thus vented their annoyance at being so disturbed they went down to the eddy.

Sure enough there floated the body, as described by the African. In a short time it was hauled up on to the beach.

It was the corpse of a young man, of middle stature, with fair hair and beard, and clothed in the usual miner's garb.

In those days the finding of a dead body in the Molyneux was by no means an infrequent occurrence. Many men were drowned in attempting to cross that river, and its important tributary, the Kawarau. Some slipped in, some were washed from the timber-rafts others perished, none knew how. Dark rumours were rife. Men said—and it is to be feared, all too truly—that the ruffians who infested the diggings subtly drugged the victims, or ruthlessly smote them down, and afterwards cast the evidence of their crime into the adjacent river. A gang of desperadoes, who subsequently terminated their blood-stained career at the West Coast, then prowled around the Dunstan. One of them kept a store (in thieves' parlance, a "fence") in the township, and it was more than suspected that the plunder obtained by many an unholy deed was there disposed of.

Ordinarily, therefore, no particular interest attached to such discoveries. But just then an unusual degree of excitement had been caused by the events which had occurred at the tent of the Co. The story had lost nothing in the telling, as it passed from mouth to mouth. The Yankee had slain his mate in a quarrel, thrown him into the river, and made off with the gold. So it was positively understood. Now, Will, or rather Harry—for by the latter name only was he publicly known—was somewhat of a favourite amongst the miners, with whom it was his wont to smoke a friendly pipe, and to chat, as he passed up and down the Gorge. So that great regret was felt for his untimely fate, and a corresponding amount of detestation for his slayer.

With these impressions strongly fixed upon their minds, the men anxiously scanned the body which they had rescued from the water. The features were so swollen and disfigured by immersion as to defy recognition; nevertheless, the general appearance of the dead man satisfied them that it was that of their young acquaintance.

"Blow'd if I don't believe as how it's young Harry," said one.

"Well, 'tis werry like him, specially about the beard," said the other.

"Yes, boys, dat's Mas'r Harry sure 'nough." Thus said the African, who had known him well, for Will seldom went by without stopping to exchange a few kindly words with the friendless negro.

"Well, darkey, you found him, and so you'd best go down to the Camp and tell the police. They'll know what to do."

And carefully sheltering the dead man from the fierce rays of the noon tide sun, they returned to finish their repast.

In the course of the day the corpse was conveyed into the township, and deposited in an out-house—there to await the Coroner's inquest.

On *post mortem* fees intent, a surgeon stepped into the shed to examine the body. It was the brisk young medico who had previously operated on Will.

"Dear me!" cried the Surgeon. "How very strange. Why, it's the same young fellow that I restored from drowning a short time since. Confound him! What was the use of wasting my time on him? He must have been born to be drowned. Humph! Sadly knocked about. Ah! what have we here? Skull fractured—badly too. Foul play, by Jove!"

"Do you think he's been murdered, doctor?" queried an incautious by-stander.

The medico looked at the querist. "Would you like to know my opinion?" he asked.

"Yes to be sure."

Then hand me over a note. I never give an opinion without a fee."

So thirteen "good and lawful men of the neighbourhood, duly chosen," were forthwith summoned "to inquire, for our Lady the Queen, when, how, and by what means the said Harry Grey came to his death." And the medico, turning the idlers out of the shed, prepared to give scientific evidence as to the cause of death.

## Chapter VIII. The Secret Hoard.

AT about the same hour of the day as the Dunstan medico was exercising his mind anent the disfigured corpse, another scene was being enacted by others of the *dramatis personae* whom I have brought on the stage.

Dramatis personae - Characters in a drama or play, sometimes shown in a list.

In the sultry summer heat, through the gritty blinding dust, two men rode down the Gorge; the one, triumphant, in uniform—blue and buttons—with stripes of honour on the sleeve; the other, dejected, in scarlet serge shirt, and dungaree continuations.

They were the Sergeant and the Senior Partner.

As they passed along, the miners pointed to them with looks significant, and nods pregnant with oracular profundity. And the bold Sergeant gazed around responsively, as who should say—"Behold us! It is I and the prisoner. Alone I did it."

And, waving the prestige which attaches to mere numbers, methinks the Sergeant was as much a hero as any Imperial captive-monger in the Universe.

Adown the Gorge they rode in silence, until they arrived at the habitation of the Co. Then the Senior Partner spoke.

"See, here, Mister Sergeant, suppose there ain't no harm in my looking in at the old place. I'd kind of like to see how it seems to be."

Out came Constable Finnegan.

"I've got my ordhers," said he. "The Commissioner says I'm to clear out, and bring everything into the Camp immadately."

"Has any person presinted himself since I was here?" asked the Sergeant.

"The devil a one, sir, barrin' the folk going up and down the road, and the trooper—Connell it was—that brought the ordhers."

"Have you seen the 'suspect' that was permitted to extricate himself out of your hands yesterday?"

"Indeed thin, I can't tell you that. All I know is that some blackguard came throubling me last night afther I turned in, and I tould him to his face that I'd put the irons on him if he didn't get out of that, quick."

"Constable Finnegan, you don't deserve to wear the uniform on your back. You're a reproach to your own posterity. Why didn't you arrest him?"

"Shure thin, didn't I tell yez I was in bed?"

"And why did you not arise from that reckembent position and seize him?"

"Saize him, is it? Faix! he was out of sight long before I could pull my boots on—bad cess to thim!"

Whilst this colloquy was going on, the Senior Partner had entered the hut.

He stood awhile gazing around the still disordered interior;—gazing with sad calmness delineated on his grave features. Then he called in the policemen.

"I ain't going to touch none of the fixings," he said, "but I want you jest to hoist them blankets, so that I may see what there is underneath."

The indicated blankets were lying in the far corner of the tent. At a sign from the Sergeant, the constable removed them, and, in doing so, disclosed the point of a lichen-covered, weather-beaten rock, projecting from the earth.

"Now, Mister,"—thus spake the Senior Partner,—"it seems some darned villain has killed my poor mate, (here his voice trembled ever so little) on account of the gold they calculated on getting. How they came to know we had it planted, stumps me altogether. Guess the all-fired scoundrel must have heard him talking about it. You see he used to rave and go on about it in his sleep sometimes."

"It is my duty," interpolated the Sergeant, "to inform you that whatever you say will be used against you at the trial. So have a care of your discourse."

"No, Sirree," said the Senior Partner, "I don't need to have no care. I mean to speak the truth, you bet. George Washington Pratt don't lie. It ain't in the blood, Sir. What I tell you is correct. Can't you see where the darned cuss has been ploughing up the floor? Well, now, I guess the plant ain't sprung; though for the matter of that I'd ante up every ounce of gold to have saved poor Harry, 1 would, Sir. Now let the constable just prize up the corner of that stone, and I'll show you a secret."

The constable took a pick and applied it under Pratt's direction. To the astonishment of the policemen, the rock yielded readily. When it had been raised about a foot, a natural concavity appeared in its lower face, and therein nestled a canvas bag. It was the secret hoard of the Co.

"Now, Mister," said the American, "jest you take care of that bag. Half the gold is my property—the rest is Will's,—I should say, Harry's."

The Sergeant readily possessed himself of the treasure. He did so with a flourish:—

"By virtue of my office, I confisket this gold in the Queen's name."

"Call it what you please, Sir. If the young woman is trustworthy I don't mind. I ain't afraid of the gold being annexed—not teetotally! for I don't suppose that it will be long before the big black lie as is scored up to my account jest now will be wiped out. No, Sirree, truth must come out, and I can always wait. Nothing like waiting. So if you think that bag would be quite safe with your Queen, you may leave it with the lady till called for. Jest as you like, Sir."

The Senior Partner treated himself to a scientific plug, and remounted the horse that was to bear him to prison. Once only he halted and turned aside. It was to look at the spot where Will's cap had been found. Whatever he may have felt, he stoically refrained from any expression or exhibition thereof. The facial muscles quivered slightly—very slightly. "Poor old Harry!"—he said very softly. That was all.

Then he rode on—on bravely, to the stake.

## Chapter IX. The Senior Partner Makes a Statement.

THE Inquest was held in a long, low-roofed apartment in one of the manifold inns in the township. The walls of this room were of calico. From the contiguous bar, the sounds of drunken revelry penetrated the flimsy partition, and the undesirable odours of bad tobacco and vile liquors pervaded the atmosphere. In the centre of the room stood a greasy and well-worn bagatelle-table, around which the jury were ranged on rude benches of unplanned wood—rendered smooth by contact with unnumbered sitters.

**Bagatelle-table** - A pub game that involves a table similar to a billiards table.

At the head of the table was a seat of honour, hastily improvised for the Coroner's use out of half a brandy-cask, and decorated with a flaming scarlet blanket. At the lower end stood the Senior Partner with unflinching eye, firmly compressed lips, and gravely composed features, patiently abiding the issue.

The jurymen answered to their names, and were sworn in. They were what my friend Pratt would have called "a mixed lot." A few of them wore coats, more did not. In those free and easy times, blue or red serge shirts were the fashionable apparel: a white shirt was full dress, and a coat of any sort was court costume. An unfortunate publican was once weak enough to return from a commercial visit to Dunedin with a regular black hat—popularly known as a "bell-topper"—but this was unanimously voted snobbish, and his friends kindly kicked the offending hat into the river.

The jury went forth to view the body with very visible reluctance. Then the proceedings commenced.

And first, Edwards and Trewartha gave evidence of the midnight brawl, with such variations and additions as—all unknown to themselves—had grown up, fungus-like, around their original story.

Next, the African and the miners who had assisted to recover the corpse, came forward to recount the circumstances, and to identify the body, as that of Harry Grey.

Then the surgeon gave his evidence.

"He had seen a body on view. Believed it to be that of a young man whom he had lately treated for aphixia produced by immersion in the Molyneux. On that occasion had observed a tattoo mark on the left arm of the patient. There was a tattoo mark on the left arm of deceased. Believed it to be the same as he had previously noticed. Had made a professional examination of the body. Over the inner portion of the right parietal bone, and near the coronal suture, there was a large irregularly-shaped wound of the scalp, with jagged edges widely separate, exhibiting a well-marked depressed fracture running from behind forwards and inwards. Such a wound would be sufficient to cause death. From the appearances presented, was of opinion that the wound had been caused by a blow from a blunt implement. It might have been caused by a pointed stone. Thought the back of a tomahawk the more probable weapon."

**Tomahawk - Native American Axe.**

The only other external marks of violence were a contusion of the right knee, attended with great discolouration, and a slight abrasion of the cuticle of the nasal organ," &c., &c.

Of course the jurors thoroughly understood all this learned jargon. Indeed, one of them—a butcher by repute, but a "vet" by profession—assured his brother jurymen that "such wounds as them was enough to kill an 'oss, let alone a man."

Lastly, with an air of much importance, stepped forth the bold Sergeant. He narrated the story of the capture with a pardonable degree of self-elation, yet fairly enough on the whole. And he produced—first the bag of gold, next the pick, then the broken knife, then the hat—Will's hat—and the torn shirt-sleeve; lastly, the blood-stained pebble.

The Senior Partner listened to all unmoved. Once only he betrayed a sign of emotion. It was when the hat was produced: Then he made a motion forward, but even in the act he checked himself, and resumed his attitude of attention.

The Coroner had asked him if he desired to question the witnesses, and for all answer to the query he had only shaken his head.

The jurymen viewed him with much the same curiosity as they would have bestowed on a caged moa. They could not understand him. They regarded his composed demeanour as the hardihood of stubborn guilt, and his involuntary movement on the production of the hat was construed as confirmatory evidence of his criminality.

"Do you wish to make any statement, prisoner'—(thus queried the Coroner)—I must caution you—"

The Senior Partner threw up his hand deprecatingly.

"No, Sir, you needn't take the trouble to do it. It ain't wanted. Sir. I reckon it's best to tell all I know about it, and that's mighty little. I ain't got nothing to hide in this matter from any man; and, God knows I wouldn't have hurt a hair of the boy's head for all the gold in the Molyneux. So with your permission, Sir, I'll make a statement; and I'll go slow, so as you can cipher it all up in your papers."

Then he told his story as you already know it. He told, moreover, how he had been accompanied by Will

about a mile up the Gorge, when he set forth in pursuit of the Prospectors. There, he said, Will had left him to return to the tent, and from that time he had never seen him.

And as he narrated the subsequent events, a pang thrilled him when he reflected that it would be impossible to prove the accuracy of his statement. The very means which he had taken to avoid observation, would deprive him of corroborative testimony as to his absence from the tent when the fatal scene was being enacted. But he mastered the pain, and went courageously on to the close.

"And now, Sir, I've jest got one favour to ask. It's only that I'd like to see the body."

"Certainly," assented the Coroner. "Sergeant, conduct the prisoner to the shed where the body is lying."

Whereupon one of the jurymen, who owned a grocery store, complained in an undertone that 'the fellow was giving an awful lot of trouble;' for which he was very properly rebuked by a neighbour of high moral principles, who being a storeman, had only his master's business to attend to, and was not in a hurry.

When the Senior Partner returned, he seemed a changed man. His step was elastic, his eye was bright, his countenance beamed with new-born confidence. There was even a playful curl of the lips, indicative of a fine sense of humour.

"Mr. Coroner," he said, "this here thing is jest a bit of foolishness. That ain't the body of my pardner. No, Sir, it ain't. I allow it's pretty much like him in a general way, but it ain't him; that's a fact."

"How do you propose to satisfy the jury of the truth of your assertion?" asked the Coroner.

"Well, I propose to prove it by the dead man himself. I don't see that any other witness is necessary."

"What do you mean, prisoner? Let me tell you that if this is a jest, it is a very sorry one. This is not the time nor the occasion for any unseemly conduct."

The Senior Partner was roused to self-assertion.

"No, Mister Coroner," he said, with a certain native dignity, "it ain't an occasion for unseemly conduct I know; and I ain't the man to make jests about any such things. Guess I know better what rightly belongs both to the living and the dead. But I stand here before you and these other gents, charged with the murder of a man that I loved as a brother, though it ain't long I've known him. And I tell you that, as sure as God is my Maker, the body lying out yonder ain't the body of Harry Grey. Now, Sir, jest you listen to me, if you please. (The Coroner was exhibiting symptoms of impatience.) You see, my pardner had a tattoo mark on his left arm, as the doctor said. That's right, Sir. He told me it was done by some of the station hands when he lived down to Victoria. And that's jest the point. The mark on his arm was a true-love knot, and the letters 'F.M.' Now this here poor fellow has got a tattoo mark on his left arm. That's right again. But it ain't a true-love knot. It's a woman and anchor. That's so. And that's how I know for certain that it ain't the body of Harry Grey."

The Coroner was nonplussed. The manner, no less than the words of the American indicated conscious innocence.

But a statement made by an accused person is not evidence in a British Court of law. "They manage these things better in France." Under ordinary circumstances, the Coroner would have adjourned the Inquest for further investigation; but with a population ever on the move, he knew right well that it would be almost impossible to get the same jury together again. He looked to the Surgeon for a sign, and the Surgeon smiled superior. So he solved the difficulty by leaving the matter to be dealt with by the thirteen "good and lawful men."

They were not long in arriving at their decision. They were hot, and tired, and thirsty; and being, on the whole mercifully inclined, they gave the prisoner the benefit of the doubt.

"What is your verdict, Gentlemen?" asked the Coroner.

"Died from a broken head, but we can't say who broke it."

"Very well, Gentlemen—very well," quoth the Coroner somewhat testily. "No doubt you have done your duty, to the best of your ability. Then you say 'upon your oaths,' that the deceased came to his death by a fracture of the skull, but how, or by whom inflicted, no sufficient evidence doth appear to you, the said jurors. Is that your verdict, Gentlemen? Very well! Have the goodness to append your signatures to the inquisition. Sergeant, re-arrest the prisoner, and bring him up before me in the morning."

Justice has many arms—shall I say tentaculæ? The Senior Partner was not yet out of the toils.

## Chapter X. The Lonely Hut.

LIKE a beautiful gem in a rough setting, lies the clear expanse of Lake Hawea amidst the outlying spurs of the New Zealand Alps. On three sides the mountains sweep back from the shore in curvilinear form; but on the West their bases descend precipitously into the water. From their lofty pinnacles, ever capped with dazzling snows, there descend many streamlets, which glisten like threads of molten silver, as they glide adown the smooth rocks, or leap impetuously over scur and precipice. Dark ribs of schist and slate seam the brown hill-sides, and patches of forest clothe the ravines. The translucent waters of the Lake, unbroken by islet or

promontory, and undimmed by shadow, ripple softly in the sunlight, inviting to dreamy repose; save when the blustering Northern wind drives the ruffled waves, in long rollers on the pebbly beach, and dashes them in fury against the marginal rocks, around which they curl and toss white wreaths of spray. In either mood—savage or still—very beautiful is Lake Hawea.

At the foot of this Lake—far remote from the busy haunts of men—stood a lonely hut, built of roughly-hewn slabs of native timber and thatched with snow-grass. Therein dwelt the shepherds and their collie-dogs,—either equally a part of the appliances whereby the squatter—(*Anglicé grazier*)—lordly tenant of the wilderness—realizes the fable of the Golden Fleece.

**Golden Fleece** - The greek hero Jason and the Argonauts have to retrieve in order for Jason to take kingship.

One night when the wind was at its wildest—when the trembling waves crept far up on the beach, as if seeking refuge from the tyranny of the furious blast, and perforce retreated with wailing sobs, to be again driven and hurried and dashed upon the steadfast shore;—as daylight was waning, a timid knock at the door arrested the attention of the solitary inmate.

Within the hut a log-fire roared, and blazed, and crackled, in the rade chimney. And the sparks flew out in wild profusion, as in sympathy with the external tempest. The billy was slung for tea, and a grey-headed shepherd was superintending the cooking of a huge panful of mutton-chops, which hissed and spluttered on the fire in wild jubilation.

Without ceasing from his occupation or even turning his head, he shouted "Come in!"

The door slowly opened, and a young man entered,—entered hesitatingly, as doubtful of his reception. His appearance was haggard in the extreme, and his eye gleamed with a scared, hunted expression. His unkemp hair was guiltless of all covering, and the left sleeve of his serge shirt was gone from above the elbow.

He stood awhile, still holding the door and silent. The wind rushing in disturbed the operations of the shepherd. "Steek the door!" said he: then first noticing the strange aspect of his visitor, he asked—"Weel, mon, wha are ye, an' what are ye wantin'?"

"I have lost my way, and I am tired, and hungry. Can you give me a feed, and a shake-down for the night?"

Thus said the stranger; to whom the shepherd made reply,—" I'm thinkin' ye're just a sun-dooneer.

**Sun-dooneer** - Like the Australian itinerant farm worker, swagman, that arrives too late in the day to work but applies for food and lodging.

Whaur did ye come frae last?"

Now, a 'sun-downer,' or 'tussocker'—for the terms are synonymous—is a pastoral loafer; one who loiters about till dusk, and then makes for the nearest station or hut, to beg for shelter and food.

**Tussocker** - Slang for tramp.

"Why do you say that?"—He spoke in a distressed, fretful manner.—" I am willing to pay you. I can pay you. See, here is a note. Take it and give me food and lodging—till to-morrow."

And therewith he proffered a £1 bank-note.

"Weel, ye needna mak' sae muckle din aboot it!"—

The shepherd carefully inspected the note; and being satisfied of its genuineness, he deposited it in his pouch, and resumed the conversation in a more genial mood.

"I dinna keep a hottle, ye ken, but ye're vera welcome till a chop, an' a scone, an' a pannikin o' tea; an' if Jamie disna come hame the nicht, ye can turn intil his blankets. Sae come ben, laddie, an' sit ye doon."

The stranger ate of the ill-cooked, indigestible chops, sodden in fat, tough and juiceless; and of the scones, yellow and bitter with over much soda; and drank of the coarse tea, innocent of milk, and sweetened with the roughest and blackest of sugar; and all with an appetite to be envied by the luxurious gustator of a London Club.

His entertainer regarded him with unfeigned astonishment.

"Eh! but ye're awfu' keen, my mon. Ye maun hae fasted lang, surely."

Quoth the stranger,—"I have fasted long. I thank you for your hospitality. I am foot-sore and weary too. But I think I'll have a smoke before I turn in."

And the pair proceeded to burn Nicotian incense;—the shepherd, from a blackened cutty-pipe, the stranger, from a peculiarly dirty meerschaum.

"An' whaur's your bonnet, laddie?" speered the shepherd, after a few preliminary whiffs.

"Blown away—lost—gone. Never mind where. Why do you ask me?"

And he turned angrily upon his companion.

"A' weel it's a wild nicht, an' I'm no that exercised aboot a bit cap. Ye seem a bonnie laddie, but just a wee dour an' camsterty. Nae doot it's a fearsome nicht to be abroad in, an' ye wi' nae victual in yer wame. Weel, weel! I've an auld bonnet o' my ain, I'se gie ye the morn."

The logs burned dim in the yawning fire-place. The stranger finished his pipe, clambered into the bunk

appropriated to his use, and was quickly asleep. But in his slumbers he tossed from side to side, and muttered fragments of speech, having no relevancy or coherency; and threw his arms about in such strange fashion that he utterly amazed the sober old sheep-tender.

"The lad's no canny,"—such was his commentary. "I misdoubt he's a bit wrang in the heid."

He threw a fresh log on the fire, and lighted another pipe.

"If Jamie is comin' hame he'll no be that far aff the noo. I'll bide a wee for Jamie."

I think he was rather alarmed by the strange conduct of his uninvited guest.

His reflections were interrupted. A cheery voice was heard above the howling of the storm, carolling in lusty tones, the old *refrain*:

*"We'll gang nae mair a rovin',  
Though the moon shine e'er sae bricht;  
We'll gang nae mair a rovin',  
Sae far intil the nicht;  
We'll gang nae mair rovin'."*

"Noo, Willie lad! wauk up!

*"Waukin still and wearie,  
Aye waukin O."*

And still singing as he entered, the long-expected errant Jamie appeared on the scene.

The old shepherd was well pleased at his coming; but it was not his humour to show it.

"What for did ye no come sooner?" he asked.

"I just gaed doon tae the toonship tae bring ye the news, and there it's for ye."

So saying, he tossed the paper to his crony. A newspaper,—a veritable scion of the Fourth Estate;—a small folio, printed on yellow paper such as grocers use;—an infant Hercules in swaddling bands.

Fourth Estate - News Media.

"There's been an awfu' murder on the diggings," he continued. "It's just a Yankee scoondrel, Willie, that kilt a mon, and then pitchit him intil the Molyneux. But the police folk hae forgathered wi' him, and his craig will sun'e be strechit on the woodie for't."

Unobserved by the shepherds, the stranger raised himself on his elbow, and listened intently to their conversation.

"Eh, Jamie, they're an awfu' bad lot, thae digger fallows. It's a sair pity that ever gold was found out, tae bring a wheen blackguards intil the kintra. Hoo did it happen?"

"Weel, it seems the twa had words anent some gold, an' the Yankee up wi' a tomahawk and gied the ither a cloot o' the heid wi't; and the neist day the body was foond in the river. Then the police gaed oot after the Yankee and cam' up wi' him at Alick's hut, on the Cardrona, an', after a fecht they snippet the irons on him. I dinna ken a' the richts o't. But there, ye'll read aboot it in the bit paper. I gied a haill saxpence for the wee thing, tae pleesure yersel', Willie."

"Pit it awa' till the morn, Jamie. My een are no that gude at readin' print by nicht."

An involuntary movement made by the stranger attracted Jamie's attention to him.

"Wha's yon?" he asked.

"Just a puir laddie that cam' till the hut i' the gloamin'. He was sair forfechten, sae I just gied him his supper, an' let him bide till the mornin'. I'll tak' my ain blankets on the floor for ance."

"Ye're awfu' kind tae stranger bodies tae dae the like o' that, Willie. D'y'e no ken him ava? Gude guide us! We may hae oor weasons scraggit in the nicht."

"I'm thinkin', Jamie, ye maun hae had mair whuskey than's gude for ye; or else ye're fair doited wi' hearin' o' the murder the day."

"Na, na, Willie, I'm neither fou nor frichtened; but I dinna like strange folk in the hut."

Before Willie could make replication, the stranger thrust aside the blankets and sprang to the floor.

"You shall not give up your bed for me," he said. "I can lie anywhere! On the floor! Outside! Anywhere. What does it matter?"

And he laughed a laugh wherein was no merriment;—a discordant laugh, which grated harshly on the ear.

"Gang till your bunk, laddie," said the old shepherd.

"No.—I want to hear the news. What is this about a murder? I heard you telling of a murder. Where is the

paper. Quick! quick, old man! Let me see it."

He clutched the paper with a trembling hand. Hurriedly glancing at its contents, he read only a single paragraph, which ran thus:—

"We understand that the man, Pellatt, is to be brought before our worthy Magistrate to-morrow on a charge of wilful homicide. It is clear that a dastardly crime has been committed in our midst, and evidence is said to be forthcoming of a nature to sheet the charge home to the prisoner. In the interests of justice, we refrain from saying more at present. Great credit is due to Sergeant, &c., &c."

He dashed the paper on the ground,—rushed to the door—threw it open, and disappeared in the darkness.

The shepherds gazed at each other in amazement.

Willie picked up the paper, closed and fastened the door, and returned to his seat.

"He's clean demented," he said.

"He's just a madman," answered Jamie. "Eh mon! ye've had a vera providential escape. Ye'll hae tae be a thocht mair conseederate wha ye tak' ben anither nicht, when I'm no wi' ye."

The stranger returned not. Out into the tempest he went, flying as from the fear of death, over the broad plain. And ever as he ran he cried,—"To-morrow! to-morrow! Oh, God! shall I be in time?"

## Chapter XI. Constable Finnegan's Horse.

"CONSTABLE Finnegan! It would be a great blow to the Force if this case breaks down. Would you know the smooth-faced blackguard that molested you in the tent?"

"Bedad, I would, Sergeant. I'd pick him out of a hundred if I set eyes upon him."

"Then take your horse and go up the Gorge and look about for him. He knows something about this matter, and likely could give evidence to convict the prisoner. It is our duty, Constable Finnegan, to secure the ends of justice."

The logic of the worthy Sergeant was defective. Offended Justice must have a victim, no doubt: whether it be Isaac, or a "ram caught in the thicket."

"Isaac, ram caught in the thicket" - From the biblical story in which Abraham is saved from sacrificing his son, Isaac, by a ram caught in the thicket which was to be saved in his place. Genesis 22:13.

But the desired result is not likely to ensue if fact be subordinated to theory. Now the Sergeant having commenced at the wrong end by assuming the prisoner to be guilty, focussed circumstances so as to support the assumption; and thereby he lost every clue, which, if properly followed up, might have led to the detection of the real offender. For I will not pay my auditors so poor a compliment as to suppose that they imagine George Washington Pratt to have been guilty of the heinous crime alleged against him.

The constable arrayed himself in his war-paint and mounted his horse. It was a hot and weary day, and the way was long and tedious. To do him justice, he was most indefatigable in his inquiries. But no trace found he of 'the beardless one' till he came to the solitary African.

"Well, Sambo," said Mr. Finnegan,—Sambo being the dark-skinned variation of *homo* in the popular vocabulary,—"Well, Sambo, is it a pile ye're making there?"

"My golly, no!" and a smile diffused itself over his shining countenance. "Ribber's too high. Mighty little gold in dis stuff."

"Come up here," said the policeman, "I want to speak to yez."

Obedient to the buttons, the negro ascended the bank.

"Tell me now,—Is there a man living hereabouts without any hair on his face? A short, dark man, not very good looking?"

"Yes boss; I know de man. Got his eyes rove cro'-jack-brace fashion. Bad lot, dat fellow; no good anyhow."

"Where is he likely to be found?"

"Bout a mile furder up. I see him go 'long jist now. Shouldn't wonder if he's gone to Brandy Ben's."

'Brandy Ben' was a notorious grog-seller, and was well known to the police. His abode was not far distant, and thither the constable proceeded.

Leaving his horse outside, he entered the hut. And this was the scene that greeted him,—

Seated on an empty gin-case was Brandy Ben, discoursing music from a rag-enveloped comb, and beating time to the inartistic melody with vigorous slaps on his knee. On the mud floor, a sturdy digger in long thigh-boots, was dancing in grotesque fashion with a frowsy woman dressed in tawdry muslin. A row of men, seated on a bench at the further end of the apartment, howled drunken chorus to the abominable music; and one blear-eyed individual snapped his fingers, and shouted—"That's your sort! go it, old gal!"—with infinite hilarity.

Amongst the chorus, Constable Finnegan marked the man of whom he was in search. With considerate politeness, however, he waited for the termination of the dance before proceeding to business.

His politeness was poorly recompensed. Whilst he was interchanging civilities with the inmates of the hut, a man, bare-headed, and minus one shirt-sleeve, came hastily down the Gorge. The constable's horse stood invitingly in the way. Without pause or hesitation, he mounted into the saddle, and Constable Finnegan ran to the door just in time to see his steed disappearing at a provokingly rapid pace.

He shouted lustily,—he invoked all the lightnings of the law. He hurled maledictions innumerable and of direful import after the culprit. But the fugitive rider never looked back. The horse was gone beyond recall.

So he returned to the hut for consolation—

*"When sorrows come, they come not single spies,  
But in battalions."*

*"When sorrows come, they come not single spies,/But in battalions."* - Said by Claudius in Shakespeare's Hamlet, Act IV, scene V.

'The beardless one' had escaped!

"Bad scran to it!" cried Constable Finnegan.

Bad scran it - Bad food or provisions. Here used as a curse.

"It's the devil's own luck I have entirely. Will any gentleman oblige me by shaving his beard, so that I mayn't return empty-handed?"

But no one volunteered to make the capillary sacrifice.

"Give me a nip, Ben," said the unhappy member of the Force." It's choking I am wid blessing the vagabond. Upon my conscience, I'll 'requisition' the first horse I meet along the road."

"Why, look 'ere," growled Brandy Ben, "hif hit's honly a 'oss you want, you can take mine. He hain't fur hoff. But I hain't got hany saddle."

"Oh! bother the saddle. Shure I always ride best without one. Get him in at once, Ben, and maybe I'll overtake my respectable friend at the Rocks."

'The rocks' was a part of the track so blocked up with boulders as to render pedestrian exercise an unavoidable necessity. But before the constable was mounted on Brandy Ben's nag, the purloiner of Her Majesty's troop-horse, was up and beyond these *impedimenta*.

Impedimenta - Things that impede on progress.

Nevertheless Constable Finnegan pressed on bravely. So there was presented to the wondering miners, the edifying spectacle of a hatless tatterdemalion dashing through the township on the constable's well-appointed steed, and the constable lumbering along ten minutes astern, on a bare-backed packhorse, of the hairy, loose-jointed type.

## Chapter XII. The Next Witness.

THE Commissioner sat down to his breakfast in an angry mood. And, indeed, he had reason to be angry.

The elegant, but fragile marquee wherein he sat, served a three-fold purpose. By day it was alternately a dining-room and a court-house. At night it was the Commissioner's bedchamber. Now the chamber had not been converted into a breakfast-room so early as it should have been; and the hour for its second transformation into a court-house was fast approaching. And the Commissioner knew by sad experience, that unless he quickly dispatched his matutinal repast, he would not be permitted to do so in quietude. Suitors and applicants of all kinds were perversely indifferent about "office hours." Already, on that very morning, he had been chased by a small host of importunate miners, as, towel in hand, he hurried down the river-bank for his customary bath. It is quite true I suppose that Vice-Chancellor Shadwell heard arguments, and issued injunctions as he playfully gambolled in the Thames. But our Commissioner objected to such exciting performances, and rightly so.

Moreover, there was a hot wind blowing; and the fine dust had overlaid the butter, the bread, the bacon, the salt, the sugar, the plates, and the tablecloth with a silicious coating, the sight of which was by no means exhilarating. I think the Commissioner did well to be angry.

Then again, he had the case of George Washington Pratt to dispose of. "Dispose of," did I say? A phrase is more easily written than an act is performed. The Commissioner was not at all easy in his mind. On reflection, he began to wish that he had allowed the accused to depart unmolested, on receiving the verdict of the Coroner's jury. Unless there was some fresh evidence, he would have to wade through the same story without any result. Then that beloved paper (I am not quite sure that 'beloved' was precisely the adjective employed,) had inserted a paragraph about it. "Bless the paper!" The Commissioner stopped midway in the demolition of his egg, to ejaculate a fervent wish that the head stoker had the paper and the editor, and everybody connected with it.

Then the Commissioner returned to his egg. Alas! the delicate white and yellow was already obscured by a film of grey dust. It was 'the last feather, &c.' Verily, the Commissioner did well to be angry.

The last feather - Akin to the phrase the last straw that broke the camel's back.

When a man is angry, he must expend his fury on something—animate or inanimate. In this case the angry man began with the egg, which he thrust indignantly from him; he continued with the chair, which he kicked backwards; he finally exploded on the Sergeant, who unluckily entered at the very culmination of the Commissioner's wrath.

"I beg your pardon, Sir,"—began the Sergeant.

"Of course you do. You are perpetually interrupting me at inconvenient seasons, and begging my pardon. By Jove! I think you take a delight in it. What do you want now?"

"The prisoner Pellatt, Sir—."

"Bother the prisoner, Pellatt! Can't he wait till I have had my breakfast? I suppose he is aware that I am really a human being, and can't exist without eating."

"Oh! very well, Sir. It doesn't matter to myself at all. He only asked me to take a message to you; but I can wait till you're done, Sir."

"Well, I've done now. I wouldn't give a pin for my breakfast. The dust has poisoned everything. What is the message, Sergeant?"

[N.B.—As the Senior Partner would have said, the Commissioner had 'slowed down' by this time, and was 'going easy.]

"It's only that he'd like to see you before the case comes into Court, Sir."

"Well, there cannot be any objection to that. Yes, Sergeant; tell the prisoner that I will see him presently."

Thus it came to pass that the Senior Partner confided to the Commissioner so much of the story of Will Enderby as enabled that gentleman to place himself in communication with Mr. John Grey, of which, more hereafter.

At noon precisely (the ordinary police cases having been disposed of), George Washington Pratt—for the officials had at last arrived at the correct orthography of his name—was placed at the table, which did duty for a dock, and charged with having compassed the death of Harry Grey, otherwise William Enderby.

When he answered to his name, a murmur went through the crowd that thronged the Court-house. A murmur, not of indignation against, but of sympathy with the prisoner. There is a peculiar, and I must add, an amiable perversity existent amongst the multitude, which induces them to admire the brave, and to side with the weak, right or wrong. The Senior Partner bore himself firmly—he was a foreigner and without friends, and the polyglot populace befriended him on the spot.

"Call the first witness," said the Commissioner.

Whereupon the Sergeant read out the name of "Philip Trewartha."

Then the constable on duty at the door of the Courthouse lifted up his voice, and called, "Phelim O'Connor!"

And yet another took up the cry, and shouted for "William McArthur!"

It is not very surprising that the Cornishman thus unceremoniously transmuted into an Irishman, and then as instantaneously changed into a Scot, failed to comprehend that he was 'wanted.'

The Commissioner was impatient at the delay.

"The Court must not be kept waiting," he said. "Call the next witness!"

Befor the Sergeant could obey, there arose without the marquee a confusion of noises:—of a horse galloping furiously, of many dogs barking, of men running and shouting. Nearer, and yet more near approached the din. Spectators, witnesses, police, all hurried to the entrance. As they did so, a man with head uncovered and torn shirt-sleeves, dashed up on a troop-horse, leaped from the panting animal, and thrusting aside the crowd with scant ceremony, confronted the Commissioner.

"He is innocent!"—he panted forth, hoarsely and with difficulty.—"He is innocent!—I did it—I—God have mercy on me!—I tell you he is innocent!"

He reeled to and fro like a drunken man. Simultaneously the Sergeant and the Senior Partner stepped forward; the one to seize, the other to support him. But before either could reach him, he staggered backwards, and fell to the ground exhausted and senseless.

It was the unauthorised appropriator of Constable Finnegan's horse,—the strange guest of old Willie at Lake Hawea;—it was Wild Will Enderby.

End of Book III.

## BOOK 4.—THE BLUE-EYED MAIDEN.

# Chapter I. On Her Majesty's Service.

MR. JOHN GREY sat in his counting-house, in the City of Melbourne. Outside, the air was as a furnace blast, and the sun dimly glimmered through a dull lurid haze. And the dust stifled and blinded the passers-by; and clothing was felt to be a nuisance, and business a bore. And well-conditioned fat men envied their lank neighbours, and wished that it were possible to adopt Sydney Smith's humorous device, under similar circumstances—namely, to 'take off the flesh, and sit in the bones.'

"Take off the flesh, and sit in the bone" - said by Sydney Smith, English wit.

But within the thick blue-stone walls of John Grey's warehouse, a delicious coolness prevailed. It was worth while to go out into the external heat occasionally, in order thoroughly to enjoy the contrast of the internal atmosphere.

Yet John Grey was himself far from being cool. Ordinarily so placid, he was unusually excited on the morning in question; insomuch that the clerks arched their eyebrows, and winked at each other doubtfully and inquiringly, as mutely asking—"What can have happened?"

And then, with the smallness of small minds, each began to calculate the amount of salary due to himself, and to ponder on the means whereby to exact the uttermost farthing in the event of the collapse of the firm.

In his hand, John Grey held a letter—a broad official letter, stamped with the brand of authority thus,—"O.H.M.S.," and bearing the New Zealand postmark.

O.H.M.S - On her/his majesty's service.

And as he perused its contents, a pained look came into his clear frank eyes, and beads of perspiration, which were not originated by the temperature, stood upon his honest forehead.

Slowly, and as in deep thought, he passed through the counting-house, and into his private office. There, screened from observation, he allowed full play to his emotions.

"Bless my heart!" he exclaimed, "What have I done? Well! well! I'm sure I thought I was acting for the best. How could I have supposed that such a dreadful thing as this would happen. Dear! dear! What will Sister Sarah think of me? Mabel too? Ah! chut! chut! A pretty mess I've made of it."

You see, he spoke of his deceased sister as though she were actually cognisant of his deeds, and he deprecated her censure as if she were still in the flesh. For death in absence is more difficult to realize than the death that is painfully enforced upon the mind, by the lugubrious trappings of the undertaker, and the gloomy cares of the grave-digger.

Now in most emergencies he was accustomed to lean greatly on his son. The energy and vigour of the young man, tempered by the prudence, and guided by the experience of the elder were potential elements of success in business matters. But the present difficulty seemed to be beyond the customary pale. For, as the result of his cogitations, he placed the letter in his breast-pocket, hurried through dust and heat to the Flinders Street railway station, and astounded the guard by returning to St. Kilda, during business hours;—a phenomenon entirely without parallel in the history of the line.

John Grey had gone to consult his best friend *videlicet*, his wife.

Videlicet - 'That is to say,' 'to wit'.

Happy John!

"There's summut wrong, I know," said Lizzie, the Housemaid. "Master's come home in a terrible takin', and he's gone and shut hisself up wi' the missus in the little back parlour, and what 'tis about I can't think. I hope he han't been a-burnin' of his fingers wi' none o' they nasty mining shares, as is always a-goin' up and down like a see-saw."

"Min' yer ain wark, lassie," responded Janet the Cook. "It's no for ye tae pry intil the maister's business. Ilka ane hae their ain troubles tae fecht; and ane's ain is quite eneuch, without speerin' aboot ither bodies, forbye the maister's."

"Papa come home?" cried Mabel, when Annie communicated the tidings. "What can be the matter? No bad news from the run, I hope, or—or—"

The "or" was unexpressed. But her thoughts flew over the sea to the *terra incognita* of New Zealand, and to "Cousin Will."

Terra incognita - term for areas not yet mapped.

There were "wars and rumours of wars" with the Maories just then; and to Mabel's untravelled mind, the geography of New Zealand was as a sealed book. Consequently, she was unable to dissever the war in the North Island from the notion of a cannibal feast on the Otago gold fields.

**Maori Wars** - 1840s-1870s. Conflicts between the British Crown and the Maori King and between Maori tribes.

Wherein Miss Mabel was not at all singular, as this story-teller has occasion to know.

Now the letter which had so greatly disturbed the equilibrium of John Grey's mind, and caused such a deviation from his ordinary business habits, was from our old friend the Commissioner, and ran thus:—

"Sir,

*"I have the honor to inform you that a young man, known as Harry Grey, but whose real name, as I am informed, is William Enderby, is lying here dangerously ill, and delirious. He accuses himself of having caused the death of a person (name unknown), whose body was picked up in the Clutha river; and, of course he is at present under police surveillance. And it having been reported to me that he is your nephew, or other relation, I have deemed it my duty to communicate with you hereon."*

*"I may further inform you that a quantity of gold has been lodged with the authorities by one George Pratt, a partner of the young man referred to, as being the joint property of that person and your supposed relative."*

*"I have the honour to be, "&c., &c."*

"What is to be done?" cried the merchant. "I declare I am at my wits' end. He is Sister Sarah's son, you know. The young scamp! It is really shocking. We can't leave the poor fellow to sink or swim without help. Dear me! this is very vexatious. What do you advise, my dear?"

Mrs. Grey was wise in her generation. She ruled by submission. Her advice was so given as to seem her husband's suggestion rather than her own.

"Of course, you cannot go to New Zealand," she said.

"Of course not. There's the difficulty. I can't possibly leave my business just now. But something must be done, you know. As to his causing anyone's death, I don't believe it. He is ill, and does not know what he raves about. Bless my heart! What is to be done?"

"Some one must go down to the place, and look into it, as you say. Could Philip attend to it, do you think?"

"The very thing. I am glad you agree with me, my dear. Yes; that is the only course. Poor Will! Somebody must go. Certainly, somebody must go; and Philip it must be. Dear! dear! I wonder will that young scapegrace ever learn common sense?"

"Oh! John; the boy is young yet. You cannot expect everyone to be as steady as Philip. Let us be thankful it is not our own boy who is in this trouble."

"I am thankful, I hope. Philip is the pride of my life. But Sarah's son—how can I excuse myself for not taking better care of him. Chut! chut! Well, it's useless now to look back. Phil. shall go over and bring him home. Suffering from fever, I expect. He was always very excitable, you know. Humph! I fear I have not quite done my duty properly by the lad."

"You have always done your duty, John," cried the wife; "and I will not have you disparage yourself."

"Well, yes, I have tried to do it; and one can only do one's best, you know, after all. But he is sowing his wild oats with a vengeance."

So it was arranged that Philip Grey should proceed to New Zealand and rescue his cousin from the hands of the Philistines.

Philistines - People of Palestine often in conflict with the Israelites. Here meaning 'common' people.

Now I am unable to tell how it happened—for this is a part of the story upon which the parties concerned persistently refuse to enlighten me—but on the morning after the events just narrated, the family physician was called in to prescribe for Miss Mabel, who had suddenly been taken ill—very ill, the doctor averred. And after an interview with that young lady, he paid a visit to Mrs. Grey, whom he gravely assured that her daughter's health was very precarious. A sea voyage, he thought, would be advisable,—to a cooler climate, if possible. And when Mrs. Grey incidentally mentioned the projected visit of Philip to Otago, the doctor said that it was really a most fortunate coincidence—nothing could be more suitable. To Otago be it. By all means, let Mabel accompany her brother.

And Mrs. Grey assented, subject, of course, to John's approval. Need I say more?

"I do believe it's all about that harum-scarum Master Will, after all."—The opinion was that of Lizzie the Housemaid.

Harum-scarum - reckless, impetuous.

"Lor'! what a fuss some folk do make about a trumpery fellow. As though there ben't as good fish in the sea as ever come out of it."

"Bide till ye hae a fallow o' yer ain, Lizzie," answered Janet the Cook, "afore ye gie coonsel tae ither. There gae mony herrin' tae aye saumont, ye ken; an' ilka lass thinks maist o' her ain laddie, as maybe ye'll fin' oot some day, wi' a sair haire till the back o't."

## Chapter II. The Crisis.

"WILL was truly in a doleful plight. A fierce attack of fever had prostrated him, and he now lay helplessly ill, with his brain racked by a thousand demoniacal phantasies. Sometimes he would cry wildly, even in his fitful slumbers, for aid against imaginary pursuers, and shriek piteously as his disordered vision pictured them crowding the apartment. At other times his incoherent ravings were of thieves and gold; and he seemed to be acting over again some dreadful scene wherein life and death trembled in the balance. At the outset of the attack he would leap from the bed, and endeavour to escape, and his agony when detained was very painful to witness. He would implore his keepers to set him free, declaring in a 'frantic ecstasy' that unless he were suffered to go, Pratt would be hung for the crime which he had himself committed. After a while, however, the body succumbed to these 'tortures of the mind,' and he became, perforce, quieter, and lay quite still, moaning feebly, and muttering in indistinct tones; but always his thoughts appeared to centre on the same horrors.

The worthy medico was considerably puzzled, and not a little interested. At first he had boldly pronounced it a case of 'D.T.'s;'—meaning thereby *delirium tremens*,—and he pooh-poohed all idea of danger.

Delirium tremens - rapid onset of confusion as a result of alcohol withdrawal.

'A little rest—throw in quinine and morphia—reduce the system gradually—two goes of brandy to begin with—soon be right again.' Such was his dictum. But ere long he became convinced that there was more in the case than his professional philosophy had conceived.

The Senior Partner was now of course a free man: for even the bold Sergeant was obliged to admit that the evidence for the defence was very strong. And, indeed, when a man supposed to be dead asserts his existence in open court, it would scarcely be fair to hang anyone for his murder. So Mr. George W. Pratt now sat by the couch of his sick friend, and tended him as a hired nurse never could or would have done. But Will did not at any time recognize him.

Said he to the medico one day—"What do you make of it now, Doc.?"

"Who shall medicine to a mind diseased?" quoted the medico. "This is far and away beyond the doctor's art. His mind seems strangely affected. Something must have happened to shatter the nervous system; and I tell you plainly that unless the cause can be discovered and removed, I have but little hope of his recovery."

"Do you mean to say that you think the boy will die?"

"Possibly; and if he survives, I fear for his reason. The crisis of the disorder is coming on rapidly. He may get over it; for he has a splendid constitution, or he could not have lived through the wear and tear of the past. If he does, you must try to worm out the secret of his trouble. Watch him closely. He may have a lucid interval, and your presence at the exact moment may be worth everything to him—life—health—reason."

"Never fear, Sir; I'll watch, you bet. There's some darned villainy at the bottom of this, and by Jehoshaphat, I'll get at it yet."

The next evening, towards sundown, Will was seized with a violent accession of his distemper, during which he raved more wildly than ever, and struggled with almost superhuman force to escape from the chamber. But Pratt was there; and the strong man held him firmly, soothing the poor fellow meanwhile as gently as a mother would still a fractious infant. When the paroxysm had spent itself, he laid himself quietly down on the bed. Then his thoughts for the first time seemed to revert to other scenes. He spoke much of Florence, and intreated her to come to him, and appealed to his uncle to help and save him. Presently the name of his mother escaped, his lips, and tears came to his relief, and so he sobbed himself to sleep.

The medico came in to look at his patient. He counted his pulse, and felt his forehead. "It is the crisis," he said. "He is wrestling with death now, and to-night will decide the issue. He must not be left alone for one minute. I will divide the watch with you. Go you to sleep till midnight."

Midnight came, and still the patient slept. Pratt came in to relieve the doctor.

"How is he now?" he asked.

"I have hope," whispered the medico. "He breathes more regularly, his head is cooler, and his pulse less violent. If he awakes, give him this draught, and call me. I will turn in, in the next room, so as to be at hand in any emergency."

Honestly, the Senior Partner intended to watch very carefully. But sleep o'ermastered him. Anxiety had kept him awake when he should have slumbered, and now he slumbered when he should have been wakeful.

He was aroused by a slight noise, and by an uneasy sensation, as if (to quote his own phrase) 'something was looking into his eyes.' The candle had burned itself out; but by the grey light of early morning he discovered a white-robed figure bending over him,—bending so closely that he felt the warm breath on his face. For a second he remained motionless; being, as it were, spell-bound by the apparition. Then he heard his name called in a soft whisper.

"Pratt!" It seemed like a dream rather than a reality,

"Pratt!"—Again he heard it. Then he regained his presence of mind. It was his patient.

Gently he arose to his feet. As he did so, Will retreated in evident terror.

"Don't be afraid, boy!" cried the Senior Partner.

"Oh, Pratt!" then cried Will, and his voice was faint and tremulous. "Is it really you? I thought you—you were dead, when I saw you lying there so still, and—and—"

He broke off suddenly, and gazed around with doubt and wonder expressed in his eager eyes.

"Where am I?" he asked. "What are we doing here? Where is the tent? Ah! I have had such awful dreams!"

The crisis was over. He had wrestled with, Azrael in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and had gained the victory.

Azrael - Angel of Death.

Pratt comforted him, and coaxed him back to bed, and gave him the draught; and merciful sleep enfolded his bruised spirit, and lulled him to peaceful rest.

"I ain't muchly in the thanksgiving line" (thus communed the Senior Partner with himself), "but I feel so good that I could jest go down on my knees and let out for a thirty minutes' spin in right-down airnest. I must do something to ease the pressure, or there'll be an explosion,—I know there will. Guess I'll go and hunt up the Doc., and hug him."

## **Chapter III. "IF she will, she will, you may depend on't; And if she won't, she won't, and there's an end on't."**

**"If she will, she will, you may depend on't;/ And if she won't, and there's an end on't." - Possibly a quote by Aaron Hill, 1685-1750.**

"MAY! May! Lazy May! Come upon deck immediately."

Scene:—On board the Aldinga; *loquitor*, Philip Grey.

Loquitor - latin for speaks, used alongside the speaker's name.

To whom his sister, who had been most perversely sick during the voyage, made response in a sprightly tone—

"Oh Phil! Are we near the land?"

"Near! Why we are going up Dunedin Harbour; and it is 'a sight for sair een,' as Janet would say."

And, in sooth, Philip was justified in his admiration of this, the most beautiful harbor in all New Zealand.

On either side arose gently sloping hills of irregular outline, clothed from base to summit with evergreen forests. Here and there, time-tinted rocks peered through patches of green sward, or loomed darkly amidst the dense vegetation. The shores were indented by tiny bays, where the hills came down to greet the sea, and the waves leaped up to kiss the land, and cool rivulets stole forth from their forest homes, to sparkle in the garish sunlight.

Primitive cottages stood in clearings reclaimed from the wilderness by the hardy pioneers of the settlement. The little town of Port Chalmers nestled 'amidst wood-crowned heights,' and many a stately vessel swung at anchor in the offing. Islands, rugged and picturesque, seemingly barred further passage, but between these and the shore were deep channels through which the harbour-steamer held her course, and still throbbed onwards; the scenery ever presenting new features of such interest, that even two intensely stolid cattle-drovers on board were impelled to declare that it was adjectively "fine." Which, from such a source, was a wonderful concession to Nature.

Soon they rounded 'Black Jack's Point,' and the full glories of Dunedin stole upon them—gradually, that is to say. For one of the peculiar effects of this scene is that it unrolls itself, so to speak, from behind the hills, as the voyager passes up the harbour; like a panorama, of which the most distant points are first seen.

The time was early morning. Flying clouds came ever and anon between the sun and the earth, producing splendid effects of light and shadow. At the upper end of the harbor, between two bold headlands, stretched the low white sand-hills of the 'Ocean Beach,' connecting the main land on the west with the beautiful 'Peninsula,' which forms the eastern shore. From beyond this slight barrier came the sullen roar of the open sea, whose breakers there heave and toss in noisy contrast to the still waters of the harbour. On the left side arose a succession of grassy bluffs surmounted by native 'bush.' On the right appeared the infant town or city—call it which you will—of Dunedin.

A town that fringed the bay, and ran up the hills to their summits, and lost itself in the intervening ravines, and peeped out of the 'bush' in unexpected places. In the lower part were shops, and warehouses, and hotels, and churches, and public buildings, of more or less pretentiousness. Above these, clusters of cottages, and villas standing amidst the 'forest primeval.' Behind, and above all, loomed the 'Flagstaff Hill,'—bald and bare—and to the north arose the indented summit of Mount Cargill, clothed with dense 'bush' to the very top;—their crests bathed in the rich morning light, and fleecy belts of uprising mist floating midway around them.

Philip Grey was not one whit poetically inclined. Neither, I think, was Mabel. But both possessed that sensibility to the beautiful, which indicates the line of demarcation between mere animalism and spiritual intelligence: whether the possessor be clad in hodden grey, or walks in silk attire.

John Grey had many friends in Dunedin, and to one of these Mabel had been carefully consigned.

"The Dunstan coach leaves to-morrow morning," said her brother, "so take care of yourself till my return."

"But I am going with you," cries Miss Mabel.

Philip opened his eyes very wide at this. "Nonsense, May; it can't be done."

"Why not, Philip?"

"Oh! because its a terrible journey—more than a hundred miles; and you so ill too.

"That's the very reason why I wish to go. The ride will be so nice. Besides, I want to see the country, Phil dear."

"I dare say you do; and very nice you would find it, squeezed up in a close heavy coach, stuffed with all sorts of rough people, diggers and what not, all puffing smoke in your face, and swearing and talking after a fashion that a sister of mine would not like, I know."

"Now I will not allow you to say that, Phil. I am sure the diggers in Victoria are very civil,—quite polite to ladies, always. And papa says that the very pick of them have come over to Otago, and I know they will not smoke in my face, nor use naughty words when I am there. Besides, I mean to ask the driver to let me sit on the box with you Phil, and of course he will."

But Philip was deaf to entreaty, and set off by himself in the morning. There were many passengers, and amongst them were some decent-looking women, so that he half repented him of his hardness of heart. There was no help for it, however, so he took his seat on the box, and tried to stifle his regret at Mabel's compulsory absence.

Yet as the coach ascended the hill above Dunedin—revealing a magnificent view of the town, the harbour, the Peninsula, and the horizon-bounded ocean beyond—and passed through the picturesque scenery of the Half-way Bush, with its cosy habitations, and rustic cottages constructed of fern-trees, standing in glorious old-world gardens, and surrounded by bright green pastures, and dark clumps of forest—Philip's conscience smote him, for that he had robbed his sister of a great pleasure. And when, surmounting a spur of the 'Flagstaff,' he beheld the broad Taieri Plain, backed by the massive Maungatua Ranges, spread out before him like a map, dotted with farm steadings, and smiling with cultivation, the shining river winding amidst fields where the emerald waves of the fresh young corn rippled joyously in the light breeze;—when, I say, he beheld this landscape, so home-like, that it might have been taken for a scene in some of the midland counties of England, or the Lothians of Scotland—his remorse was complete, and his self-condemnation was great.

Lothians of Scotland - A region of Scotland.

At the end of the first stage, Philip dismounted, as it is the established custom of coach passengers to do, at every halting-place. He was about to enter the hostelry, when one of the feminine travellers within the coach addressed him.

"Do you think you could get a cup of tea for a lady, Sir?"

The voice sounded strangely familiar, Philip thought. It was the merest coincidence, of course.

"Certainly," he answered, glancing up at the speaker. She was a young woman apparently, attired in a plain brown dress of some coarse material, with a particularly common bonnet on her head, and a blue gauze veil, which effectually concealed her features. A servant girl probably, *en route* for the diggings.

He returned with the desiderated beverage.—"Oh! thank you so much;" and the pretty little hand, very unlike the hand of the servant, tendered him a sixpence.

That voice again? The coin fell, unheeded, to the earth, and Philip gazed upon the tenderer, after a fashion which called forth a rebuke.

"Do you not think it very rude to stare at a lady, Mr Philip Grey?"

"Mabel!" cried Philip. "Gracious powers, how came you here?"

"Woman's wit, you see, brother of mine;"—and she threw up her veil. "I hope you think my dress very becoming. And now, Phil, they are all very nice people here; but I do so want to see the country. Can't you get me a seat on the box, dear?"

"Oh you naughty witch! I verily believe that you are in a league with the Prince of Darkness. To outwit me so completely! Come out at once, and have your own way, for have it you will—that's clear. So I may as well make a virtue of necessity."

(MEMO.—On the whole, I am inclined to think that a man is well-pleased to be outwitted by a woman, especially when the manœuvre tends to his own gratification.)

## Chapter IV. The Heart of the Mystery.

WILL'S restoration to physical convalescence was rapid. Mentally, he was still perturbed, and discoursed incoherently, but there was less violence and more 'method in his madness.'

One day the bold Sergeant suddenly made his appearance in the sick chamber. Pratt suggested to him an immediate evacuation of the premises. The Sergeant stood his ground manfully.

"I am here in concordance with instructions," he said. "My instructions are to find out the state of the accused."

"Well, Sir, there he is, sleeping like a babe in the wood. Don't disturb him, Sir," whispered the Senior Partner. "It might bring back the crisis, and we don't want any more of that. Crisis don't agree with him very well. Come this road, if you please, and I'll expound to you. They keep very pretty liquor in this here caboose."

So saying, he edged him quietly out of the room, and eventually succeeded in persuading the Sergeant that his services were not required just yet.

When he returned to Will, that troublesome young person was sitting up in bed.

"I have heard everything," he said. "It must come, sooner or later. Better have it over at once. I did kill him, you know, Pratt."

The Senior Partner humoured his patient. "Of course you did," said he. "But do you know it rayther strikes this child as an uncommon strange thing, that you han't told us yet who you did kill. I ain't a morsel curious on my own account. No, Sir; only I should like to know. That's all."

"Give me a little water," said Will, "and I'll tell you all."

It was the 'lucid interval' prognosticated by the medico.

Will did tell all. He related a story coherent in its several parts, but so strange withal, that the Senior Partner may be excused for somewhat doubting the sanity of the relator.

And here, in substance, it is:—

On the eventful night when Pratt started in pursuit of the Prospectors, he was accompanied (as truly he informed the Coroner) by Will, for about a mile on the way. Will then returned to the tent, in pursuance of the arrangement arrived at, as hereinbefore narrated.

Now Will was still dissatisfied at the *rôle* assigned to him, and the habitual lack of self-control which was his 'most easily besetting sin,' produced the customary result. As he loitered along the road, half inclined to retrace his steps and follow his partner, he suffered negative displeasure to merge into positive anger; and thus, with corroding passion gnawing his heart, he approached the tent. As he came up to it, two men rushed therefrom. The first escaped by flight; the second Will grappled with. Both were unarmed, and they were very fairly matched. The struggle was long and fierce. To and fro they swayed—they fell prone to earth, and rolled in the dust, and rose again to their feet, and shook each other fiercely; but never once did Will relax his grasp. Gradually—whether of design or by accident I know not—they approached the brink of the river. At one moment Will's antagonist held him almost suspended over the bank; but by a dexterous movement Will reversed their relative positions. Then, with a vigorous effort, he released himself from the fellow's grip, and thrust him headlong over.

The forceful impetus of the final struggle threw Will on his knees, and well-nigh carried him also over. A portion of his shirt sleeve was torn away by the last convulsive clutch of the falling wretch; his hat must have fallen over earlier in the contest.

For a brief space Will remained peering into the darkness. "Help!"—the cry appalled him. "Murder!"—the shriek paralysed his brain. He heard the thud, the splash; he marked the silence as of death that ensued. Then a great horror fell upon him. He turned and fled from the scene;—fled, he knew not—recked not whither, so only that he could shut out from his mind and memory the upturned face, pallid and fear-stricken, as he had seen it by the faint starlight, of the man whom in his wrath he had hurled to Eternity.

Behind the tent there was a deep gully, tortuous, precipitous, rock-strewn, running between high walls of stone far up the face of the mountains. Thitherward, half unconsciously, he directed his steps. Panting, perspiring, he wrought his way amidst numberless obstacles; stumbling, falling over rocks, bruising and wounding his limbs, but ever up and on again, feeling neither bruise nor wound in the fierce excitement of flight. The ghastly face seemed to peer out from every crevice in the mountain side,—to mock and mow and gibber at him. Nor one face alone, but many, and each with an accusing light in the staring eye-balls. And that last despairing cry—"Murder!"—The horrid sound pursued him. The blast that wailed amidst the desolate crags had tongues that repeated it. In vain he stopped his ears: that cry never ceased to penetrate his brain. In vain he closed his eyes: that face was ever present to his mental vision.

Accident afforded the relief which flight denied to him. As he climbed over some larger rocks his foot slipped, and he fell headlong to the ground, alighting on the back of his head. To his disordered imagination it seemed as if he had been stricken down by an invisible pursuer. The violence of the blow stunned him, and he lay insensible. Whilst in this condition sleep happily supervened, and sweet oblivion shielded him temporarily from the horrors of his waking moments.

When he awoke, the sun was already glinting on the peaks of the mountains, and the Cairn and the Obelisk were rose-tinted and resplendent in the early dawn. He found himself lying amidst a confused pile of rocks, the *débris* of a fallen cliff; and at first he failed to realize the position, or to recall the circumstances that had brought him thither. Suddenly all the horrors of the night recurred to him, and for an infinitesimal fraction of time his heart seemed to stand still. Then it leaped up with unnatural violence, and the blood, coursing furiously through the veins, so pressed upon the brain as to endanger sanity and life.

A nameless terror oppressed him;—a terror which he had not resolution to analyze, nor courage to combat. And therewithal a thought came which not only gave him the solace of hope, but also furnished him with a motive for action. If he could but find his American friend! *He* could advise him, shelter him, save him. He rose up from his dank couch, half dazed and wholly cowed, and struck across country. All he knew was, that Pratt had gone in the upward direction of the Molyneux. And so—the river, everywhere visible from the ranges, being his guide—he hurried on. Through the calm, cool morning, through the weary noon-tide, through the descending shades of night, through the pitiless pelting of the storm, he held on his course with unfaltering perseverance, half begotten of his ardent temperament—half forced upon him by the instinct of self-preservation.

And thus it chanced that at eventide he found himself at the Lonely Hut on the shores of Lake Hawea.

"Can you picture the man, anyway, pardner?" asked the Senior.

"Picture him? Yes—only too well. I see his face now as I saw it that night. It is always before me—fearfully, vividly present. I never can—I never shall cease to see it."

And he lapsed into a paroxysm of irrelevancy.

"Guess I wouldn't know the critter by that description—not if I saw him in a pound."

## Chapter V. The Senior Partner Unravels The Skein.

THE Senior Partner was very thoughtful for some time after this revelation, and he became utterly profligate in the matter of plugs.

To quiet his mind he strolled up the Gorge in a leisurely way, speaking nought, but thinking a great deal as he went along. Presently he retraced his steps, and strode back at a swinging pace. To the camp he pursued his course, and there he sought an interview with the Sergeant and Constable Finnegan, of whom he made many and particular enquiries touching 'the beardless one.'

"Are you conversant of the person?"—queried the Sergeant.

"Well now," said the Senior Partner, "I reckon that's a curious riddle. Maybe I am;—can't say exactly. Maybe I ain't; can't say at all."

The Sergeant, proffered his assistance; but the Senior Partner politely declined his services.

"No, Sirree!" said he, very decisively. "Guess you ain't likely to run him home. Too many buttons, Mister. No offence, only them things ain't progressive in these here matters, that's a fact."

And so saying he departed.

"Constable Finnegan!" shouted the Sergeant.

"Yes, Sur," responded the Constable.

"D'ye see that person?—Follow him, wherever he goes, and report to me."

"Shure, and what is it I'm to do wid him, whin I follow him?"

"Constable Finnegan, I'll never make a policeman of ye. See and listen to everything he'll be doing. He's a dangerous charackter, and mintions the Force in a disrespectful and contemptible manner. And its my opinion that he's decocting a conspiracy to delude the ends of justice."

Thus instructed, the constable blundered after the Senior Partner in such a way as to betray his mission before he had gone a hundred paces.

Some hours later, Constable Finnegan reported himself.

"Did you follow your man?" inquired the Sergeant.

"Indade, thin, I couldn't do it, Sur."

"How was that, constable?"

"Begorra, he wint to bed, Sur."

Wherein Constable Finnegan was deceived. For the Senior Partner having succeeded in throwing that worthy officer off his guard, quietly slipped out of the back-door, and proceeded on his self-imposed quest.

Up the Gorge he went, with the regular, steady gait of a man who knows precisely whither he is bound. As George Washington Pratt *did* know. The description he had obtained of 'the beardless one' served to identify that much-wanted individual with the smooth-faced Vandemonian who had previously made himself so troublesome to the Co.—'Flash Jimmy' in fact. Here then was a clue which he resolved to follow up.

An hour thereafter he was seated in the rocky den of the villainous trio, to whom I introduced the auditor in

the earlier stages of this most veracious story.

There was only one member of the gang then present. It was the proprietor of the inflammatory locks, which had procured for him the designation of 'Ginger.'

He was stretched upon a couch repellent to every idea of comfort; he was bruised in person, and incapable of active motion, yet fiercely demonstrative of speech. But he was as a child in the hands of a master. The Senior Partner 'held him with his glittering eye,' which glowed with the steady flame of a resolute will, against which it was in vain to strive. And his cool, confident manner completed the ruffian's subjugation.

"Jest as you darn'd please," said the Senior Partner, after a brief parley. "I ain't in no special haste. Only I don't propose to quit till I've dragged the truth out of you, if I have to unravel it with this little corkscrew. (And he tapped the butt of his revolver.) See here, now, this is how the matter stands. There's a friend of mine, whose life is above par, and who's in danger on account of some infernal wickedness; and here's you, who ain't worth a cent, dead or alive—no Sirree! you ain't. And you could give evidence that would set my friend up on his legs again. That's so. And you've got to give it, you bet, whether you like it or whether you don't. I don't care a red which."

"I don't care a red" - Full idiom follows: I don't care a red cent, referring to the smallest coin in American currency.

But it's got to be done, I tell you. Now, Sir, I'll play you square, though you don't deserve it. I'll give you five minutes to shake yourself together, and if I don't get what I want then, I'll jest hoist you out of that, and telegraph you to the Camp. Yes, Sir, I will, by Jehoshaphat!"

The Senior Partner pulled out his watch to mark time. 'Ginger' lay sulky and silent, yet with greedy lust sparkling in his ferret eyes as he noted the massive repeater. During the prescribed five minutes not another word was spoken.

The American replaced the watch in his pocket.

"Now, Sir, time's up." And suiting 'the action to the word' he arose.

Simultaneously the entrance of the cavern-like abode was darkened, and two men entered. They were 'Tripes' and 'Flash Jimmy.'

They halted suspiciously when they saw and recognized the Senior Partner.

"Walk in, gentlemen. Make yourselves quite at home," said Mr. George Washington Pratt; and by an adroit change of position he placed himself between the door and the ruffianly triality, before the new arrivals had recovered from their first surprise.

Then—revolver in hand—he confronted them. Briefly he explained his errand.

"Don't move, boys," he said; "this here weapon is bound to explode if the atmosphere is agitated. But it's as harmless as a new-born babe if you only keep quiet. I jest want to know the truth—that's all."

Not for my pen shall it be to set down the conversation that ensued. There is not ink sufficiently black and sulphureous fitly to record the turbid torrent of speech that flowed from the lips of those three unhung vagabonds, nor is there any paper of the asbestos-like incombustibility needful for the retention of the shameful words.

Out of the contest the American came unscathed and victorious. By dint of mild persuasion, artfully interwoven with assurances of personal immunity, by appeals to their cupidity, and mysterious references to possible consequences in the event of refusal, he extorted from them the true story, whereof he had shrewdly forecast the issue.

A few sentences will suffice to tell the tale. 'Ginger' it was who lay *perdu* behind the tent, when Will's unlucky anger revealed the secret of the buried gold.

Perdu - Hazardous position.

Becoming thereby acquainted with the intended movements of the Co., the confederate thieves watched the tent, and marked Will leave with the Senior Partner. Then they commenced their search for the treasure,—'Flash Jimmy' keeping watch outside whilst 'Tripes' and 'Ginger' ransacked the interior. Working, the one with a sheath knife, the other with a pick, they tore up the earthen floor of the tent, and broke down the bunks to facilitate their operations. As we have seen, the hoard remained undiscovered and intact in its rocky receptacle, which presented only the appearance of being the point of a considerable boulder, and consequently was not disturbed by the unlawful perquisitionists.

When Will returned, 'Flash Jimmy' incontinently fled, leaving his mates to shift for themselves. Vice is ever selfish. 'Tripes,' in his haste to escape, thrust 'Ginger' aside, thus impeding his movements, and giving Will time to come up and close with him. It was 'Ginger' then, with whom Will grappled, and whom he cast over the bank in that fierce struggle herein recorded. Full fifty feet he fell, and his were the cries that aroused the slumbering echoes of the night. But not by water was he fated to perish. A loftier destiny was his; and years after, when the measure of his crimes was full even to overflowing, he was suffered to attain thereto.

He fell, partly in shallow water; but his head and body were dashed against the rocks, and he missed being

killed by the narrowest of possible lines. As it was, his head and face were badly cut, and his collarbone and two ribs were broken. And from the effects of these injuries he had not yet recovered.

Merely to say that 'Ginger' harboured a feeling of hatred against the members of the Co. would be to faintly shadow forth the demoniacal feeling that possessed him. He regarded himself, indeed, as an injured individual. For had not Will defrauded him of the coveted gold, and furthermore beaten and bruised him? And as for the Senior Partner—he had now forced from him, or rather from his mates, an admission which would render their further stay in the district both difficult and dangerous.

In the lesser degree these feelings were entertained by the others. It will be remembered that this was not the first occasion on which Mr. George W. Pratt had given a practical lesson to these worthies, and they regarded him accordingly. I think if they could have got him at a disadvantage, his career would have been of the briefest; but his watchful eye and the levelled revolver conjointly, more than compensated for any inferiority of numbers. Moreover 'Ginger,' as we know, was invalidated.

The end of this strange conference was, that a treaty was concluded between the high contracting parties; whereby, 'for a consideration,' the thieves bound themselves to be true men, for the performance of certain things necessary to the satisfaction of the official mind, and essential for the restoration to mental and physical health of Wild Will Enderby.

## Chapter VI. Black Spirits and White.

WHEN Pratt returned it was twilight. Will was sitting up in bed, and looking strangely excited.

"I've seen an angel!" he cried.

"Yes, Sir?—Was it an angel in pants, or an angel in petticoats?"

"Don't mock me, Pratt. I tell you I saw it plainly—as plainly as I now see you. I was lying half-asleep when I somehow became conscious of a presence,—I could not tell what, but it was wonderfully pleasant and soothing. And I heard a faint rustle, as of wings you know, and a delicious fragrance filled the air. And Pratt—it is true—when I looked up, there was a beautiful face bending over me. But before I could properly understand it all, it faded away softly and silently, and disappeared. But I saw it—I saw it. What does it mean old fellow?"

"Means you han't been taking your drug-mixture properly, as the doctor ordered."

"Do you believe in spirits, Pratt?"

The Senior Partner opened wide his eyes.—"Why, you han't been drinking have you, pardner!"

"Pshaw! I don't mean that. Do you think that the spirits of those who loved us can visit us ever?—It may have been my mother," he added softly.

"It's jest been a dream, I reckon. Go to sleep and see it again, boy; and to-morrow I'll show you a spirit in the flesh, that'll make you feel like singing 'Hail, Columbia!' on a barrel-organ."

Singing 'Hail Columbia' - American patriotic song that was, one of the unofficial national anthems of America until 1931 when the Star-spangled Banner was made the official anthem.

Just then the door opened, and it was intimated that 'a gentleman' was 'waiting to see Mr Pratt.'

"Sure he's a gentleman? Right you are. Give him my love, and say I'll meet him like a man in about one-thirty."

The 'gentleman' proved to be Philip Grey, who quietly introduced himself to the Senior Partner.

"Let me thank you for your kindness to my unfortunate cousin. Believe me, we all fully appreciate it."

"Well, Sir," (thus Mr George W. Pratt), "I reckon I've only done what I'd expect any other man to do for me—that's all."

"And that is precisely what few people do in the world," replied Philip, who was a bit of a cynic in his way.

"Don't say that, Sir; there's more good in folk than is mostly believed. Only, somehow, men are more skeared of showing the bright side of human nature, than they seem to be of exhibiting the dark side; women too, sometimes—though, as a general rule, they've got the best of us in that, as they have in a heap of other matters."

"Well, Mr Pratt, we will not argue the point. If you will accompany me, I shall have much pleasure in introducing you to a lady who will thank you more fittingly than I can."

"A lady? Jehoshaphat! Hope it ain't that velvety tiger-cat my pardner talks about. Might I make so bold as to ask what name her god-fathers and god-mothers gave her? Because if it happens to be 'Florence,' I'm kind of dubious she wouldn't agree with my digestion—not muchly."

Philip laughed. "It is my sister, Sir,—Miss Grey."

"Whe-e-e-w! No wonder the boy conceited he'd seen an angel. I'm your man, sir. Guess I'd sooner see Miss Mabel than the prettiest nugget that ever smiled in a sluice-box."

When the Senior Partner 'turned in' for the night he thus soliloquized.

"This child has had a high old time of it to-day. I've seen a real live angel in flesh and blood. Next to my

Ruth, I calculate she's about the smartest piece of walking calico in all creation. She is so. And I've seen three children of old Beelzebub—the infernalest vagabonds on this side of Jordan, that's a fact.

Beelzebub - Name of a demon, sometimes also said to be the devil.

Mighty curious thing now;—it wants one of each to recuperate Harry. (I shall always call the boy 'Harry'—know I shall.) Well it ain't no good puzzling about it. So I'll jest seek that repose which none but the virtuous can enjoy and arouse me, like a merry Swiss boy, in the morning."

And he rolled himself in the blankets, and slept the sleep of the just.

## Chapter VII. A Novel Prescription.

"SAY, Doc., do you think he's strong enough to stand it?"

"Strong enough? Yes." And the medico swore a huge oath, which was a blessing disguised. "There's no such physic in my bottles. Administer the girl first. The sight of her will operate like a tonic on him. Then throw in the blackguard as a counter-irritant. Drench him with the fable of the Dog and the Shadow; and give him the *Provincial Gazette* or *Tupper's Proverbial Philosophy* as a sedative; and if that don't cure him nothing will."

**Tupper's Proverbial Philosophy** - A book published by Martin Tupper in 1848, New York, that contain philosophical musings on a wide range of topics.

"Guess you're a cut above me there, Doc. Don't know nothing about no Tupper. Suppose it's a new liquor."

The medico chuckled. "Yes; very new and abominably frothy—diluted gas, in fact. 'Pon my soul, I don't know which to admire most, old fellow,—your honesty or your simplicity. Come—baptize your tipple."

"No, Sirree," said the Senior Partner, "I never liquor up till the sun is well over the main-yard. It ain't judicious, Doc."

"By Jove!" cried the medico; "I'm deuced glad there are very few of the same opinion. Why, Pratt, if it were not for the drink there would be very little work for the sons of Esculapius to do.

Esculapius - Used in reference to a physician. Asclepius was the Greco-Roman god of medicine.

This climate is disgustingly healthy."

Unto them entered the bold Sergeant.

"How's the young man?"

"The young man is pretty well, Sir," answered the American. "He desired me to give you his affectionate regards, and thank you for your kind attentions, and to say you needn't call anymore, because you ain't wanted."

The Sergeant's nose curled scornfully. "Don't be talking of my intentions," said he. "I must make a personal inspection of the accused."

And he made a movement in the direction of Will's chamber.

The American detained him. "No, Sir; you must not. We've concluded not to trouble you any more. See here: there ain't no accused, nor nobody killed. So you can jest go back to the Camp, and tell Mr. Commissioner that before next cock-crow I'll produce the necessary evidence."

And he did so. He caused the redoubtable 'Ginger' to be conveyed to the township, and presented him at Court,—to the Commissioner, that is; and to that official the facts of the case were narrated. Then, following the doctor's advice, he brought the fellow to Will, who having been previously interviewed by Philip and Mabel, appeared 'clothed, and in his right mind.' And so far was he from entertaining any grudge against his late antagonist that, when thoroughly convinced of his identity, he insisted on bestowing on the *mauvais sujet* who had caused so much trouble, a considerable donation, by way of compensation for damages.

Mauvais sujet - French for worthless person, or bad lot.

Any prosecution for the attempted robbery was out of the question. For to the disgust of the Sergeant, the Co. 'resoled' not to initiate any action in the matter. Said the Senior Partner,—

"Guess the miserable skunk has been welted enough already. Two ribs and a collar-bone is rather tall whipping: more than the books allow for non-annexation of property, stranger."

"Listen to me now," grumbled the Sergeant to his henchman, the constable. "Them democratic Yankees will ruin the country. They've no respect for the Force nor the Queen either. It's my opinion, Constable, that the fellow ought to be hung as high as Haman for speaking of Her Majesty as a young person."

"Did he say that, now?" cried Constable Finnegan. "Be jabbers thin, it's the blarney-stone he's been kissing!"

**Blarney-stone** - An expression of dubiousness. Blarney castle in the Cork County, Ireland, is famous for the Blarney Stone that resides in the South Wall which is reported to give the gift of eloquence to those that kiss it.

Scarcely less annoyed was the Commissioner. "Here's been a precious stir about nothing," said he. "What a shocking waste of valuable time!" he continued, thinking wearily of his manifold and arduous duties. Then with a shrug of resignation he re-constituted himself a Committee of Public Safety, and dismissed the subject from his thoughts.

And Mabel—bonny, blue-eyed Mabel. Here I draw the curtain. There are more things than tragedies, which should be enacted behind the scenes. Conceive the situation, my friends. Picture to yourself, dear Sir or Madam, the probable issue of such a meeting as then and there took place; and if your own imagination be not vivid enough to supply the details, ineffectual would be any attempt of mine to fill the canvas. I will only say that the tonic supplied by the medico agreed remarkably well with Will's constitution, and the tonic seemed none the worse for it.

## Chapter VIII. Mistaken Identity.

"WELL, Mr. Pratt, you have behaved like a trump all through, I must say."

"Like a trump? Hang it, no! That's a bad phrase. A knave is a trump, and a winning trump, much too often, by Jove! Say rather, like a Roman citizen."

"Thank you gents. Reckon you mean well. But I'm an American citizen, I am, and I don't want no higher name than that. Don't believe they ain't got any better men than Mr. George Washington down to Rome."

The interlocutors were—first, Philip Grey; second, the Medico; and third, the Senior Partner.

"Say, Doc.," continued the latter, "ain't it a powerful circumstance that I should be sitting here, sociably colliding with a man that tried his darndest to get me wiped out? How on earth came you to take that poor dead chap for my mate? Don't wonder at some of the galoots, but you're so chock full of science, Doc.?"

"Bother science! It's a lesson I shall not easily forget. But such mistakes are not at all uncommon. I remember a case, where a man claimed the body of a drowned woman as that of his wife, with whom he had lived twelve years. It seemed that she had left the house in a fit of anger about something. The fellow was in a tempest of grief, and the funeral procession was about to start for the churchyard, when his wife walked in alive and well, and turned the mourners out of doors. What do you think of that?"

The Senior Partner replenished his plug and said—"Well, Sir, that reminds me of a curious event that happened to Jim Burke, down to Missouri. Lazy Jim, he was called. He was so all-fired lazy that when he yawned he had to get his wife to shut his mouth for him. The scientific gents gave it as their opinion that he had sprouted too fast when a lad, and never rightly got over it. The only thing he was ever known to be spry about was liquoring up. He was considerable on the liquor, he was; and he'd go loafing around the bars all day on the chance of a cock-tail, or a gin-sling, or a mint-julep, or any other sort of wet drink. He did not mind a cent what, so long as it was wet. But he couldn't abide anything dry, not even a dry eye. Used to say it made him feel thirsty. He swallowed so much old rye that any ordinary man would feel half drunk if he came anywhere nigh hand; and when he fell in the creek one time, the horses that drank the water got the staggers, and one virtuous old lady was overcome by swallowing tea made from it. Anyhow, she gave it out that it happened that way, and her teapot had a high old smell of whiskey, that's a fact.

"Jim's wife was a decent soul; rather good looking too, and as lively as a three-year-old. How she ever came to let such a goney freeze on to her is more than I know. Gals do make a queer fix of it sometimes. And the fun of it seems to be, that the worse they are treated the more loving they get. That was so with Jim's wife. She worked for him and tried to fix him up decent, and keep his head up. But it warn't no use. The darned critter got lower and lower, till, 'as drunk as Jim Burke,' and 'as lazy as Jim Burke,' got to be a kind of proverbs.

"She gave out at last. Human nature—even she-human nature—couldn't stand it for ever. So one time when Jim had been on the bust for a whole week, the boys got him asleep and shaved his head, and stained him from head to foot a most beautiful mulatto colour. Then they shook him into his clothes again, and laid him aside to dry.

"When he fetched around, he warn't more than half-sobered, and the first thing he did, he went up to the barkeeper and asked for more liquor. Barkeeper said they didn't serve coloured gentlemen at that shop. Jim fired up as much as such a lazy critter could fire, and swore he was as good a white man as any in the crowd. Well, the boys laughed right out at that, and told him he'd better look in the glass. 'Jest what I want,' says he, 'Gi' me glass old rye!' But they meant a looking-glass; and as it was too much like work for him to go to one, they brought one to him and showed him his mahogany visage and bald-footed head.

"You bet he squirmed like a speared eel when he saw that. It seemed to sober him all at once. 'Thunder!' says he, 'who's that?'

"You oughter know that best yerself, stranger," says the boys. 'What name did your boss conceit you were capable of carrying safely.'

"Why don' you know me?" cried the poor wretch. 'I'm Jim Burke; old Jim Burke, of Indianny!'

Indianny - Possibly referring to Indiana, the state in America.

"That won't do," says the boys, 'you can't put that off on our folk. Why, Jim Burke, the drunken old cuss, went dead and buried more'n a week agone; and what's more, his old woman's goin' to hitch up again in a few days, with Dick Stanley. No, Sirree! none of yer darned low nigger tricks here, if you please, if you ain't

pertickler in want of a bran new suit of tar and feathers.'

"Jim shot out of the saloon at a mighty tall pace for him. He almost ran—very near, not quite though. The first man he met that he knew, he called to him. 'Say! who'm I?'

"How on airth du I know?" says the other. "Think I keep a register of runaway niggers?"

"And so with every soul he spoke to. At last he brought up at his own caboose, and in he goes, and calls to his wife—'Maria! Say! Look here! Ain't I yer huz?'

"But she yelled right out at him to 'Git out!' and quit the house; and she called him 'a impudent dirty black beast.'

"Says she—'You wouldn't dar to insult me, only you know I'm a poor lone woman, since my poor Jim went to glory, and left me alone in the world, with four precious lambs to feed, and nobody to look to for a cent.' With much more of the same sort, keeping it up like a high-pressure steam engine, so that Jim couldn't wire in edgeways. By-and-by she exhausted the boiler, and had to pull up for fresh supplies.

"Then Jim struck in. 'See here!' he said. 'Air I Jim Burke, or air I not? What say?

"'You Jim Burke?' says the ma'am. 'You? How dar you ax me such a question? Oh, Jim! Jim! my poor dear Jim!' she cried. 'If you were only here, and not lying out there in the cold ground, wouldn't you cowhide this old black villain, that wants to make me believe he's yer own darlin' self? Oh! you vagabond,' says she; ' Git out of this, or I'll break every bone in yer ugly carcass, I will.'

"And she fairly drove him out of the house with a broomstick.

"As he went forth into the street, he ran kerwallop, right slap into the arms of Deacon Goodenough; who had often laid it down to him that his goings on would lead him to perdition, clear and straight. The Deacon didn't know him in the least. So says he—

"My dark friend, what air you a-doin' of in the habitation of the widow and the fatherless?"

"Doin'?" says Jim. 'Why, ain't she my wife? Don't you know me? I'm Jim Burke!'

"Alas! no,' snuffled the Deacon. 'Lie not, my sable friend—lie not! Jim Burke departed from us last week; and I'm afeared he's gone where there ain't no water, and there ain't no wine.'

"I'm darned if I am!" cried Jim. "See here, old hoss;—jest come over to the grocery and try. I ain't got nary red myself; but they'll let you plaster it up, Deacon, I guess.'

"Depart from me, man of sin!" said the Deacon. 'Depart from me, for I know thee not. Be warned by the end of Jim Burke, and drink not at groceries, neither at saloons, lest a worse thing happeneth unto thee.'

"Well, Jim went for one after another, and they all answered him in pretty much the same style; for, you see, the report had been put around that he was dead and buried. At last one of the boys who was in the secret took him up to the graveyard, and showed him a headboard, crowded with no end of willow bushes, and churches, and seatless babes, and such-like foolishness all wafered on to it; and an epitaph which made out that it had been put up in memory of James Burke, who 'died of mixed liquors at the early age of 47.'

"When he spelled that out, he felt pretty considerable strange, you bet. 'Darn'd queer thing,' says he, 'that a man don't know who he his. I don't mind passing in my checks one bit. Wonder how I got so as to be transmogrified into a bald-face old darkey, who ain't got no friends. Seems like as if I war kinder reading my own tombstone. Can't cipher this here 'rithmetic up no-how. See here, boys! 'sposing I ain't myself, who on airth can I be?"

"Well, they kept that game running for the matter of a week or more maybe. And Jim got so dreadful mixed, that if anybody inquired for his name, he'd say he hadn't got none,—came kerslap into the world promiscuous-like, and couldn't find out rightly who he was. But after a spell Ma'am Burke, she softened to him, else she got tired of playing widow anymore; for when he was very badly gone in liquor one day, she toted him home, and had him scraped and cleaned, and when he come to, she persuaded him that he'd been down in a fever through the drink, and had had his head shaved to cool him. But the story went around, and if ever he showed his nose inside a whiskey-mill after that, the boys sand-papered him to that degree that he was glad to keep clear of them and the liquor too.

Whiskey-mill - Pub, drinking house.

"And I tell you what, gents," said the Senior Partner, in conclusion, "he got so as to be a new edition of a human, and went in for work, and joined the Order of the Children of Jonadab, and he lost the name of Lazy Jim from that out."

The Order of the Children of Jonadab - Jonadab was a figure in the Old Testament of the Bible who commanded his descendants not to drink wine. Jeremiah 35:6.

"That reminds me," said Philip, "of a trick that was played upon old Markham Jackson, when he was electioneering up-country in Victoria. He used to ride a white pony, and one night while Markham was explaining his political views, some of the 'free and independent' painted the pony sky-blue, so that the old boy was unable to identify his property when they brought the animal round in the morning."

"And that reminds me," cried Miss Mabel, there and then opening the door, "that we have to start early in

the morning, and it is quite time for all good people to be in bed."

## Chapter IX. The Co. is Dissolved.

IT was early morning—cold and chill, notwithstanding the advanced season. The stores and grogeries were fast closed, and the only human beings visible were a few crapulous wretches,

Crapulous Wretches - Suffering from excessive drinking.

staunch votaries of Bacchus, unwashed, unkempt, untidy, hairy and haggard, with blotched faces, and bleared eyes, red of the nose, and ragged of costume.

Votaries of Bacchus - Bacchus the Roman deity of agriculture and wine. His followers were Satyrs and Maenads.

Some of them wandered purposelessly up and down the long straggling street; some leaned against the buildings like male caryatides of an inferior order, others lay helpless on the earth.

Caryatides - Architectural features originating from classical Greek buildings that use female figures instead of columns.

A stray dog that had lost, or had been lost by its huma appropriator, roamed discontentedly about, snuffing suspiciously, like a sagacious canine connoisseur, at the miserable bipeds, who might have learned a lesson of sobriety from the poor dumb creature, had they not been too brutalised to comprehend the teaching.

An asthmatical clock in the bar of the Dunstan Hotel wheezily proclaimed the hour of Four, and simultaneously therewith, the coach of the ubiquitous Cobb came forth. Then the intending passengers began to assemble.

In one group appeared an invalid, supported by a goodly young man, and around the pair hovered a bright-eyed lassie, plainly dressed, but as plainly a lady, despite her coarse wrappings. With them were a bronzed and stalwart man, and a brisk gentleman whose coat of heather-brown and rough felt hat failed to disguise a certain professional air and manner. Need I name these people? If so, I have written in vain.

The driver cracked his whip. "Now then; all aboard!" The parting could not be delayed.

"Good-bye! old friend." It was the invalid who spoke. "I never shall—I never can forget how much I owe to you."

"Don't name it, Sir," said the American, "I'm only kind of worried that we can't travel together no longer. Guess it's better as it is though. There ain't nothing in these here diggings equal to the claim you're alongside of now. You'll excuse me, Miss; but you see I've taken such a notion to Harry—meaning Mr. Enderby—that I'm downright jealous of you."

"Oh, Mr. Pratt!" cried Mabel, with a blush that became her well, "I'm so much obliged to you for being so good to my cousin,"—with a strong emphasis on the word—"How shall I thank you enough?"

"Well, Miss, if a man of any grit don't feel enough thanked by a smile from them eyes of yours, he must be an ondeniable glutton; that's a fact."

"Time!" cried the booking clerk. The driver sent the lash of his mighty whip curling around the flanks of the leaders—"Hi! Git up!" The last *adieu* were briefly spoken, and the coach, with Will and his cousins, disappeared in a cloud of dust.

"Cousin, eh?" quoth Mr George W. Pratt. "Did you ever have a she-cousin, Doc.? We've all got sisters, as the song says; 'but a cousin's a different thing.' Rayther!"

"Splendid girl, Pratt!" cried the medico. "Good figure, though small; fine bust, head well set on, pretty hands, and stunning feet and ancles, by Jove! Try a nip, Pratt. I prescribe gin cocktails."

"If I knock under through it, will you physic me gratis?"

"Pooh! yes. Drench you for a month, with pleasure."

"Jest so. Then this child don't liquor up. There ain't no inducement."

The medico laughed heartily. "That's immense," he said. "Well, old fellow, you have lost your mate. How do you feel?"

"I don't feel good, that's a fact. Seems like as if I was a solitary snipe in the wilderness. Darn the boy! I never cottoned so to a stranger before."

"That was because he gave you such an awful lot of trouble. We always love our plagues best."

"Guess you're on the right track there, Doc. I'm dubious that smart young filly will have some trouble with him, for he ain't half broke in yet."

"What's the next move?" asked the medico.

"Well, Sir, I shall slide over to Fox's. (N.B.—The location of the new diggings was now no longer a secret.) I han't got quite enough of the yellow dross to satisfy me yet. More than that, I ain't a-going to cave in because I didn't get there no sooner. No, Sirree!—and if on no other account, I should go now jest to carry out my first idea. So I'll wish you farewell, Doc.; and say—next time you overhaul a stiff one, don't you go to make too sure

you can name the owner."

And so they parted. The medico sauntered off to resume his ordinary avocations; the American squared up his shoulders, and went on his way, serenely confident that Fortune would again shine on his exertions.

"It's all for Ruth," he soliloquized. "Bless her dear face. Another year, and then if things shape righteously I'll claim the old Squire's promise."

And so with a stout heart he set forth on his lonely journey.

And the dead man who had been mistaken for Harry? His identity was never ascertained—the mystery of his death was never solved. It may be that in some far-distant chamber tears are yet being shed for the loved and lost one,—that some mother—sister—wife—still mourns for him who went forth and never came back; still hopes, with a love-begotten faith, that even yet he may return. But the weary years stretch out and still he comes not. Never again shall his presence gladden the mourner's vision. The once familiar voice is mute; the loving eyes are sightless. In an unknown grave, on a foreign shore, is all that remains of the wanderer from home.

## Chapter X. A Roland for an Oliver.

ACCOUNTS, more or less garbled, of the events herein-before narrated found their way into the New Zealand newspapers, whence they were copied into the Victorian papers,—and so, in technical phraseology, 'went the round of the press,' greatly to the delight of the members of the 'Mind-your-neighbour's-business Society,' and the pleasurable edification of sensation-mongers generally. Of course, that highly-talented 'organ,' the *Tamboura Trumpet*, seized upon the delicious morsel, and transferred it to its columns; and thus it came to pass that Florence became acquainted, after a fashion, with the affair.

Tamboura Trumpet - A lost edition of Newspaper.

Which induced that charming lady to sow a few Cadmean dragons' teeth, in the manner following:—

Cadmean Dragon Teeth - Cadmus a hero in Greek mythology sowed dragon's teeth and from them sprang Sparti, fierce warriors.

"*MY DEAREST MABEL,*

*"I have only just read of the dreadful misfortune [N.B. This was a fib, and consequently she emphasized it: she had read it a week before she wrote] that has happened to your poor cousin, Mr Enderby. I cannot resist my desire to assure you of my sympathy and regret. Such a very shocking thing! How could he be so foolish as to kill his partner? I do so hope it was in self-defence. But then, dear, you know he was always very passionate and quick-tempered. I cannot help thinking of the lucky escape you have had. I am sure you have reason to be thankful that everything is off between you and him. I would not mention it for the world, only for knowing that; but the silly fellow actually proposed to me, when at the very time he was engaged to you. Only fancy his wickedness and impudence! I gave him such a scolding. I think he was afraid of its coming to your ears, and perhaps that made him fly off in such a silly, mad way to New Zealand.*

*"Marriage is such a lottery, my dear, that you cannot be too careful. Really, there is no believing these young fellows. Not that dear Justin is old: but then, you know, he is one of a thousand. Such a dear, good man. I think he worships the very ground I walk on. Everyone says we are more like lovers than staid married people."*

Here followed gossip of little interest to us; showing how dear Mrs Such-a-one had contributed a new edition of Adam's popular work to Gippsland society; and how it was said that Mr This treated his wife 'in a shocking manner, my dear;' and that there were 'dreadful stories' told about that 'shocking flirt,' Mrs Venus; and wherefore the contemplated silliness between Miss That and Mr Toher had arrived at an abrupt conclusion; together with a dissertation on the weather, and a 'tedious, brief discourse' anent the fashions, &c. &c.; in all, four compactly-written and crossed pages of the best cream-laid note-paper. Finally, the fair scribe concluded thus:—

*"And now, my dear girl, let me beg of you not to give way because of this awful trouble. Do try to keep your spirits up, remembering that affliction is sent for our own good. I am sure I thought I should have gone mad when I lost poor dear Melmoth. But we never know what is best for ourselves. Give my love to dear Mrs Grey, and remember me kindly to your excellent papa; and accept assurances of fondest love from*

*Your sincere friend,*

*"Florence M'Carthy.*

*"P.S.—I hope you will write soon, my dear, and pray tell me all about your cousin. I am anxious to know for your sake."*

Now, the blue-eyed maiden to whom this precious epistle was addressed was not a whit deceived by Madam Florence's finesse. But I have reason to know that she was somewhat angry. At the hollow pretences of friendship and sympathy she laughed, as she could right well afford to do. But what business had this woman to be so anxious for news of Will?—Of Will, her own treasure, whom that false jade had deluded, and driven forth, and abandoned remorselessly, and whom she—Mabel—had sought and rescued from the very jaws of death! Moreover, the tone of the letter throughout was displeasing to her. It was too intensely patronizing. There was altogether too much of the Governess-to-the-Pupil style about it.

Mabel did the wisest possible thing. She burned the letter, and dismissed the subject from her mind. But she dispatched to Tamboura a brief missive, couched as follows:—

*"Dear Florence*

,—

*"A thousand thanks for your very kind note. Those stupid papers have misled you. Cousin Will never killed anyone; so it is all a mistake, you see. He has been very ill, but he has quite recovered, and is looking better than ever. Indeed, he is quite himself again. I know you will be so pleased to hear this. The dear fellow is staying with us at St. Kilda, which is very jolly. We often talk of old times, when you were here. Will says he must have been mad when he made such furious love to you. Of course, it was only for fun, you know; so I hope you did not take it seriously. That would have been absurd, when one considers the difference between your age and his \* \**

*(Then came all the exquisite nothingnesses of young-lady correspondence.)*

*Good-bye, dear Florence. Be sure and write again soon. It is always a pleasure to get your letters. They are so amusing.*

*Yours very affectionately,*

*Mabel Grey."*

*"P.S.—Mamma sends her love, and desires me to say that she is very glad to hear that you are so happy, as some ill-natured people have been circulating very unpleasant reports here. Ta-ta, dear!"*

*"M. G."*

I think the younger lady had rather the best of this encounter. That last blow was very deftly administered.

And the blow struck home; for rumours were indeed current that all was not perfect rural felicity at Tamboura—that, in fact, there was a fly in the matrimonial ointment.

Let us follow Mabel's letter to its destination.

Just where the outlying spurs of the Great Dividing Range stretch down to the Gippsland plains—amidst park-like scenery, where silver-leaved Acacias, with exuberant golden blossoms, made contrast with stately smooth-barked Gum trees, whereon the white flowers peeped forth from dark olive foliage, and the young branches were aglow with flame-coloured leaflets—yellow and red;—where the sombre Honeysuckle tree, alternated with the native Cherry, through the long pendulous spikelets of which, a soft, warm breeze, laden with balsamic odours, swept with a musical, though somewhat mournful, cadence;—where a small creek meandered through tall reeds, and the broad stream, to which it hastened, flashed back the ardent glances of the sun;—there was the home of Florence M'Carthy.

It was a long, wooden, single-storied house, facing to the South, with many windows, and cool, broad verandah, and white walls, standing out in bold relief against the densely wooded ranges that towered in the rear. In front, the natural park sloped away to the river, which there formed an irregular bend, so as to enclose the homestead on three sides. Flocks of gaudy birds in the trees; many horses—bright bay, glossy black, and silvery grey; fragrance-breathing cows—red and dappled—some grazing, others reposing in the grateful shade; and the picture is complete.

No, not yet complete. Across the creek and under the trees rides a man, bearded, bronzed, handsome,—a perfect type of pastoral manhood—with two beautiful, fawn-eyed collie dogs following 'at heel.' And in the verandah sits a woman, indolent and impassive,—a Juno-like woman, robed in violet satin, whose large black eyes wander vacantly around, with a listless, weary expression.

Juno-like - Juno the Roman Goddess connected with all aspects of the life of women, especially marriage. Here Pyke could be hinting at an unhappy marriage as Juno and her husband, Jupiter, were infamously at odds

with one another.

The rider approached the house. Leaping from his foam-flecked horse, he produced a packet of letters, and handed, or rather tossed, three of these to the lady. Two of these were closed; of one the envelope was broken.

"Letters for you, Flo.," said he.

She caught them eagerly. Then observing the torn envelope, a bright flush suffused her face as she exclaimed.—"Why have you opened my letter?"

Justin smiled a peculiar smile. "Only by accident, Flo. The address is in a very masculine handwriting, you see, so I thought it might have been intended for myself."

The excuse failed to appease her anger. "I do not believe it was an accident, Justin. You did the same thing last week. That was 'an accident' also, I presume."

"Probably. The fact is, I always do forget not to open your letters when they look as if they came from gentlemen. Ladies should not have gentlemen correspondents—married ladies I mean."

The bright flush grew brighter. "Justin," she said, "you are a barbarian to treat me so. I will not allow you to open my letters. Poor dear Melmoth was never guilty of such ungentlemanly conduct."

"Bother 'poor dear Melmoth!' If there is one thing in this world more provoking than any other, it is the way you always fling 'poor dear Melmoth' at my head when I don't happen to please you. You almost make me wish he was alive."

"As I do, most sincerely. He was a true gentleman."

"And died like one, of course. Now I have no intention of doing anything of the sort, till my proper time comes. So don't look forward to a second widowhood, Flo."

And he strode into the house, triumphant.

Presently Florence opened Mabel's epistle. Its contents did not tend to restore her equanimity. The bright flush spread over neck and forehead, and an angry light pervaded the beautiful eyes.

"Your correspondence does not seem to please you, Flo," said Justin, who had re-appeared on the scene, and was eagerly scanning his wife's countenance. "May I look at it?"

Then the woman cunningly turned the weapon pointed at her own breast, against her lord and master.

She threw Mabel's letter at his feet. "Take it," she cried. "It is excessively complimentary to myself, and no doubt it will please you. You may not be quite so well pleased to find that your brutality is already the talk of Melbourne."

Justin M'Carthy opened his eyes very wide indeed. He was very fond of his wife, notwithstanding frequent little skirmishes, such as that I have recorded. But out of the rich soil of love, grew the poisonous weed—jealousy. He felt a real pain whenever she conversed with any other man—an acuter pain if she smiled on that other. And yet his jealousy was altogether unreasonable and causeless, and he knew it to be so.

"My brutality? he repeated, "My dear soul, what have I done to deserve such an accusation?"

"Read the letter, Sir. No doubt you think it kind and proper—of course you think it proper—to open my letters, and to mew me up here in this abominable wilderness, half a universe removed from all and everything I love or care for, with no companions but the wretched station-hands, hearing no conversation except about sheep or cattle, or the price of wool, and seeing nothing but the grass and the trees, and the trees and the grass, from week to week. Oh! of course, you think that this is all as it should be, and that I ought to be satisfied. Read that letter, Sir, and see what other people are saying of it."

"But Florence, dear—"

"Allow me to pass, Sir."—And she swept by him in the old proud style, before which her slaves had been wont to bow in the days of her queenly widowhood.

Thus quickly had the canker-worms of jealousy and discontent nipped the bud of marital happiness; and thus the Lady of Tamboura was less to be envied than the veriest pauper whose scanty fare is supplemented by all-abiding and enduring love.

*"And he that tells the tale,  
Says that her ever-veering fancy turned  
To Pelleas, as the one true knight on earth,  
And only lover."*

*"And he that tells the tale,...And only lover."* - Alfred Tennyson's Idylls of the King.

## Chapter XI. What Philip Thought of It.

"TELL me, Mabel, have you quite forgiven me?"

Mabel turned upon him her innocent young face, and frank honest eyes.

"I have done more than that, Will," she said. "I have quite forgotten that there was anything to forgive."

"Bless you, my darling!" cried Will; and in his impetuous way, he took her in his arms, and rained kisses on her lips, eyes, and forehead.

These osculatory performances were not entirely concluded, when the door opened, and Philip presented himself.

Osculatory - a reference to the circular action of his kisses.

"Very pretty, indeed!" said Philip. "Am I to understand that all your iniquities have been condoned? Is the *entente cordiale* fully restored?"

*Entente Cordiale* - A friendly arrangement.

"Yes, cousin Philip; that is so, as my late partner would say. You imprudently entered just as the treaty between the allies was being signed and sealed."

"Sealed? Humph! very pretty sealing. Rather Mormonish, I fancy."

"Don't be impertinent, Phil!" cried Miss Mabel from the verandah.

"Oh! you are there, are you? Well then, I think the best thing you can do is to go to papa, and curtsey like a good little girl and fold your hands and say,—'Please papa, I want to get married.'"

Mabel flew into the room, with her cheeks very red, her eyes very bright, her hair very tangled, and altogether prettily disarranged.

"I shall not do anything so silly, you rude boy." And half in sport, half in earnest, she boxed Philip's ears.

Then she vanished again.

"Now Will," said Philip, "let us be serious for a few minutes. Of course I am glad to find everything pleasant between you and Mabel. But this cannot be allowed to go on without some definite arrangement. Don't jump up in that furious manner. I'm not going to call you out. It is a very simple matter. If you and Mabel are to be married, the sooner it is settled the better. If that is not to be, you must see that you cannot possibly remain under the same roof with her another day."

From which sensible little speech you will observe that Master Philip Grey was a very business-like young man.

"What on earth are you driving at?" cries Will. "Why are you badgering a fellow in this way? What do you want me to do?"

"Merely to see my father—your uncle—and explain to him the present state of affairs."

"Oh, hang it, Phil! there's no need to hurry about that. It's all right, you know."

"No, my dear coz, it is *not* 'all right,' and there *is* need for hurry. I don't forget that May's peace of mind has been nearly shipwrecked already; and I don't think it right for her to incur more risks of that sort. So you had better see the governor—or shall I do so?"

Will *did* 'see the governor about it.' And the governor looked very grave. He saw things in a light somewhat different from the rosy hues wherewith Will regarded the situation. His mind, moreover, was busied at the time with a cargo of sugar, just arrived from Mauritius; a bad debt, which promised to largely add to the comfort and prosperity of the insolvent; a promising new Company, of which he was Provisional Director; and a few other 'unconsidered trifles.' So he said;—

"This is a very serious matter, Will. Mabel's happiness has to be considered, you know; and really I'm afraid that you are not sufficiently steady yet to undertake the responsibility. And you are both very young, you know—very young indeed. There's no hurry!—no hurry! Marry in haste, and repent at leisure—repent at leisure, you know.

"Just what I said myself, uncle. But Philip would insist on my speaking to you at once."

"Humph! Ah! Well! Philip is a sensible young fellow. Bless my heart, I don't know what to think of it. I must talk to your aunt about it. Yes, that's the best thing. I can't give you an answer just now. Besides I'm very busy—very busy indeed."

The good sense of Mrs. Grey, aided perhaps by natural reluctance to part with her daughter, suggested a period of probation.

"Exactly my own opinion," said John Grey, "that will give us time to see how he behaves."

And he explained to Will that there must be a little delay.

"Of course," assented Will, "I always intended that. Christmas will be quite soon enough."

"Christmas?" echoed his uncle. "Christmas indeed? Chut! chut! Christmas is only a month off. No, Will; say Christmas twelvemonths. That's much better."

"What Sir? Twelve months? A whole year? How do you suppose we are to wait so long?"

"With patience, Will—with patience. Finest thing in the world. And between you and me, you want it sadly."

Will fumed, and stormed, and raved. But this only convinced John Grey of the wisdom of his wife's

suggestively conveyed advice.

So Will was relegated to the station, to bear, as best he might, the tortures of absence and delay for twelve weary months.

## Chapter XII. "Ring Out the Old—Ring in the New."

MISS MABEL GREY had, as we have seen, a will of her own. (N.B.—I wish it to be distinctly understood that no *equivoque* is here intended.)

*Equivoque* - Wording of double meaning, a pun.

And it was her will that her lover should not be banished from the usual Christmas festivities. So that he had scarcely resumed the routine of station life, ere he was summoned back to Melbourne.

John Grey, like most old colonists, held in reverence the usages of his youth and mother country. Therefore, on Christmas Day he and his family trooped in procession to church; and joined, heart and soul, in anthems of rejoicing, such as bright-robed angels sang to the 'ravished shepherds' in the plains of Bethlehem;—anthems commemorative of that tremendous event, compared with which the grandest episodes of history must for ever 'pale their ineffectual fires.' And thereafter they ate of the traditional goose and apple-sauce, and of the plum-pudding—blazing in brandy, and decorated with sprigs of holly—notwithstanding that the thermometer was 92° in the shade; but compensating themselves for this sacrifice to national customs by the imbibition of iced champagne, and cool light wines from Albury and the Barrabool Hills.

*Albury, Barrabool Hills* Albury was an inland settlement that was established as a result of better transport such as the railway from Dunedin to Christchurch, completed in 1878.

And then—having loyally done honour to Her Majesty—John Grey called upon his lads and lasses to fill their glasses once more, to drink, this time, to the health of their mother, 'with three cheers, and one more, as you love her! Hip! hip! hip! hurrah!'—After which he affectionately kissed the lips of the good wife, who had been his true and faithful friend through early manhood and mature age; and their children—one and all—followed suit, not omitting 'Cousin Will,' who, indeed, had found in her a second mother. And she—dear woman—responded with joyful tears to the embraces of her loved ones, who, fulfilling the wise man's saying, 'arose up, and called her blessed,'—finding therein sweet recompense for many a past hour of suffering and anxiety, of sleeplessness and suspense.

And then began the revels, wherein the parents recalled their own young days, and in their children lived them o'er again. And neighboring friends came in, and the dining hall was cleared for the dance, and beneath a spray of native mistletoe—suspended in orthodox fashion from the centre of the ceiling—many a merry kiss was given and returned.

"Now, Will, I'll not dance with you any more," cried Mabel.

"No? And wherefore?" queried Will.

"Because I do not chose too, Sir. That is quite a sufficient reason from a lady to a gentleman."

"Oh, very well; then I can dance with some one else."

"You had better not, Sir. I forbid it, positively, and without recourse, as Philip would say. You are not sufficiently recovered from your illness yet, and may over-exert yourself. Besides, it is awfully hot, and I am very tired, and I want to talk to you, and—there—don't say that women can't give reasons for anything they do. I am sure I have given enough to convince the Grand Turk."

"Then 'come into the garden,' May."

"Ah, now you talk sensibly, like a dear cousin Will, as you are."

"Humph!—I wish you would not call me 'cousin' quite so much. I hope to have a dearer title soon."

"Well, I don't suppose anything that can possibly happen will alter the fact of our being cousins. And, Will, tell me—can't you get rid of those nasty marks in your arm? I shall never quite love you, while you go about like a sheep, with that woman's brand upon you."

And the red lips pouted so invitingly, that notwithstanding the protest, Will bent down and pressed them lovingly.

"I wear a prettier brand now," he said. "Look!"

They were standing near one of the windows, and he bared his arm to the light. The true-love knot was there, so also was the 'F. M.;" but other letters had been added, and now the legend ran thus: *For Mable*.

"Stole away!—stole away! Oh, here they are." And the lovers were encompassed by a cloud of youngsters, 'in whose sunny veins the blood was running bright.' And so they were compelled to seek refuge within, and take part in the joyous festivities of the evening.

## Chapter XIII. Only Eighteen.

"MAMMA, dear!—how old were you when you were married to papa?"

"What a singular question, Mabel!—Why do you ask me?"

"I thought I should like to know. That is all."

"Curious child," said Mrs. Grey. "I was only eighteen at the time. Your brother Philip is nearly twenty-three, so that I am becoming quite a venerable personage."

Mabel did not seem greatly interested by the latter remarks.—"Well, mamma," she said, very demurely, "you know *I* shall be eighteen in May."

Mrs. Grey's mild eyes sought those of her daughter with a new interest. "Do you mean," she cried, "that you wish"—

The question was never finished. For, for all answer, Mabel, blushing scarlet over face and neck, threw herself into her mother's arms, and hid her sweet confusion in the maternal breast.

There was a solemn conference that night between Mabel Grey's mother and Will Enderby's uncle. And the result was, that next morning, as John Grey arose from the breakfast table he went round to Mabel, and pinching her cheek caressingly, said to her,—

"So you will be eighteen next May, will you? Bless my heart! What a little old woman it is! And mamma was married when she was eighteen, was she? Well, May, if you will, May, you may have Will on May-day. Dear! dear! I don't think I was ever guilty of a pun before in all my life. It's a most unbusiness-like thing to do. 'Pon my word I'm quite ashamed of myself."

Will jumped up in a great hurry to thank his uncle.

"Chut! chut! Don't make a fuss," cried that gentleman deprecatingly. "There's many a slip, you know—many a slip. Get away to the run at once, and behave yourself properly, or I'll never give you my bonnie May. Never, Sir, never!"

And he hustled off to the train.

And as Philip prepared to follow him, that sagacious young man said to Will:—

"Take the governor at his word. You hold trumps now, but trumps don't always win. Much depends on the way they are played."

And thus was Will's term of probation abbreviated.

## Chapter XIV. "She Paceth Forth in Virgin White."

So it happened that on May-day, Mabel Grey and William Enderby took each the other 'to have and to old, from that day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and cherish till death doth them part, according to God's holy ordinance.'

Nor they alone. For about a month before the marriage, Lizzie, the housemaid, intimated to her mistress that she wished—no she did not wish—but she would 'have to leave.'

"Dear me, Lizzie!" said Mrs. Grey, who knew the value and the scarcity of good servants in the colony; "why are you leaving? are you dissatisfied with anything?"

"Oh, no, ma'am," quoth Lizzie, playing with the corner of her apron, and smirking very much. "Tain't that. I'm sure I never were more comfortable in any place. Only as my young man wants me to marry him, which he's very respectable and drives a car, and as Miss Mabel's agoin' to be married come next May, I thought as how I couldn't do better than get married at the same time, ma'am, if you got no objections."

"I cannot have any objections, Lizzie, but I wish you could defer it. It will be rather inconvenient just then."

"Well, ma'am," protested Lizzie, "Once bit, twice shy, and I've been done once afore. And as my young man have ast me, I shoudln't like to put it off. He mightn't come up to the scratch again, you know, ma'am."

Lizzie's logic was unanswerable. Even cautious Janet signified her approval.

"It's the maist douce-like thing I ever kent ye dae, lassie," she said, "for there's nae trustin' thae menfolk. Here the day, an' awa' the morn,—aye skelpin' owre the kintra frae Dan to Beersheby, an' makin' luve in the lug o' ilka feckless taupie they fa' in wi."

So Lizzie achieved her purpose, and was married to her 'young man' on the same day, at the same church, by the same parson, as her young mistress and 'Master Will,'—a feat of which she has not ceased to boast even until this day. And the joy in the drawing-room was echoed by the mirth in the kitchen; and when shoes were thrown for good luck, be sure that Lizzie had her share also.

And thus I bid my auditors,—Adieu! If with any pleasure you have listened to my story, with greater pleasure have I told it unto you. Even now, as I indite these lines I feel strangely reluctant to frame the closing sentence. Willingly would I prolong the theme, for many things yet remain untold. And it may be, that if haply this 'abstract and brief chronicle' shall win your favour, I may hereafter resume the thread of my discourse, and further divulge the fortunes of

Wild Will Enderby.  
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