



1857

# Tallangetta, the Squatter's Home A Story of Australian Life

William Howitt

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# TALLANGETTA,

## THE SQUATTER'S HOME.

A STORY OF AUSTRALIAN LIFE.

BY

WILLIAM HOWITT,

AUTHOR OF "TWO YEARS IN VICTORIA,"

*&c. &c.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON :

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TALLANGETTA,  
OR  
THE SQUATTER'S HOME.

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CHAPTER XII.

A RIDE IN SEARCH OF EVIDENCE.

OUR two youths made the best of their way. Leaving Fenton's station with the dawn next morning, they soon after crossed the Loddon, and held away through the forest towards Mount Korong. Thence they steered their way across the woods to the Avoca, and cantered on, leaving Mount Jeffcott to the left, and bearing north-west for the regions where the waters of the Wimmera lose themselves in the desert lakes. We shall not describe their journey. It was through scenery varied by low hills, rich green valleys, and the different species of gum-trees,

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each kind occupying the soil or the rock that it likes best. Now they traversed the low banks of streams where the red-gum flourished in noble bulk and altitude; now the rocky, barren ranges where the stringy-bark and the iron-bark prevailed. They found ready welcome at the different stations on their way, and distinct directions for their next stage. Thus they cantered on, grave and eager to reach their journey's end. Jonas, as we know, a capital bushman, and very amusing in his curiously blundering yet witty observations, was now too deeply anxious to be anything but serious and often taciturn. Now riding one horse and now another, they advanced at a rapid rate; on the second day they found themselves on the borders of that immense region of Mallee scrub which extends over a vast stretch of the north-west of the colony. Luckily for them, a track was cut through it, and they were thus at once enabled to advance with speed, and prevented from wandering. This Mallee scrub, as it is called, consists of a dense wood of a dwarf species of gum-tree, *Eucalyptus Dumosa*. This tree, not more than a dozen feet in height, stretches its horizontal and rigid branches around it so as to form with its congeners a close, compact mass. So close is it that you may travel for scores of miles through

it, and see no trace of any vegetation but itself and a species of twining plant, which runs like cords amongst it, and as it were knits and ties it up into an impenetrable mass. Where vegetation does prevail, it is generally the sharp and inhospitable needle-grass, a grass the blades of which are like wires, and every one of which terminates with a point sharp and keen as a needle. This grass affords little or no nourishment to the horse of the traveller, but, where he is obliged to traverse it, wounds and stings his legs fearfully. Woe, therefore, to the wanderer who finds himself involved in the mazes of the fearful Mallee scrub. He may nominally make his way to some distance, but the impenetrable thickets compel him to turn hither and thither, and soon he is completely bewildered, and eventually brought to a dead stand, not knowing how to advance or retreat. Hence the skeletons of many a lost traveller lie bleaching in the melancholy wastes of Mallee scrub.

The only access to any given point is that made by the axe; and along such a passage between the walls of this scrub our travellers advanced. There was no turning right or left, and so destitute of animal life was the scene, that for a score of miles that they rode through it they did not see or hear a bird or frog, or perceive so much as a lizard en-

livening by its motion the soundless and wearisome jungle.

Issuing from this tedious and unattractive region, they found themselves in a vast sandy desert. Low sandhills, covered with a thinly scattered wood of blue-looking gums, extended on their right hand; and before them stretched an arid, sandy plain, sparsely scattered with low bushes, and clothed with a rigid vegetation resembling heather. Both they and their horses were wearied with their two days' rapid journey. They looked round and onward in vain for a trace of water; they listened for the ever-welcome sound of frogs. There was no such cheering note. All was dry, barren, and desolate. It was now August, a winter month verging on spring, and yet all was dry: they felt what it must be in the sultry summer months, more resembling a furnace than a habitable land.

For hours they rode on in great perplexity and anxiety. All track was lost. They might in this pathless desert of sand go on perhaps for days, and find no human habitation if they missed the one they were in quest of. It was not till now that they felt the hazardous nature of their undertaking. Without a guide, what should lead them to their goal? They stood still and held a council; the result of which

was to proceed no further across the plain, which appeared interminable, and by all accounts was only bounded by the terrible Mallee scrub. To the right they could perceive something like rocks, and they determined to direct their course thither. Their horses showed now every mark of exhaustion, and no wonder, for they had each of the two last days passed over more than seventy miles of ground, and some of it extremely rugged and difficult. They were evidently exhausted by intense thirst, and water was still the most hopeless of all things. The sun was fast descending the evening sky; and weary, both man and horse parched with heat and drought, for the day had been very warm, they toiled on for a couple of hours. The rocks, if they were such, seemed to recede at their approach, and they almost began to regard them as some delusion. At once, however, they perceived them grow more distinct. They soon clearly showed themselves as granite rocks, strangely wild, gray, and broken. On their backs stood up, ragged and sickly, a number of straggling pines, of the *Calitris* species which, like our Scotch fir, loves to take root in the driest crevices of the most barren and hot rocks. Between the rocks were several openings like little valleys, showing behind a most arid and adust region, as if

the very soil were only particles of decayed granite, and bearing a meagre forest of crooked and twisted stringy-barks. The aspect of the place was singularly desolate; and yet, in one of these openings, under the gray pile of rocks and overhung by several of the skeleton-like calitris, stood a wooden hut, rudely roofed with sheets of stringy-bark kept in their places by stones slung across it by ropes of cow-hide.

Humble and miserable as was the hut, our youths beheld it with feelings of unspeakable exultation. They took it for granted that it was inhabited, though they saw no smoke issue from its chimney, and not a creature appeared visible. Not a dog lay about the place, so universally the case at stations; not a fowl or a pigeon appeared below or above: but these, were they there, might have betaken themselves to roost. It was near sunset, yet the sun glared uncloudedly from the west across the waste of torrid sand, and the place seemed glowing in a red and fiery heat.

“If the place be tenantless,” said Jonas, “what is to become of our horses? for neither grass nor water can exist here.”

As he spoke, however, a large sheep-dog set up a wild bark somewhere on the top of the rocks, and appeared to be descending some hidden way, barking



furiously as he came. They looked up, and on the brow of the precipice opposite to them they beheld an object which filled them with astonishment. It was a short, thick figure of a man, as it seemed, but of a shortness and a thickness which amounted almost to monstrosity. The figure could not be more than four feet in height, and in size it was beyond all ordinary proportion to its altitude. It was clad in a scarlet shirt, which was stuffed into a pair of wide trowsers, which again disappeared in a large pair of jack-boots, there called Napoleons, only reaching to the knee. On his boots he wore a large pair of spurs, and a dark-coloured pair of braces made themselves conspicuous over his shirt: he had on no hat; but his head, which appeared large and solid, was covered with a bush of curling black hair, and his complexion at that distance appeared of a swarthy brown. This strange apparition stood motionless and profoundly silent, eyeing them attentively from his elevation, while the dog had descended; and after several circles made around them, barking vociferously, now drew itself up at the door of the hut, and showed its teeth, growling in a low tone.

“Good morning, mate,” shouted Jonas to the strange object on the precipice; “any one at home?”

"I am here," said the figure laconically, without moving, and in a voice of extraordinary gruffness.

"If you are the sole tenant of the place," added Jonas, "we shall be extremely obliged to you for a night's rest, and refreshment for ourselves and horses."

"Does it look like a place where refreshment abounds?" replied the miserable figure.

"Well, not remarkably," replied Jonas; "but before we bandy any more compliments, just tell me, is this Mr. Randall's station?"

The "sturdy stump of a man," as Jonas called him, *sotto voce*, to Charles, took some little time to consider his answer, and when it came it was only, "And suppose it should be?"

"Then, if it should," rejoined Jonas, "it would be a blessing, for we have as little inclination to travel further in this sort of country as you, mate, have, as it would seem, to talk. If this be Mr. Randall's, we want to see him."

"Maybe," rejoined the figure; "but Mr. Randall is not at home."

"Then we must wait till he comes."

"Perhaps you may tire of that. Can you live on sand?"

Jonas now stared at the man, if man he were, and took as long a silence before answering.

“Not on sand, mate, but we could do tolerably on sandwiches; we are not particular, but we are in haste.” And with this he and Charles dismounted, without ceremony, and determined to see what sort of quarters the place afforded. The strange, inhospitable kind of reception, from a creature as strange, was so totally out of character with the practice of the colony, that they were at a loss what to make of it; but they and their horses were both too much in need of refreshment and rest to stay wasting further words. As they dismounted, however, the squat figure also began to descend from his eminence; and as they had just opened the door of the hut, where they saw nobody, he came up to them.

If they had been astonished at his appearance at a distance, they were tenfold more so on a close view. The man—for man it was—was evidently a dwarf; yet not a dwarf alone, but one of those remarkably strong-built persons who are called double-jointed. His legs in his boots bore some resemblance in thickness to those of elephants, at the same time that they were extremely short. His arms and hands were of equally massive size. His neck was like a little tower, and his head, though by no means dispropor-

tionate, was large, massy, and indicative of great strength, both physical and intellectual. His face, though of an almost copper hue, was rather handsome, and the expression singularly mild, though at this moment reserved and lowering.

The two youths stood before him in astonishment, not without awe. The place and the man taken together, had something weird and supernatural about them.

“Will you oblige me with your names, gentlemen?” said the ponderous little man, laying a huge hand on the handle of the door, and drawing the door to.

“Mine is Fitzpatrick,” said Charles; the sturdy stump of a man gave no indication of its effect on him. “And mine is Popkins,” said Jonas.

“Popkins!” There was the most instant change of the man’s countenance. The cloud vanished, the caution was gone, his eyes flashed out a sunburst of light, and the hitherto taciturn person now exclaimed in a voice singularly soft: “Bravo! Mr. Popkins; I have been on the look out for you these four days on the hill. I congratulate you on your escape. Mr. Randall will be rejoiced. He will soon be at home.” The door was flung open, the horses were led away. There was found an abundance of water and corn, and soon the two weary youths

were seated in the hut, where the kettle was speedily boiling for tea. It was wonderful to see the adroitness with which the bulky little man went about the duties of cook, notwithstanding his ungainly elephantine build. He came in with a load of wood on his shoulder, enough for a horse, and piled it carefully in a corner for the evening fire, observing that the nights were still very cold. He set a massive table in the middle of the room, lifting it as an ordinary man would lift the merest work-table. In a very little time he had the tea-things on the table, and kangaroo steaks frying on the fire, with a piece of cold beef, and a wattle-bird pie also ready on the board.

“You mistake me for my brother Abijah,” said Jonas, sorrowfully, as the large little man was busy frying his steaks.

“What,” said he; “are you not Mr. Abijah?” with a start that almost upset his frying-pan. “What is amiss, then? They have not taken him?”

“I am sorry to say they have,” replied Jonas; “and my brother now lies in Castlemaine. He wants Mr. Randall to give evidence for him.”

“Oh! Lord of mercy! In prison! Ay, they were within a hair of having Mr. Randall too. Good Lord alive! what is to be done! I was afraid they might be coming here after Mr. Randall, and that

made me so rude to you till I knew who you were. Oh luds! luds! luds! And there comes the master; I must run and tell him. Would you hold the pan?"

He gave the handle to Jonas, and disappeared with a speed which astonished them from the peculiarity of his build. Anon, he returned grave and thoughtful, and without a word, took his pan, and proceeded in silence with his business. In a few minutes, a man walked, or rather limped, into the apartment, who scarcely less excited the surprise of the young men than their first acquaintance. He was a man of about the middle height, very shabbily dressed in an old drab riding coat, a pair of riding breeches, lined on the inner side with leather, tan-leather leggings, and stout ankle boots laced in front, an old plaid waistcoat of a very large pattern, in which red and green greatly predominated, and which did not boast of more than about two buttons. He took from his head a very weather-worn and battered green wide-awake, and displayed a head of hair of a reddish yellow, and wild-looking whiskers of the same colour, nearly surrounding his face. The face was also of a somewhat sandy look, and rather pitted with small-pox. To add to the singularity of his appearance, they could not avoid perceiving that his legs were very much bowed, as though he had ridden on horseback all his

life, and they had thus acquired this shape by clinging to the rounded body of the steed. Besides all this, he moved with a decided limp of the left leg. Can this be the Mr. Randall? each of the youths thought. Yet in the face of this man, on whom nature appeared to have been so niggard of her favours, or rather on whom she seemed to have wreaked her capricious spite, there was an expression of good nature, and a gentleness amounting to quiet, which quickly made them forget much of what first struck them. He put out a very freckled and sunburnt hand to welcome them with a cordial shake, and expressed, in a low and very cultured voice, his pleasure at seeing them, but his sorrow for the occasion. "I was quite in hopes," he said, "that my friend Abijah would have escaped the myrmidons; he is very active and quick in resource, but it seems, they were too nimble for him. Well, poor lad, we must not desert him. I expect they will take me too if I go; but go I must, for we must never fail our friends in trouble."

All this he said with a quiet propriety and feeling, which came very strikingly from a person of his exterior. He then begged his guests to be seated at table, and bade Crouchy, for so he called his extraordinary servant, place tea on the table at once, for he was himself consumed with thirst, and had no doubt

the young gentlemen were still more so after their ride. He had noticed the excellence of their horses in the stable, and said that two of them had been his, and had been sold by him in Melbourne, Bluebeard and Charles's cob. When he heard in what time they had accomplished the journey, he smiled, and said: "Yes, that is the having blood and breed in your cattle." As they proceeded with their meal he made himself master of the main facts of Abijah's case, and when he heard that the real onus of it rested on his proving an alibi for the last month, he said: "That I can soon do, if they admit my evidence, but perhaps they will expect me to prove one for myself; for having been seen with Abijah in the diggings, the police were bent on seizing me as an accomplice. If I had time, I could bring evidence from every inn and station between the Darling Downs and Melbourne to prove where Abijah and I were every day; but there is no time, if the trial goes on at once. But," added he, "I have my memorandum book, with all the items of purchase and expenditure at every place; I have the bills of every inn receipted; the receipts for horses purchased, and certificates of pedigree and soundness from some of the greatest breeders of horses in New South Wales, for I purchased on this last journey two hundred. That



surely will do. Yes! yes! that must do," he exclaimed, in increasing confidence, as he went on. "Bravo! Mr. Popkins! we shall bring your brother off!"

"Pray God," said Jonas, most earnestly, and appearing to gather great comfort from the assurance. Crouchy, the strange, double-jointed servant, stood all the time, listening with the utmost intentness, and on hearing this, rubbed his hands together, and cried "Tuckaroo! tuckaroo!" an expression which, whatever it meant besides, expressed wonderful satisfaction. Our young travellers observed that Crouchy had placed a plate and knife and fork for a fourth person, and imagined, in the easy life of the desert, that he meant to seat himself at table with them: but at this moment another personage made his appearance. This was a young man of most gentlemanly and aristocratic aspect. He was remarkably handsome, both in form and face. He was not tall, but approaching tallness. His features were of a peculiarly well defined and intellectual cast, delicate, and yet manly. He was clad in a shooting dress of gray plaid, of small pattern, coat, vest, and trowsers of one pattern. A brown wide-awake, turned up smartly at the sides, covered a head of glossy brown hair, which, when the hat was removed, displayed a

grace in its bearing and contour which extremely struck Charles, who felt that, whoever he was, he was a man of birth and family. What could he be doing here? What inducements could this hungry desert present to him? The young man, however, made a courteous inclination to the strangers, unslung his double-barrelled gun from his back, and handed a bag of game to Crouchy, who appeared most assiduous in his attentions to him. As this fresh arrival took his place at table, two magnificent Highland staghounds, here denominated kangaroo hounds, walked in, and stood behind him.

“What noble dogs!” exclaimed Charles. The gentleman, whom Randall addressed as Mr. Flavel, appeared pleased with the involuntary tribute of Charles’s admiration, and turning, patted them on their heads, saying, “Yes, noble fellows they are. Crouchy, my boy, give them some water, will you, at once, for they are, I am sure, dying for it.” Then, turning to Randall, he said, “We have had a long chace after an emu to-day, but it fairly beat us, by cutting right through your flock of breeding ewes, so that the shepherd drove the dogs back; and we have been to the Wimmera, and bagged some wild ducks.”

“Mr. Flavel,” said Randall abruptly, “do you

know that poor Abijah is taken, is in prison, and in danger of his life as an accomplice of those bush-rangers? I must be off with these young gentlemen in the morning, and leave you and Crouchy in charge."

"Is that true?" said Mr. Flavel, with evident sincerity of interest. "Well, I am very sorry, indeed; but they can't prove anything of the kind. You know, and can testify that."

"Ay," said Randall, "but who is to testify for me? For they snapped at me, too, and may again. Instead of a witness, I may come out an accused."

"No, no," replied Mr. Flavel, "I will take care of that. I will go and authenticate you."

"Will you, though?" exclaimed Randall, delighted. "Bravo! then I care for nothing. Your testimony is all sufficient."

"Well then, you shall have it; it is settled."

The party now continued the conversation in the highest spirits. Numerous matters were introduced, which greatly interested Charles. Randall and Mr. Flavel described the country round, and their mode of life, for it appeared that Flavel was, and had been, for a good while, a regular resident here. He learned that though this district was barren and desolate in the extreme, there were here and there, on

the extensive run, plains of better pasturage, especially in the direction of the lakes Kuron and Hindmarsh. In the woods, there were cattle runs which, in winter, afforded some pasturage and shelter, and in summer, the cattle migrated towards the waters of the Wimmera, north of Hindmarsh, and found tolerable supply of green food. There was, on the sandy wastes, also, a species of salt scrub, on which the sheep grew fat, where a stranger would imagine they must perish; and then, as for sport, which all these dwellers in the deserts of Bullarook appeared equally to be enthusiasts in, there were emus on the plains, kangaroos in the distant forest pastures, and abundance of wild fowl on the lakes, and on the reaches of the Wimmera. They described the double valley of the Wimmera, descending north-west from the Grampians, as a most attractive scene of fertility and beauty, thickly studded with stations, and swarming with stock.

A most friendly feeling had sprung up between the different individuals of the party before they retired for the night, not even excepting the extraordinary specimen of humanity, Crouchy, who entered with a perfectly enthusiastic passion into all the details of the life there. Charles gave the most cordial invitation to both Flavel and Randall to Tallangetta,

assuring them that they would find good sport there. At bed-time, Charles and Jonas were shown into a small room, where they saw a capacious travelling portmanteau, with "Augustus Flavel, Esq.," stamped in black letters on its tan leather top, and on a little shelf, where were piled a number of books. Charles took down, with some surprise, the Latin Orations of Cicero, the Dialogues of Plato, the Eumenides of Æschylus, and the Antigone and Œdipus of Sophocles. In short, on that little shelf were lodged such a set of books as he would never have sought for in any bush home of the colony. Shakspeare, well handled, appeared the only English book allowed to associate with the great dramatists and philosophers of Greece. What, again Charles asked himself, can this Mr. Flavel be doing here?

By peep of day Charles and Jonas were up, and found breakfast on table, Crouchy filling the teapot, and with a good stock of provisions packed to be tied on the saddle of a led horse. Soon appeared Randall and Flavel, equipped for their journey; Randall in the same old garb as yesterday; Mr. Flavel in a handsome Oxonian, and a pair of beautifully-cut light jack-boots. They sat down to breakfast, and sought to make good use of their time. In the midst of the repast Charles looked across the table to Mr. Flavel,

to whom he had addressed an observation which received no answer, and was struck with an extraordinary sensation at his appearance. His hands rested on the table on each side of his plate, his knife and fork having, it appeared, been quietly dropped on the plate. He sat looking as at the opposite wall, but there was "no speculation in those eyes." His face was calm and motionless as if in sleep; yet his eyes were open, but had a most singular expression. They appeared to be looking at no particular object; on the contrary, there seemed, as it were, a curtain drawn down over the iris, and the vision, if there were any, to be within.

Charles turned with astonishment towards Mr. Randall, who lifted his finger, signifying that he should take no notice, himself proceeding with his breakfast as if nothing particular had occurred, and went on speaking to Charles of the shortest route to Castlemaine. In about five minutes Mr. Flavel moved, and drew a deep breath as if awaking from sleep, resumed his knife and fork and his breakfast, and said to Mr. Randall, as if in the most ordinary course of circumstances, "Well, I can't go with you."

"No!" said Randall. "Why not?"

"Why, do you know my brother George is the

counsel for the crown in this case. It would never do for me to appear."

"Oh, heavens, no!" said Randall. "How unfortunate!"

"It is most unfortunate," resumed Mr. Flavel, while Charles and Jonas looked from one to the other, perfectly confounded with the news, but far more with the wonder whence it could have come. Here, at this distance, at this table, at this moment, in this almost unpeopled and inaccessible desert, to be told this!

"My sister says," Mr. Flavel went on, "that not only is George the leading counsel in the case, but that he has made up his mind secretly as to the guilt of every man taken; that he will bend every effort to condemn the prisoner you are interested in, and that he will bear extremely, severely, perseveringly hard upon you. I am greatly concerned."

"But why on me?" exclaimed Randall, evidently considerably alarmed. "Why on me? He knows me not; he has no suspicion that you are here; how can it be? How comes he in Victoria at all?"

"He has been here this six months. Something disgusted him at Sydney, where he was carrying all before him, and he has been invited here by his

Excellency, who knew him years ago in America, and who gives him all the weight of his influence."

Randall looked actually confounded. He grew pale; knit his brow, as in vexation, and gave to his mouth an expression of great chagrin and yet of dogged firmness. Charles and Jonas were utterly bewildered. To hear this clever, aristocratic young man, so intelligent, so calm, so sober, talking of things impossible, as it seemed, as plain facts which they might have then and there learned from a morning paper, if there had been such a thing: to hear Flavel talk of his sister as his informant—where was she? If here, how had she communicated with him at table in the midst of breakfast? At once it flashed on Charles. He is mad! That is it! How sad in such a fine young man of his education! And yet, in Randall, that could be no feigned feeling, meant to take the patient's lunacy as sanity; it was no acting, it was real feeling, and vexation and alarm. The mystery was past any solving.

But breakfast was now over. Up rose all and prepared to depart. Randall snatched up his whip, shook hands with Flavel most warmly, and asked for his prayers while away. "I will not be longer than I can help," he added. "I will not impose any duties on you more than is necessary; but Crouchy will put



out his wonderful energies and relieve you all he can."

Crouchy looked highly delighted at this praise, and said, in an energetic tone, "Ay, ay; never fear about Crouchy."

Mr. Flavel took a most friendly leave of the two youths. Sympathies of rank and education seemed to draw him strongly to Charles, and he promised to pay him an early visit. They mounted their horses, which Crouchy had ready at the door, and rode away at a great speed.

They took a short cut through the granite wilderness, and had ridden some miles, when they saw a horseman coming at full gallop down a glade to the right. It was Flavel! His horse was in a foam, showing the speed at which he had ridden. He drew up close to Randall, and said, "I learnt after you were gone that all will go well; and I wanted you to know it; it will make you at your ease. But one thing you must do. When George is driving you hard, and interrogating you mercilessly as to your own identity, as he will, ask him ——" Here the speaker dropped his voice and whispered the rest into Randall's ear. "That will settle it," he said, with a smile of triumph; and Randall, with looks of astonishment, replied, "My God!" he could utter

not a word more. The two friends wrung each other's hands, and, Flavel once more bidding adieu to the young gentlemen, turned his splendid brown mare and rode leisurely up the glade, followed by his magnificent pair of hounds.

On rode the travellers; fast and far they went; till they had passed the dreary Mallee scrub, they never drew bit. There they dismounted, and made a hearty dinner of the viands Crouchy had so providently supplied. Scarcely allowing themselves or horses the necessary rest, but having given their horses each a good feed of corn, which they brought with them, they rode on again till sunset. They were then near no station, so they hobbled out their horses, made up their evening fire, and prepared to spend the night each wrapped in his rug. During the day, Charles thought over and over the strange incidents of the morning, and often longed to question Randall, even in their rapid ride. But Randall himself offered no explanation, and yet the circumstances were enough, as he must have felt, to excite the deepest wonder in a stranger. Now, however, as they sat round their evening fire, with the shadows of the forest around them, Charles asked Randall what it meant, and whether he was to suppose Mr. Flavel not right in his mind.

“Your question,” said Randall, “is perfectly natural, and I would have given you some explanation, but every moment is so precious, that I avoided entering into engrossing conversation. But now I most willingly explain to you what must have appeared so extraordinary. There is no secret necessary regarding it, between friends, for Mr. Flavel makes none. Mr. Flavel is member of an ancient family, which has large estates in Ireland. He is heir to the ancient barony of Dunallen. In this family there runs a peculiarity which, ever and anon, in the course of ages, shows itself in a species of second-sight. In the Dunallens it is something more, for they not merely see the phantasmal pictures of coming events, they become frequently, and without warning, aware of the spirits of the dead, and hold communication with them, as with their living friends. It is a condition like that which has attached to various eminent men, as Swedenborg, and Zschokke, who became frequently involuntarily conscious of the life, history, and state of certain people in whose company they happened to be. In Mr. Flavel, this occurs in a species of brief trance, during which he is utterly unconscious of what passes around him: but appears to be absent from the visible world, present with the invisible, and

thus obtains the most certain intelligence of matters of passing importance.

“ Ages ago, an ancestress of Mr. Flavel was pre-eminently endowed with this faculty or condition; she foretold the most extraordinary things, and several times disclosed to persons present, facts which so affected their reputations, that violent feuds arose in consequence; the family itself was extremely annoyed, and she was shut up as incurably insane. She was known through the country as the Mazed Lady of Dunallen. She was said to be allowed the range of the upper rooms of the castle, but was never again seen abroad. The country people say that she still wanders, day and night, through those rooms, and especially in a large picture-gallery, where she used to stop on her rounds, always before a particular picture, when she appeared to converse with the portrait of a lady of a still more remote age. There is said to be a wonderful likeness between the portraits of those two ladies, and that likeness is said to have revived in the present Mr. Flavel. Certainly, the *spiritual* likeness has so descended; the spirit of the seer has fallen on our friend. I must make a mere outline of his story. He lost a beloved sister some years ago, and with that sister he holds frequent intercourse. By her, he was warned to fly

from his native country, and keep himself concealed for a certain term, or he would be secured as insane, and his next and only brother, a man of an ambitious and bad character, would be empowered to hold and administer his estates for him. The old Lord Dunallen, a worthy, but weak man, had been wrought upon by this second son to agree to this course, which the son represented as necessary to prevent both serious disgrace and disasters to the family. That term of years is now nearly run: Mr. Flavel's sister assures him, that he is now safe, or you would not have heard these particulars from me. The old man, however, whose eyes have been opened by the daring presumption, and arbitrary, and dishonest acts of his second son, receives frequent assurances of his eldest son's safety and affection. The second son, George, disappointed in his schemes on the estate, and refused any further aid from his father, has qualified himself for, and received a call to the bar, and is, it seems, practising here with brilliant success. So much for Mr. Flavel, whose acquaintance I made some years ago in Melbourne, and who asked me to secure him a retreat where, in profound seclusion, he could enjoy his books and the chase. Could he be more entirely hidden in any corner of

the earth, yet with free range of river, waste, and wood, than at Bullarook ? ”

“ That is a wonderful story,” said Charles Fitzpatrick. “ And do you really find Mr. Flavel’s spiritual revelations borne out by the fact ? ”

“ Of that,” said Mr. Flavel, “ you will very soon be able to judge. You heard that he guarantees that all will go well at the trial : that I shall be hard run by the crown counsel, who is to be his brother, a matter wholly unknown to me, and on which I have never till this morning heard a word ; and, finally, he has given me a message, which he says will at once confound and defeat this brother, the hostile counsel. We shall see.”

“ And this Crouchy too,” said Charles ; “ what an extraordinary creature ; wherever did you meet with him ? ”

Randall smiled. “ Mr. Fitzpatrick,” he said, “ you may well wonder ; truly my house must seem a refuge of oddities and incurables. I myself am no Cupid or Adonis ; Mr. Flavel appears to ordinary eyes a visionary, if not something more—a madman ; and Crouchy, there are those who, suddenly encountering him in the forest, have believed him the devil. You say he is extraordinary ; he is more extraordinary than he looks : Nature has given him an uncouth,

but a most amazingly powerful frame. His father was an English sailor; his mother an Abyssinian. He possesses incredible strength, and passions of equal violence. It was this strength, enclosed in this form, like a giant crushed down into a dwarf, which was his snare and bane. Being a mockery at home, and made vengeful by insult, an artful monster prevailed on him to escape with him to this hemisphere, promising him the post of a shepherd or a stockman in these woods. Crouchy is passionately, madly fond of horseback; he jumped at the proposal, and in a few months found himself, in Sydney, and then in Melbourne, exhibited as a prodigy of ugliness and gigantic power. The feats of that strength are said to be incredible, and the lucky kidnapper was apparently on the road to fortune. Hopillipopo, the Dwarf-King of the Mountains of Chipango, whose strength exceeded that of fifty men, was a splendid property. But Crouchy had a soul peculiarly sensitive to wrong; he raged inwardly at the treachery practised upon him, and at the indignities he was daily made to endure. He became rebellious to this keeper's tyranny, and this led to increased coercion, and to cruelties utterly monstrous. This could not last. It was only the terror of fresh insults, if he ventured abroad amongst the rude population of the

colony, which retained him in submission. But outrage and contempt have their limits. Crouchy is vindictive in resentment as he is faithful to devotion in gratitude for kindness. One evening, when his master brought him his food, and bade him prepare for the night's exhibition, he seized him, in his rage, bound him neck and knees together with a cord which he had secreted, locked the door upon him, and escaped into the darkness. It was on my way between Melbourne and Mount Cole, that one day as I sat in the solitary forest, wofully depressed by sorrows of my own, and even tempted to thoughts of self-destruction, sitting by my fire, this startling figure suddenly appeared before me. I am not superstitious, but I felt my blood arrested in my veins, my heart ceased to beat; I verily believed that my impious despair had called up the Prince of Darkness. Poor Crouchy; he was dressed, not in his present favourite style, but in a close-fitting, flame-coloured garment, meant to display his massive build and muscular development; a short skirt of light blue encircled his hips, and his black, raven-black, and curly hair, to my surprised imagination, appeared like Medusa's snakes. But he soon made known his sad tale. He was famishing with hunger, not having dared to show himself to any one till he saw my



fascinating features. But I freely confess that I never felt a compliment so flattering in my life— God knows I have never received many — as that of thus being the first creature in which this poor out-cast felt that he could repose confidence. There was an end to my despair too, when my thoughts were directed from my own ills to the shameful wrongs of another. I refreshed him, made him mount one of my horses, and Crouchy has now been for two years the inhabitant of Bullarook. If there be a noble soul in a dishonouring body, it is Crouchy's. He thinks Flavel little less than divine; every word of his is to him gospel, for he has seen the wonderful truth of his words. As for me, he serves me as the man who first treated him as a fellow-man. On my wide and straggling station, he is worth a score of common stockmen. He is here, there, everywhere; and there is an atmosphere of superstitious terror surrounding him that is an army of protection in itself. You should see that short bulky figure mounted on Snob, his favourite tall horse, flying through storm, or fog, or twilight. It is something equally grotesque and startling. You should hear the fearful shriek which he sends through the woods when the wild dogs are at the flock at midnight. It is enough to make the stranger's heart stand still; the very dingoes steal

away silently at the sound to their lairs. But, above all, you should see him in the excitement of the chase of the wild bull through the granite hills and amid the iron-bark forest. Then his Abyssinian blood is up indeed — then he is all one glow and fury of delight, careering like a demon, pistol in hand, after the tremendous animal; and it is wonderful to see how, when the infuriated beast turns upon him in madness, he will ride up into his very face, and — there is a report, and the huge creature drops dead at his feet. In these scenes Crouchy is immensely happy, and even to me terrible. Many a time man and horse, meeting him in his headlong rides, have wheeled round in sudden affright, and gone back at full gallop. Many a time, when he has been following Mr. Flavel in the chase, often crawling on all fours amongst the scrub, or climbing some tree or rock, to bring down his game, the solitary shepherd has scudded away in terror; and there are rumours now far and wide in the bush — for I come ever and anon across them — that in the desert of Bullarook there actually haunts a terrible sorcerer and his imp. Who can wonder who sees them? Who can help smiling who knows them? Would to God that the earth had plenty of such men, as true, as generous, and as good; but

with the graces of Flavel rather than the grimness of Crouchy.”

Such was the relation of Randall to the deeply interested young men at their evening fire. They then rolled themselves up in their rugs, and slept till the laughing jackass awoke them. The next evening saw them at Castlemaine.

## CHAP. XIII.

## THE TRIAL.

OUR two young emissaries had made such expedition that they were in Castlemaine three days before the day of trial. Three anxious long days they seemed to all those who were interested in the fate of the prisoners. The friends of Abijah Popkins had been as active as they were certain to be with such a man as Mr. Peter Martin at work in the matter. They had hunted up, arranged, and had already assembled such a host of evidence on behalf of Abijah prior to his departure with Randall, as left no doubt on that part of the story. There were various deeds of atrocity done by the Douglas and Melville gang in various parts of the country, which, however, concerned Abijah not at all; for during all that time he was living rather too publicly, but still most unconcernedly, as regarded all but himself and wife, before the people of Bendigo. His position, too, as

proprietor of a wealthy and successful store, made the attempt to charge him with acts of violence and plunder appear ridiculous. But he had been away a month, the Bendigo public knew not where; he was considered wild, and fond of his glass; they saw his wife left to the cares of a heavy and responsible concern, wearing an aspect of anxiety; and when Abijah returned, the first thing heard of him by many was that he appeared with a very suspicious-looking stranger, and was surprised by the police in the midst of the most desperate and sanguinary gang of bush-rangers in the colony. These were heavy facts against him, and the government was disposed to use every possible severity, and to make a striking example of the parties taken. Mr. Martin had secured able counsel for the prisoner, but the fame of the new man, who, as attorney-general of the colony, was coming against them, was high and appalling. All the prisoner's friends saw how much would depend on the evidence and still more on the character of the man whom he had been professedly absent with. Mr. Martin, spite of his protested confidence, as the day approached could not shake from him a growing and depressing anxiety. The mother as well as the wife of Abijah was come. The friends had been with the prisoner, and though perfectly convinced of his innocence of

any charge against him, yet, the scenes in the prison were said to have been of the most appalling and heart-rending character. The young wife, spite of her enfeebled frame, which had not recovered the shock of Abijah's apprehension supervening on a long course of anxiety and tension of mind, had borne up admirably while with her husband, but every night on returning home fell into repeated faintings, and it required all the skill of the kind Dr. Roche, and the cheering assurances of the indefatigable Mr. Martin, to keep her up. The poor old mother, grave, religious, but deeply feeling, while she comforted her son, who was of a timid nature, and was now sorely cast down, on retiring to her own lodgings, walked to and fro with a face of woe that would have touched the hardest nature, and continually repeated to herself: "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved: if this thing befalls me, what good will my life do me? Help us, good God!" The old man was silent, stern, but evidently consumed by the heaviest inward misery.

When Mr. Martin was introduced to Randall, in whom he expected to find a well-to-do and well arrayed squatter, he could not conceal his astonishment and chagrin. Was this the man whose character and evidence were to save the accused? Was this the

main pillar on which the fabric of his defence rested? For a little time, with all his practised command of self, he could not avoid letting his disappointment appear most broadly. He was dumb. In a while, however, he recovered himself, and said: "You are Mr. Randall?" "Yes." "You are the squatter of Bullarook?" "Certainly." "You are aware, I hope, what an amount of responsibility rests on you in this case." "I am quite aware," replied Randall, calmly.

"That is well," said Mr. Martin, still pausing. "You can give positive proof that Abijah Popkins, the prisoner, was with you during the whole of the last month, and with you in occupation wholly creditable."

"Mr. Martin," said Randall, "let us be frank with each other. You are surprised at my appearance. Nature made me partly what I am, folly, sorrow, and penance have made up the rest. I am under a vow to myself to live hardly, to labour incessantly, to go meanly clad; to wear such a garb and manner that few shall court my society, and those only who can see a man through his rags, if necessary. I shun the world, except so far as is necessary to business and the acquisition of a sum which will set my heart and my honour at ease. Is that enough?"

Think not of me, but of what I can do." And with that he laid before Mr. Martin the proofs which he had for the trial. The opening observations of Randall arrested the fixed attention of Mr. Martin; as he proceeded he was struck with surprise and pleasure at the purity of his language, the high character of his motives and principles, and when he ceased to speak, Mr. Martin seized him by the hand, and shaking it warmly, said: "Mr. Randall, you have made me feel that I have to do with a man of a thousand. You have revived my confidence. We must succeed; but I wish we could subpoena those squatters and innkeepers in your list; and one or two of the nearest we can and will." And the two went out together to send off at once for these gentlemen.

The day of trial came. The sun rose brightly and warm over that new town of Castlemaine; over that wide new square or market place; over the brown bare rocks, and stringy-bark woods which looked down upon it. Thousands of people, men and women, diggers and squatters, were assembled to witness the trials of the bushrangers, and other interesting cases which had to be heard. The police were drawn up in strong detachments in front of the court-house. Mounted police were seen riding in troops to and fro near the government camp, as if in readiness on any



emergency, and yet not so near as to alarm the sensitive nature of independent justice, and of freedom-loving Englishmen. Lawyers were seen hurrying towards the court-house with their blue bags, and the judge now advanced from his lodgings attended by the sheriff and his retinue.

How many a heart beat anxiously at that moment. We are now in the court, amid a crowding, crushing throng; it is with difficulty we gain the seat allotted to us, and there already behold the judge on the bench, and the sheriff and chief commissioner seated by his side. There is the table at which the counsel are busy unfolding their papers, and hastily glancing over their briefs; and there stands a prisoner in the dock, with a powerful-looking turnkey at his side. It is one of the bushrangers. The attorney-general rises and opens the case against him. What a very different man from our Mr. Flavel: can they really be brothers? This man is tall, powerfully built, with a face firm, eagle-eyed, eagle-nosed, clever, daring, with an audacity unrelieved by one visible touch of tender feeling. What a story he tells, what a catalogue he produces of atrocities and villanies. The blood of the hearers first chills, then warms, then grows hot with indignation against such monsters, and their blasphemous jests, and their

demoniac cruelties. There is but one feeling in the court, it is the demand for speedy death to the whole crew. The fellow, who is the first on whom this thunderbolt of accusation falls, is a great, strong knave, with a hooked nose, a huge black beard, and dark eyes, that beneath black, shaggy eyebrows flash fury on the lawyer. His teeth grind in impotent rage as he listens, but no one appears to offer a word in his defence: he is condemned. There is another; and another; unknown, undefended villains, with the curse of Cain written palpably on their brows. They hear their doom, and are drawn away. There is now a pause, — a deep, awful pause,—you hear your watches tick, your hearts beat; the deep-drawn breath of some anxious spectator near you. There is a slight shuffle of feet beyond the table of the counsel, and there stands in the dock a slim, pale youth, not more than two or three and twenty, clad in simple black, and with a look fixed on the judge as if he already expected the fatal word which should send him to the gallows. Near him in the court, but lower, and partly screened by the partition of the dock, you behold a huddled trembling group; it is the family of the prisoner. There are several men's heads, they are all bowed down; but two countenances are fixed fully,

firmly on the prisoner. They are women's faces, — pale as death, but resolute in the love which conquers terror, so that it may sustain the tried one in his trial. Whoever saw those faces will never forget them while they live; the young one like a bloodless spirit, watching the beloved one at the day of Judgment, knowing that there was danger, yet hoping against hope, and unshaken in the eternity of its love: the elder one so rigid, so dignified, and so profound in its affliction. By the side of the young wife sat the ever watchful doctor.

That terrible attorney-general rose. He reminded the jury of the culprits already so justly doomed. He remarked on the different sort of person now before them: young in years, but, he was afraid, deep in crime. He drew a striking picture of the affliction and disgrace which he had brought on a highly respectable, and, as he had heard, truly religious family. He asserted that he felt deeply for this unhappy family, but that his duty to his country did not allow him to be moved by it. Young as the prisoner was, and well connected as he was, he had shown that he was a most dangerous character, fond of bad company, of drinking, and gambling; leaving a good home, and an admirable wife, for wild adventures with the most desperate men. Such a man,

gentle and timid even as he might there look, was capable, when excited, of perpetrating the most fearful actions. He might, and probably would, if not early checked, become a captain of highwaymen, as ferocious and truculent as Douglas or Melville. He believed there would be an attempt to prove an alibi on all occasions where the gang to which he belonged had done their worst deeds. To a certain extent, that might succeed, but there was a considerable period during which he had disappeared from home, which would require the most powerful proofs to free from suspicion, and on the last scene, there could be no mystification possibly thrown. All there was clear, too clear, indeed. The prisoner was found actually at cards with the leaders of the gang, in one of their most notorious haunts. He was actually hob-nobbing with that fiend incarnate, called the Black Douglas, and that smooth, but sanguinary villain, the so-called Captain Melville. With these he burst forth through the police, and by them two of the police were murdered on the spot, by which of the desperadoes it were impossible to say.

It would not be possible to tell the effect of this address, taken with what had gone before, on all interested in the prisoner. He himself looked as if all were lost. No words, no pencil, scarcely could

paint the agony of those two female faces, still riveted immovably on his form. The attorney-general called his witnesses. We shall not particularise them. They went to prove Abijah's wildness, his absence, and his presence at the surprise of the bushrangers. The only thing in his favour was, that not a man was produced to swear distinctly that he saw him shoot either of the policemen. But without that, it was bad enough,—the being mixed up with the possibility of it,—with being *one* of those who undoubtedly did it.

The counsel for the defence now arose. He drew a very different picture of Abijah; as of an amiable youth, but fond of pleasure, weak in its resistance, but by no means criminal; and he undertook to prove an alibi for every day for the last twelve months, and to within ten minutes of the very moment when the police came down upon the grog-shop. He declared that he would produce a most respectable witness, who had him in his service, and with him in distant places, till within that ten minutes. Men, he said, do not grow into bushrangers in ten minutes. He would show that the unfortunate youth merely went to pay a bill, and was beguiled by the villains, totally unknown to him, to play; but that, even then, his friends had him in

sight, as it were, and were hastening to fetch him away.

A most profound attention possessed the whole court. The counsel called his witnesses; and, certainly, the exertions of Mr. Martin and Abijah's other friends had not been trivial. There were some dozens of persons who came forward, or were ready to come forward, to bear testimony to his character as totally free from, and totally wanting in, motive for the commission of any such crimes. They proved that he was at home on all those occasions when the gang had done deeds of violence in other places. And now came the turn of Randall, that most respectable witness, who was to cover by his evidence the rest of the time to the very moment of the attack. When, therefore, he stepped into the witness-box, there was a sensation of astonishment through the whole court. People rose up and leaned forward to get a better view of this extraordinary witness. There was a buzz of exclamations and of conversation through the whole place. The attorney-general stared at the shabby-looking man, in his old threadbare riding coat, his plain, pitted face, half lost in a bush of yellowish hair, and the limping gait with which he reached his place. The attorney-general

smiled, a smile which said distinctly—"So this is your most respectable evidence!"

The witness, however, stood cool and quiet. The counsel by his questions led him to show where he and Abijah had been during the month; that Abijah had only come to take leave of his wife before going away with him to his station on a long visit, and that seeing him enter the grogshop to pay a bill, he felt the danger of the place, and hurried out his horses to fetch him away. He was too late; the police were down on the place, and his friend had fled out in alarm; but he would swear positively that Abijah could not have shot one of the men, for he had no pistol in his possession.

The attorney-general now cross-questioned him. He said that he did not disguise it that he thought the witness was in the wrong place, that it was not the witness-box but the dock in which he ought to appear. He would demand a strict account of himself, as well as of the prisoner at the bar. He would, however, take the case of the prisoner first, and he demanded more proof that he and the prisoner were at the places on the business alleged. Randall at once produced his memorandum book, showing the bills paid and the business done at the different places. The attorney-general declared that this book

might be a forgery got up for the purpose. Where were the people whose names appeared to different bills? Randall replied, that if time were given him, he would produce every one, but short as the time was, he believed there were two or three in court. His counsel at once brought forward three most highly respectable squatters, who proved as many items and gave the highest character of the witness. They knew him to be a substantial and most honourable squatter. This turned affairs amazingly. But the attorney-general would still have proof that the prisoner at the bar was on all these occasions there. Randall pointed out his signature to various memorandums in the book, for he had frequently kept the accounts. "How are we to know that these are the prisoner's signatures?" demanded the lawyer.

The judge here said, "Hand the prisoner a pen and paper; let him sign his name." It was done, and the name and Randall's book handed up to the bench. The judge pronounced the signatures perfectly identical, perfectly satisfactory. There was a buzz of approbation throughout the court: all now began to pronounce the prisoner innocent in their own minds. The threadbare, shabby, limping man had thoroughly proved his case. There was a manifest triumph in the court on behalf of the prisoner.



But the attorney-general, who had calculated on condemning the whole batch, felt like a lion defrauded of his prey. He was mortified beyond expression that he should be thus foiled by a man who had, by his very shabby appearance, raised his expectations of success to certainty, and who he hoped would afford him good matter for the display of his wit. He, therefore, now turned upon him savagely. He declared that it was necessary to know something more of the witness himself. They must have some good proofs that he was worthy of credit.

“That has been satisfactorily attested,” said the judge.

“But your honour, permit me,” said the attorney-general. “Randall? Randall?—were you not some years ago connected with the turf in England?”

“Yes.”

“Ha! I thought so! And you disappeared, leaving a good many engagements undischarged?”

“That is quite true,” replied Randall.

“Oh! so you admit that. We shall now see what your evidence is worth.” A gloomy, disappointed silence fell on the people. The judge, however, said, “Witness, you may bear in mind that you are a witness, not a prisoner at the bar.”

“Thank your honour,” said Randall with emotion;

“but pray allow the counsel to go on as he pleases.”

“Very well, then,” said the attorney-general, bitterly.

“Why did you abscond?”

“That I might find means to discharge my just obligations.”

“Have you done that?”

“I have in great part. These obligations were 10,000*l.*; I have paid 8,000*l.* Here are the accounts and the vouchers.”

They were handed up to the bench. The judge carefully looked them over, and returned them; saying emphatically: “Most honourable, most praiseworthy.”

“But,” continued the inexorable lawyer, “why hide yourself in a desert? Why not walk openly where your fellow-men can see you? Why all this mystery and seclusion? I would know that this is all honest. Money is made in strange ways here often.”

“A celebrated poet, one Churchill, can answer that for me,” said Randall:—

“‘Would’st thou be safe? Society forswear!  
Fly to the desert, and seek shelter there;  
Herd with the brutes,—they follow nature’s plan:  
There’s not a brute so dangerous as man.’”

“So,” said the lawyer, “you read poetry, eh?”

Quite pastoral, really! Perhaps you could give us some further account of yourself in rhyme?"

"No doubt of it, from the same clever hand," continued Randall, smiling:—

" ' Let it be bruited all about the town  
That he is coarse, indelicate, and brown—  
An antidote to lust: his face all scarred  
With the small-pox, his body maimed and marred.  
Should'st thou report him as by nature made,  
He is undone, and by thy praise betrayed.' "

There was a burst of applause and laughter in the court. The judge, though smiling himself, commanded order. All were struck by the philosophic spirit of the man who could thus serenely describe his own personal defects.

"And now, sir," continued Randall, taking the offensive; "as you seem to like my quotations, I will give you one more portrait:—

" ' Bred to the law, he from the first  
Of all bad lawyers was the worst;  
Who will, for him, may boast of sense,—  
His better guard is impudence;  
His front, with tenfold plates of brass  
Secured, shame never yet could pass;  
Nor on the surface of his skin  
Blush for the guilt which dwells therein.' "

At this the burst of laughter was renewed with universal uproar. The judge declared he would clear the court. The attorney-general, purple with rage, cried — “Sirrah, peace! This is intolerable. You insult the whole bar, the whole profession. I command you to be silent and answer my questions.”

“Sir,” said Randall, “I have answered you many questions that have nothing whatever to do with the cause at issue; and now your position shall not protect you. I throw myself on the justice of the court, on the impartial spirit of my country’s laws. I insist that you answer me one question. You have dared to probe my life, and endeavoured to blast my reputation before the world,— answer me this:—What did your father say when, at your vehement and repeated solicitation, he granted you a last secret interview beneath the Banshee Oak in Dunallen Park?”

The haughty lawyer stood arrested at that question as by a supernatural blow which turned him to a statue. He appeared petrified by astonishment. “My father! the Banshee Oak!” he stammered.

“Yes, your father! the Banshee Oak!” said Randall, outwardly calm, yet plainly and justly incensed. “Your father, the venerable Lord Dunallen. Do you not see him,” said the homely-looking squatter, rising, as if inspired, and pointing to a par-

ticular part of the court, all eyes, including those of the terror-stricken lawyer, mechanically following his finger — “do you not see him now, leaning on his cane, shaken by grief as by a palsy, and his bare white head gleaming in the moonlight, as he says solemnly :—‘ You have banished your brother ; you have killed your mother by a broken heart ; you have disgraced your family ; you have deceived and left utterly desolate your father, who now stands here alone before God in his age. May you repent, repent ; for rather would I see you lying dead on that sod, than that the people of the Dunallen estates should ever fall into your power in your present unchristian, unregenerate temper.’ ”

There was a sensation throughout the court, as if a thunderbolt had fallen on it. A death-like silence prevailed, and the proud counsel, who so lately had borne down all before him by his talent and audacity, suddenly dropped on his seat, with his head on the table, and was even sliding to the floor, when some of the other counsel caught him, and had him borne from the court.

The sensation throughout the crowd was inconceivable. No words could describe it. People, lawyers, all present sprung to their feet ; all sense of order was lost. There was one loud buzz of voices

expressing amazement at this most singular occurrence, and numbers hastening out to gain further intelligence of the stricken down man. At length the officers of the court restored some degree of attention. The judge, wonderfully affected, rose and summed up, compelled several times to pause for composure; and when he dismissed the jury to consider their verdict, they almost instantly, by their foreman, pronounced, clear and loud, the words — “Not guilty.”

Scarcely were these important words uttered, when a shrill shriek rang through the place, and the relatives of the prisoner were seen supporting the sinking form of the young wife. In another moment the prisoner was at large, kneeling in deepest agitation by her side, and clasped in the arms of his mother. We drop the curtain over that family group. All is right. The doctor forcibly seizes the fainting young woman, and carries her to the open air, where she is driven home in a carriage which stood at hand. Mr. Peter Martin, all life and radiant with joy, is manfully fighting his way through the crowd in the body of the court, where the people are squeezing round Randall, and shaking his hand as if they would leave him no fragment of an arm. His old gray coat is in terrible danger of not surviving many hours — he is the hero of the day.

## CHAP. XIV.

## A STARTLING EVENT — THE DIGGERS' RUSH.

WE could willingly linger a long time relating all the joyful results of the remarkable trial described in the last chapter, but circumstances are already forming themselves which will very speedily close our narrative at the antipodes. We must hasten on. Enough that we say that there was joy unbounded in the family of the Popkines. The misguided Abijah had sown his wild oats; the crop was not to his taste, it was bitterer than wormwood. Gladly he and his admirable little wife, looking still pale but happy, took their leave for the mill of Lahni with the aged parents, quiet, but much forgiving and thanksgiving. The buoyant-hearted Mr. Peter Martin rode along with them on his Bluebeard, never tired of talking of the trial, and of that wonderful *coup-de-main* of what he called the sandy-hued squatter of Bullarook. That arrogant but condignly punished attorney-general, he told them; had thrown up the rest of his briefs at the assizes, resigned his office, it was said, and gone, no one knew

whither, and no one, as he believed, cared. So they rode on to Lahni, whither Mr. Martin in a day or two brought his wife and daughter to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Patty Popkins. The Martin ladies were greatly taken with her, and with her enthusiastic delight in the delicious valley of Lahni. Already she looked more like a blooming, bright-eyed little fairy, than the pale agitated wife of the digging store; and already Abijah was soberly carrying corn-sacks in and meal-bags out of the mill, his coat and face most befitting, powdered with flour, and watching the meal come pouring silently down into the receptive hopper.

Charles Fitzpatrick rode blithely home, for he had helped to do a good and kindly deed. No fear of his father's anger haunted him, for he had been thrown against Mr. Peter Martin it is true, but he had not stuck there, but had been also hastily jostled in a heap of equally eager and gregarious men. He left Barks and Purdy behind him, bent on subterranean fortune. At home all was brightness and welcome. Spring was coming round with its greenness and its flowers. His father asked after his nuggets, and joked him merrily on his take in by the Blessed Ben and Holy Joe. Aunt Judith had young pigeons, young fowls, young ducks, young 'possums,



young parrots, young native companions, and young kangaroos in the orchard paddock, and at the huts, to show him. Geordy had discovered new rides; and David Rannock had most interesting information of emus and wild turkeys that he had seen in his traverses of the run. All was smiling, sunny, and homelike. No mischief had come from any quarter; and his father had arrived at the conclusion that Dr. Woolstan's spiritual stories and messages were all "bosh."

Charles found that a great deal of visiting had been going on amongst his family and the neighbours. The Woolstans, the Metcalfes, the Quarriers were constantly quoted, and were very often there to save quotation and speak for themselves. Aunt Judith and old Mrs. Quarrier had "kicked up," as the father called it, "a desperate friendship;" and Geordy and Mrs. Poncefort were in a most affectionate league. The two women had made their rides together as far as the Quarriers, the Metcalfes, and the Woolstans, where one day Geordy had been startled to find Mrs. and Miss Martin, but had behaved very well according to her notion—that is, very coolly and distantly—but could not help being astonished to find Sara Martin so handsome and sensible a girl, how very amiable the mother was,

and regretting that they should belong to so horrid a man.

“ Ah, Geordy !” said Charles, as she told him this, with a strange flush and air of excitement, — why should he now ? — “ Ah, Geordy ! you ’ll come to my opinion, I see ; that they are most excellent, most charming, most loveable people.”

Georgina stared. “ Why, Charles !” she said — and there she stopped and looked astonished.

“ What now, Geordy ? What amazes you ?” said Charles, flushing still more.

“ Why,” said Georgina, “ I do really think you are in love.”

“ Nonsense !” exclaimed Charles, wheeling round on his heel, “ what stuff you talk, Geordy.”

“ But what a horrid tangle that would be, Demby,” said Georgina, “ if you really were to fall in love with Sara Martin. Oh, gracious ! it would be worse than that affair of Romeo and Juliet !” and Georgina laughed, and yet again directly looked serious and curious.

Time rolled on : spring, summer, winter, passed, and the family at Tallangetta seemed rooted down on the spot as if they had lived there all their lives. All moved on, bright and prosperous. The flocks

and herds grazed and increased, wool was clipped and sold well. The country had recovered from the effects of the bush fire. Barks and Purdy still continued at the diggings; they had bought a cart and horse of their own, and had deposited in Mr. Fitzpatrick's hands some hundreds of pounds that they had gained. Still they thought they would have a further campaign at the gold-fields, for there came fresh news and fresh rushes, and they were ever on the edge of a new grand chance. One great piece of good luck, and they would give over; but still the chance did not come, and they went on.

Meantime Tallangetta flourished without them. Mr. Fitzpatrick followed his kangaroo hounds, and shot his emus, his wild turkeys, and his bronze-wings; and Charles joined him, and many another man, for Tallangetta was become known far and wide. It was pleasant riding over to the Poncefords, and the Metcalfes, and the Woolstans, and the Quarriers; and Tallangetta often saw them altogether under its roof, and there was no lack of topics, music, and social pleasure. Ever and anon dropped in the squatter going up or down the country; the commissioner riding from one digging to another, for there was now a great rumour of wonders doing at the Ovens, and Tallangetta lay not far out of the track from

Bendigo thither, nor far either from the new diggings of the Mac-Ivor and the Goulburn. Presently there came scores, hundreds, thousands, rushing along the valley below ; there was a great rush to the Ovens ! From the windows of Tallangetta was seen a living stream traversing the great flowering plain below. Men on foot, with pack, and gun, and huge following dogs ; men on horseback, galloping as for life ; men and women and children with loaded carts, rolling, plunging, tearing along, amid loud shouts and curses ; huge drays, hugely piled with goods, rolling and swaying along, drawn by long double teams of bullocks, and attended by huge fellows in jack-boots, huge hats, and smoking faces, and whips that cracked and thundered like volleys of unceasing musketry, and an eternal din of oaths, and shouts, and curses. Men and women in garbs of all shapes, and sorts, and colours ; and on they came and came, hurry-scurry, noisy ; guns firing, dogs barking, men howling, horses neighing, bullocks lowing. It is pandemonium broke loose ; it is the Exodus of Bendigo and Forest Creek, Goulburn and Mac-Ivor. Away, away ! to seize the rumoured riches that cover the surface, fill the rivers, steep the earth at the Ovens. There goes a train of Chinese, with huge hats and wide blue trowsers, and long poles on

their shoulders bearing at each end a ponderous burden. On they go, trot, trot, with a short mincing pace, and bending poles. There runs a team of a dozen men harnessed by ropes to a cart loaded with bundles and tools; and away they fly forward, and are gone. And there creeps along a Frenchman with a big black beard, wheeling in a barrow before him one big box and one great red umbrella.

Never did Aunt Judith and the ladies of Tallangetta see or dream of such a sight, tearing, steering, winding, and streaming on and on, and without end, up that lately flowering valley, now flowering no longer; for that strange multitude burst through the sea of golden flowers, tread it down mercilessly, recklessly, drag their carts, gallop their horses, tramp in their ever coming hundreds and thousands over it. There they halt; and loud comes the thunder and the crash of falling trees; out burst fires here, there, near, far, all along the creek side, and the wood side; kettles are boiling, frying-pans hissing, dogs barking, horses and bullocks turned loose to graze, and far as the eye can see rise smokes and gleam fires; and on and on comes, comes, comes, the never-ending train of white-tilted carts, and high-piled wagons, and hurrying foot people, and galloping riders in blue and flaming scarlet, and in

white shirts, innocent of coat or vest, and blue flying-veils; and still there is the thunder of guns; and the flocks of gaudy parrots and noisy laughing-jackasses fly in affright on all sides.

“What is it? What in heaven’s name is it?” exclaims Aunt Judith and the ladies in turn.

“It is a rush,” says Charles.

“A rush! And what is a rush? Where is all diggerdom rushing to?” asks Aunt Judith.

“They are rushing to the new gold-fields at the Ovens,” replies Charles. “And one thing I can tell you, they will want milk, butter, eggs, mutton, beef, vegetables, fruit — everything.”

“Oh, gracious me!” cried Aunt Judith, in terror. “What, will they eat us up? Will they devour us like a flight of locusts? Will they come up here? Oh, Heaven defend us! What is to be done?”

“No, trust them!” said Charles. “They can’t come up here, they are in too great haste to climb; it is life and death with them to reach the field of promise: but they will want everything from the huts below — meat, milk, eggs, everything. See, see! they are driving on to the huts in shoals, hot, eager, insatiable of mutton and cabbages. Now for it, David Rannock! for they will surround every hut and rush into every open door like an inundation.

Beware of the garden, Abner! beware of the barley paddocks, Abner! or they will soon clear off cherry and peach, melon and grape, half ripe. They will turn their horses into the corn, and it will be all trodden down before you can say Jack Robinson!"

And whilst speaking, away he ran down the hill-side, and away went Mr. Fitzpatrick, and the cook after him, all the ladies crying, "Oh, take care! take care, or they'll kill you!"

And truly there was a Babel, and a bustle, and a crowding, and a noise, as they reached the huts. There were a hundred voices asking for milk, mutton, eggs, anything, and offering handfuls of money and native gold. Any price for the first serve. David Rannock, with his cool Scotch blood, was promising them everything if they would only give time—it was impossible to give them everything at once. "Time! nonsense, man! we have no time. Where's your beef—your pickled beef—your corned beef—your mutton?" "We have none killed," shouted David; and a score of rough voices shouted to him back; whilst the speakers peered into his face till nose touched nose. "Bring your sheep here; we'll kill 'em for you."

Fowls were knocked down with sticks, and not a

feathered creature would have been left, but they escaped — ducks and geese into the lake, and hens into the hen-lofts. Abner and Peggy were cutting cabbage at three and five shillings a piece, and tearing up onions, and carrots, and potatoes, at two shillings a handful, till the perspiration streamed from their faces; and all the women and children were helping to hand something, or helping to wonder. What a stir! what a confusion! what a hubbub!

“Hold! hold!” cried the commanding voice of Mr. Fitzpatrick; “what do you want, my friends, here?”

“Want!” exclaimed eager, hairy fellows, from the backs of lean horses, or on their own long legs, “we want everything, and have no time for talk.”

“Well, have patience! and we’ll do what we can for you.”

“Patience! the devil! we’ve no time for patience! Have you any meat, old fellow?”

“Plenty,” said a strong confident voice, close at Mr. Fitzpatrick’s ear. It was a voice like music to him.

“Barks, my friend, are you there? — and Purdy? You are just the men we want — you can help us — you know these men.”

“Yes, yes! we know them! — we know you,



mates! Keep order—do no mischief—all are friends here; and now follow us; we must have some sheep up. Come along!”

A troop of men and boys rushed after them, and in ten minutes some sheep from a flock near were caught and killed and cut up, warm as they were, and sold at fabulous prices; and away went horsemen, with a smoking quarter of mutton each before them; and away went pedestrians, with *their* smoking quarters, and with sacks of potatoes, turnips, cabbages, and pumpkins. Never was such a fair!—on they came, and came; and so long as daylight lasted there was no rest for man, woman, or child; all were busy serving, taking money, serving again—even to Mr. Fitzpatrick, and to Mrs. Fitzpatrick, and Aunt Judith, and Georgina, for they had followed down, and were seen pulling turnips, carrots, parsnips, cutting cabbages, and dealing out melons and pumpkins. So soon as it was dark, and the rushing tribe of living, hungry, impatient creatures paused, all sat down in David Rannock's, and sought some refreshment for themselves. They were tired out, worn down, famishing; and not a loaf or a drop of milk was left in the place. But Charles and Barks, and some of the younger people, hurried up to the house, where there was still plenty, and brought

bread and meat, and tea and butter; and there was a busy meal, and then a council.

What was to be done? "The stream," Barks and Purdy said, "would continue for days, weeks; for the rumour was wonderful, and would draw half the old diggings. If the field lasted, there would be a great traffic always on this road; and there must be a supply of all necessaries. There must be a capacious butcher's shop and a store. Yes! there must be a store of groceries, and flour, and cheese, and bread. There was a fortune to be made out of it. But how long would the goods hold out? They must calculate, and charge accordingly. They must keep a supply for themselves too. As to meat, they could supply any quantity of that. There were plenty of sheep and bullocks too on the run; and if they could not supply enough of themselves, they had plenty of flocks on their neighbour's runs at command."

Barks and Purdy, who had set out to go to the Ovens, stayed, at the earnest request of Mr. Fitzpatrick. They agreed to conduct the supply of meat. David Rannock sent off in the night a message to order up abundant supplies of flour, and teas, and sugars, and other groceries, from Melbourne. There was a stock at the huts already to last for a fortnight

—flour at 15*l.* the bag. Abner, with the help of the women, thought he could deal out as many vegetables each day as he could spare; and luckily the garden was of an enormous size — it was at least five acres; and when he had sold a certain quantity, he meant to guard the rest for the family's use, like a griffin of the Arimasian desert.

For days the rush and crush continued, and not a moment had any one to spare. It was a scene of hurry, hurry, deal out stuff, take in money. In about ten days the main fury of the rush was over, but there remained a brave trade, chiefly in meat, milk, and groceries, which kept all the men at work, and occupied Charles and his father in directing and providing.

It was a new and wholly unexpected scene of life, and of profit too, opened. It was a gold mine of no trivial yield, and the Tallangetta family laughed at the idea of being thus converted *al improvviso* into traders, hucksters, chapmen, and dealers! Who shall say what a man shall become in a new colony, and in a new gold colony in particular?

But besides the new field of activity and profit, this change brought a new and wonderful accession of company. There were batches of commissioners, in demi-military uniform, hastening off to the new

gold-field: young men of gentlemanly character and education—some; snobbish, and empty, and vain—many. There were doctors and lawyers, store-keepers and auctioneers, as keenly hurrying to the new scene of action. There were police, mounted and on foot; a bran new escort, with mounted troopers, in blue uniform, scouring along, guarding their light cart to bring down the gold; and there was the Governor himself, with a troop of officers, flying rather than riding, to take a survey of the new Ophir. All these drew up at the huts, or the house, as naturally as fish swim or spaniels take to the water. The gentlemen instinctively took their way to the house on the hill, and the trading and more work-a-day people gave David Rannock their company. There were dinners, and luncheons, and teas, and suppers to provide, for all came hungry as hunters; their horses wanted no care, they were turned at once into the paddocks around to care for themselves; but there wanted shake-downs at night often for a score or two; and then came Charles's barracks, as he called it, into request; and many a comical bed there was constructed both at the huts and the house. A rug to roll themselves in sufficed the multitude, and whole floors were seen strewn with immortal creatures, who had souls to save, and lay in

most Christian humility on floors and benches, and snored in many a wild tune, though they were commissioners in charge of Her Majesty's gold-fields. Many were the talks over night, amongst pipes and rum, and comic were the shifts in the mornings to find wash-basins and towels for the thickly-strewn and fast upstarting guests, who absorbed huge quantities of tea out of all sorts of cups and panikins, and cleared huge dishes of chops and steaks, and then mounted and away, paying nothing but "thanks! and we'll call as we come back!"

A busy, expensive, profitable, and most amusing place was this Tallangetta become, by lying so on the direct line of travel to the new diggings, and sometimes odd and rather startling incidents took place. Sometimes, half a dozen hairy and strangely vested fellows, looking amazingly bushrangerish, would stroll up to the house when not a soul but the ladies was there, and coolly seat themselves in the kitchen, call for meat and drink, draw out their pipes, make a very free survey of the house, and then stalk on. Suddenly, as Georgina was sitting one warm day at an open window, at her needle, a couple of huge-bearded faces presented themselves close to her own, and a familiar "Well, mate, is there such a thing as lemonade or gingerade on the

tap here, for we are consumedly thirsty?" Georgina was no little alarmed, but she put a fair face on it, and said, "Oh! certainly; pray go round to the door."

"Hang the door," said the fellows; "the window is the shortest way;" and clapping their hands on the window-sill, they leaped like kangaroos into the drawing-room, followed by a very dusty and grim white bulldog, and throwing themselves on a rich silken sofa, in their clay and gravel-stained clothes, the dog jumping up and seating himself, too, between them, they greatly applauded the soft, elastic seat, and declared it prime!

"Well," said they, without noticing Georgina's frightened face, "this is something of a house now." "Gad, mate," added one, stroking the soft sofa-cover, "I'll turn squatter myself, or I'm blessed! What a glass they have!" pointing to the pier-glass over the mantel-piece. "That's big enough for a slap-up chief commissioner to see himself in. One might shave without cutting there, and no mistake. But where's the gingerade, my pretty mate, for I've a regular bush-fire in my throat?"

Georgina rung the bell, and the astonished cook making his appearance, she bade him bring in something to eat and drink, adding, "And ask Miss Fitz-

patrick to come here." Aunt Judith's astonishment was not trifling when she entered, and saw Georgina sitting gravely at her needle, and two great, rough, hairy fellows, in clay-coloured and very light garbs, stretching their legs at full length on the sofa, one from the head, and the other from the foot, their dusty bulldog asleep between their legs, and very composedly smoking their pipes, which they had produced and lit, throwing their burning matches on the carpet, and putting down one leg and treading on them. But Aunt Judith had the tact to take the thing easily, and was no little amused by the free conversation of the men, whom she soon saw had no harm in them, though each had his gun, his revolver, and a butcher's knife stuck in a leathern case at his waist behind. Having made a hearty meal, they went away, declaring that they could not have been better treated in the best inn in Melbourne. "And there's that for a keepsake," said one, pulling out a nugget of at least one ounce weight, and giving it to Georgina. "Nay then," said the other, "here's one too for the mother," giving to Aunt Judith one still larger; and, with a "Good bye, mother; good bye, pretty Miss," they nodded gravely, puffed complacently, and smoked serenely away down the slope.

Scarcely were they out of hearing, before Aunt Judith went into fits of laughter, and declared that she would have iron bars put to all the lower windows, and chains to the doors, or she should never dare to stay in the house without the gentlemen, but should follow them about wherever they went, like a sheep. Such incidents, however, were of rare occurrence; and they soon came to amuse themselves with them without fear, for they never received any harm from any one who visited them.

Soon the escort and the chief government traffic took their direct way up and down, to and from Melbourne, and the traffic of the diggers that way became less, and more steady; and by placing a board on a pole, at the entrance of the plain below, with a hand painted, pointing along the valley, with the words, "TO THE STATION AND STORE," the visitors at the house were more occasional and select. When all had fallen into a steady routine again, and Mr. Fitzpatrick had made over the store, and the supply of the travelling diggers to Mr. Rannock and Barks and Purdy, wishing to make a good thing for them, Charles once more made his excursions, sometimes with Georgina, sometimes without, to Corballa and Moolap. Flavel, instead of coming, as proposed, immediately, had deferred his visit to make



a tour through Tasmania and Adelaide, and Charles beginning to lack excitement, was vexed to find that Mr. Farbrother was gone on one of his naturalist tramps into New South Wales, and Mr. Peter Martin had gone with him, being anxious to visit Mount Wingen, the volcano. For a moment Charles felt really chagrined at that news; for he had told Mr. Farbrother that he should of all things like to join him on such a ramble, and he had promised that he should; but then he reflected that he had been over head and ears in the rush, and that if Mr. Martin had a desire to go, he could not have been of the party.

Charles was far from being in a happy mood. He had never forgotten the fresh, sensible, attractive face and buoyant form of Sara Martin, and meeting her repeatedly at the Woolstans, he had grown more and more fascinated by her. There was such a clear, healthy beauty, there was such a clear transparence of mind and nature in her, mingled with a pleasant gravity, which, as you became on familiar terms, developed so much easy affability and gaiety of heart, as won irresistibly on Charles. Sara Martin had all the strong sense of her father, with something of his frank, decided manner, but with an absence of vanity or assumption that was extremely charming.

She was highly educated, having been her father's pupil; and not only played on the piano with great skill, but sung with a sweetness and a feeling very rare. Being extremely fond of horseback, Charles accompanied her on long rides through the forest, and found himself insensibly reluctant to leave the place where she was. In fact, Charles was irrecoverably lost. He felt how it stood with him, and he looked with consternation on what stood before him. He had pledged himself to his father to have nothing to do with Mr. Martin, and here he was, gone beyond recall, in love with his daughter. What should he do? He thought on what Georgina had said, when she suddenly seemed to divine his feelings. He rode home, was restless, could settle to nothing, and on the very next time of Sara Martin being at Corballa, found himself there, looking on her bright, clever, spiritual face, listening to her grave talk, so singularly lit up with cheerfulness and gleams of merriment as with sunshine, standing over her at the piano, riding by her side; and ever again and again came the stinging thought, what was to be the end of it?

But there can be only one end with young people in such a predicament; Charles soon convinced himself that all must come right. This misunderstanding of the families, which, by the bye, was all on the

side of his own family, must come to an end. Mr. Martin himself said it would end soon. Charles resolved, at all events, to take the necessary plunge, and ascertain his fate with Miss Martin, and leave all the rest to Providence. Alas! poor Charles found that the fair object of his admiration had more firmness than himself. When he made known his sentiments, Sara Martin suddenly flushed all over like the red rose, but as suddenly assumed the colour of the white rose. She became pale, and trembled excessively; tears started to her eyes, and still allowing her hand to remain in Charles's, as he had taken it, said: "Mr. Fitzpatrick, I will be candid with you. Were all straight and amicable between our families, I should to-day be the happiest of women; but now I am far, far from that. You know how matters stand as well as I do. Your father would be furious at the idea of such a proposal on your part; my father would never consent that I should listen a moment to it under present circumstances. We must part instantly," and here her tears fell faster, and the hand trembled more violently. "We have been foolish, I now perceive, foolishly happy; but we must be firm and honourable. Neither your father nor mine shall blush for us, cousin Charles?" and she looked such

an inquiry at the young man, as drove him to distraction.

Charles strove vehemently, said, did everything that an ardent lover could do to convince Miss Martin that all would be right soon ; but the young lady said firmly, " When it is so we may talk of it ; till then we ought not, and we must not. Good bye, dear cousin ; let us part at once ; we are not kind to our parents, we are not true to ourselves here any longer."

" But promise me, dear Sara, promise me," said Charles, " that until all comes right you will wait, you will consider us pledged to each other for that time."

" No, no ! not a word more, Charles !" exclaimed Miss Martin ; " that would be to break your pledge to your father while pretending to keep it. I will give no promise, make no engagement ; we will stand as free, as clear, as true to ourselves and to our parents, as the will if not the ——" Charles expected she would add, " the heart can make us ;" but with an effort she suddenly drew her hand from Charles's, and, fresh tears gushing over her cheek, disappeared into her own room.

Charles saw no more of her that evening, and the next morning at breakfast he learned to his astonishment, that she had ridden home by herself. In vain

from that time he sought to meet her at Moolap or at Corballa; she never came there. In vain he wrote to her; she only replied — “Remember what I said, and do not write to me, for I cannot answer.” That was all. Charles felt that she was right, and he honoured her for it; but that did not make him at his ease. He believed she loved him, but he longed to know it positively. When might these hateful family affairs clear themselves up? What might not happen with a beautiful and fascinating woman like Sara Martin in a colony where ladies were not plentiful, and such ladies *rarissimæ*? He was restless, had no taste for anything, and rode about rather to distract his thoughts than to find any enjoyment. Suddenly he heard of Mr. Martin’s return home, and often he rode out to Corballa and Moolap in the hope of finding him. “What a good neighbour Charles Fitzpatrick is become,” said the Woolstans and the Metcalfes. They felt much flattered, but they thought he did not look so well as he had done. They doubted the climate would not suit him. What a pity! They observed that he did not enter with the same unaffected relish into the sports and the pursuits of bush life. That was a proof that he was not quite well. They advised him to go for awhile to Van Diemen’s Land, or to New Zealand. He

said he thought he would, but he did not. Suddenly he encountered Mr. Peter Martin, as cordial and hearty as ever, and full of talk of his excursion, of the beauty of Sydney, of the splendid plains of the Darling and Liverpool, of the beauty of Argyleshire, and the tropical wonders of Illawara.

“But, bless me! Charley! what is the matter with you?” he said, suddenly stopping and surveying him, thus turning the eyes of Dr. and Mrs. Woolstan as suddenly upon him. “Why, you are not well! you are getting thin, you have lost your colour.” Charles suddenly flushed a rich red. “Ha! there, now that is a hectic flush; my dear fellow, what ails you?”

“Oh! nothing! nothing at all,” said Charles; “perhaps I have been a little overdone through the rush and the hot weather.”

“But,” continued Mr. Martin, “you have no business to be overdone, a young fellow like you. I don’t like it a bit. It can’t be this climate, can it doctor?” said he, addressing Dr. Woolstan.

“Perhaps it may,” said the doctor, kindly;—he had a pretty shrewd guess. “I would advise Charles to take your example, and make a good, and even laborious excursion to a cooler climate,—say a voyage to New Zealand.”

“Ay, bless me,” said Mr. Martin, “that is the very

thing. I will go with you, Charles;—oh no! I forgot, I can't do that, I wish I could; but you must go alone."

Charles said he would think of it; but as soon as he could get Mr. Martin alone, he opened his heart to him fully, and entreated his sanction and kind interest in the matter.

"Bless me," said Mr. Martin, looking all astonishment. "That's it, is it? Who could have dreamed of that, now! Why, my dear fellow," he continued, snatching Charles's hand; "if there were one youngster on the face of the earth that I would choose for Sara, it would be you. But then—confound all this nonsense! there can't be a word said about it; Sara is quite right. No! no! we must be all fair above board, no underhand work. No! no! it won't do. We must let things take their course, trust in Providence, and believe all will come right."

"But if we could have an understanding; I don't say intercourse or correspondence," said Charles; "I don't ask for that, but only an understood certainty."

"Ah! the deuce! but that, you see, is everything!" said Mr. Martin. "Then we are just cheating your father, and saying nothing about it, that is all. No, no; I won't say a word, yes or no. Sara is quite right. Not a word for the world. It shall never be added

to the charges against Mr. Peter Martin, that he secretly encouraged Sir Thomas's son, in spite of his prohibition of such an acquaintance. Don't you see, my dear Charles? don't you see? Well, you must go off somewhere, and work like a very Cyclop. Ay, that's it; that's the thing; and, let me see,—why there's Farbrother going right away up to the north east, into New England, you 'd better go with him."

Charles listened to that, and Mr. Martin promised to settle all about the matter, and, shaking Charles's hand very affectionately, rode off—full canter for Corballa.

If people in love were reasonable, Charles might have made himself quite at ease. As far as both father and daughter were concerned, there was everything to assure him; he had a strong place in both of their hearts; but then lovers are not reasonable, and the long standing enmity between the families lay like a black cloud on the young man's spirit. But at home, where his faded looks and unsettled state were also seen, the scheme of his trip with Mr. Farbrother was highly approved, though no one there knew where it originated; and in a few months he was off, with his rifle, his dog Club, his brown cob, his valise containing a simple change of linen, and his calico sheet,



which formed at any moment a rain-proof tent, folded and strapped behind him.

We shall not follow him on this trip, which was what he called glorious, and lasted six months, living in the forests and the mountains, sleeping under the fragrant boughs of the forest, and in constant enjoyment of new scenes, and the pursuit of new objects of natural history. He came back refreshed and renewed: the same beloved idea was at the bottom of his soul; it reigned there strongly but resignedly. Continually they were making new acquaintances at solitary stations, and found squatters who delighted to go off with them for weeks through the woods and hills. Many a quaint, strange scene they saw, many a strange wild story they heard, which would enrich for years Charles's memory, and the fireside stories of home, on his return. Amid the Snowy Mountains, on their regaining the colony of Victoria, they sojourned at a beautiful place called Mount Tracey, and hunted wild bulls with a fine young squatter of the name of Widdrington, whose story, which was as follows, greatly interested them.

## CHAP. XV.

## THE GOLD-HUNTERS.

Whither away, young man ;  
Whither away ?

To the land where gold doth grow,  
There with sack and pack we go,  
Where men revel, smoke, and fight ;  
Where they swelter in the sun,  
Where they sleep, their delving done,  
On bags of gold. Good-night.

ON the 10th of June, 1852, a great sorrow had fallen on two families in the north. These two families lived in Coquet Dale, on the coast of Northumberland. Their ancestors had borne great names in the days of feudal strife. They were united by many an old tradition, which had maintained a kindly friendship long after the martial glories of their race had departed. They now occupied a still and unobtrusive position in their native country, and one of them had descended to the simple

rank of a yeoman. Farmer Widdrington could trace his descent from the hero who had fought so stoutly on his stumps after his legs had been smitten off at Chevy-Chase. He now saw the once fair estates of his particular branch of the family reduced to 150 acres on a bare and chilly upland, which, from the free play of the elements about it, had acquired for his humble homestead the significant name of Windy-Haugh. From this elevated spot, he could look down, at a distance on the stately but ruined towers of Warkworth, from whose portals his ancestors had often borne proudly the banner of the Percy against the bands of Douglas. Still beyond lay the wild ocean, and just below him, snugly embowered in its gardens and orchards, the imposing antique residence of Reginald Mowbray, his very good neighbour and friend.

The two families living thus near to each other, and somewhat distant from others, the intercourse between them, based on long family alliance, had been all the more uninterrupted, simple, and cordial. Mr. Mowbray, very much the richer man of the two, was of a quiet and very retiring disposition, devoted to the reading of border antiquities and to fly-fishing. Since the death of his wife, some years previously, he had grown more confirmed in his avoidance of

general society. He had only one child, a daughter, Ellen Mowbray, on whose education he had bestowed much care and expense, and she was now his almost constant companion and solace.

His great enjoyment, next to ranging the wild moorlands through which the Coquet runs from near Carter Fell to the sea, was and had been for twenty years at least, daily, when at home, to walk slowly up the hill to neighbour Widdrington's, with his newspaper in his pocket, and have a comfortable chat with the hearty old couple who lived there. He was accustomed to drop in at the close of the day, when the farmer's labours were ended, and they had drawn round the fire. Here he communicated any news that the paper contained, and they discussed the state and prospects of the country.

Matthew Widdrington—a strong, hale man, of a clear, hard, practical head, who took a shrewd, common-sense view of things—was never in danger of being led away by his imagination, which betrayed no evidence of its existence except when awakened by some tradition of the past, by wild border legends, such as the Ghostly Bridal of Featherstonhalgh, or the dirge of a Lykewake, or a story of a battle-field, so many of which lay around them in which their forefathers had stood together. Mrs. Widdrington

was one of those women whose sound sense and warm motherly hearts make themselves strongly felt wherever they exist, even in the humblest dwellings. The squire had perfect reliance on her judgment and true feeling; and he never concluded the least affair of business without having well discussed it during the evening conclave at Windy-Haugh. Mrs. Widdrington had been the intimate, long-years' friend of his late wife, and showed a mother's interest in Ellen. There were no days so happy as when the bright face and merry voice of Ellen Mowbray enlivened the little farm-house.

The Widdringtons had two sons; the eldest, Andrew, a sober, plain, young man, whose ideas never overran the farm on which they lived, and on which he was an indefatigable plodder; the younger, George, a quick, ardent, and impetuous character. He had an especial passion for everything belonging to country life, and may be said to owe this, in a great degree to Mr. Mowbray. As a lad, he had often engaged him to carry his fishing-basket and landing-net on his angling expeditions up the Coquet; the prince of Northumbrian piscatory streams. By this means he seemed to have become indispensable on such occasions to the old gentleman. His active character; his readiness to run on all occasions, to

assist in all difficulties, and his fondness for the sport, had completely won the old gentleman's heart. Many a delightful summer's day they spent together amongst the fells and moors of that picturesque and singularly solitary region; by Brinkburn Priory; the quaint, grey, old village of Rothbury; amongst the heathery Simonside Hills; by the ruins of Harbottle, and its lonely, gloomy tarn, which no traveller ever passed without awe; and away past the roaring chasm of the Linn Brig, up to its wild source in the perfectly silent hills. On many of these occasions Ellen Mowbray as a little girl had accompanied them, and the remembrance of the deeply brooding silence of the summer's day by the Halystane Well, or in the heathery wastes of Barra Burn, only broken by the wild cry of the curlew, the rushing sound of the upspringing black game, or the sight of the stately heron watching by the stream for its prey, came frequently across her in the hours of town study. Was it any wonder if the image of their boy-companion, George Widdrington, came also amongst all these pleasant pictures not the less pleasantly? Especially as at later holiday times they had rambled together through all the neighbouring haunts of the dale, and were familiar with all its traditions. George could repeat by heart the whole of the ballad of the

Hermit of Warkworth, and often, as children, had they spent whole afternoons in its ruined chapel and little enclosure, playing at the young banished lord and the fair Emily Neville; whose visit to the hermit has charmed the youthful imaginations of thousands beside themselves.

So much had George Widdrington won the regard of Mr. Mowbray, that he had volunteered the cost of an education for him far beyond the means and aspirations of his own parents; and had augmented his kindness by having him articled to an eminent solicitor in Newcastle.

As George spent his brief snatches of holiday at home, he continued to pass a good portion of these bright days at Kidland Grange, and to manifest all his ancient predilection for his fair playfellow. As they both grew—the one into a tall handsome, and active young man; the other into one of the most graceful and beautiful maidens that ever bloomed on the Border—the same unclouded frankness of intercourse still prevailed, as if they were indeed brother and sister. Worldly-wise people saw it, and asked what the wealthy Mr. Mowbray meant by giving this unobstructed opportunity to the son of the poor farmer Widdrington, to engross the affections of a daughter whose beauty and fortune might claim for

her the noblest hand in the county? Mr. Mowbray saw it just as clearly as they did, and felt that he would rather call his favourite George Widdrington his son-in-law, than any man he knew or expected to know.

And it was, no doubt, with this settled purpose in his mind, that, on George completing the term for which he was articed, he took a wider view for him, and one more suitable to the future husband of Ellen. He sent him to London, and entered him at Lincoln's Inn, as a student for the bar. He was the more readily induced to do this from the zealous praises of his old master, who declared that his talents were of too high an order to be wasted in the obscurity of an attorney's office, and would certainly do honour to his native county if introduced to a nobler field of exercise.

George had not only eaten his commons ; but had studied hard under an eminent counsel for more than two years. When he paid his annual autumnal visit, he was observed to be as gay and agreeable as ever, and wonderfully improved by the more extended area of society, and the opportunities for amassing knowledge, both of books and life, which he had enjoyed. A finer or more intelligent young man, it was declared, even by the most aristocratic people of the neighbour-



hood, was not to be found in the north. This was all very gratifying both to Mr. Mowbray and to his daughter. The union of the families, so long allied in friendship, was now considered a settled thing. All around them looked bright and calm.

Yet there sprung up, slightly at first, a spirit of uneasiness. During the last visit of George, Ellen thought she perceived a failing of George's attachment; not to her, but to the ancient usages and faith of their ancient church. There was a tone in his observations when she ventured to question him on the subject; which jarred painfully, though confusedly on her feelings, and the further she pressed the subject, the more her anxiety and alarm grew. She, as her family had ever been, and as her father was now, was most devotedly and conscientiously attached to the established faith. Without any illiberal prejudice—with a more ample and generous spirit of toleration than prevailed around her—she was yet terrified at the bare idea of the man, to whom she had given her heart and soul in the glow of the tenderest affection and with whom she contemplated spending her life, being infected with sceptical ideas. But George in London had fallen in with a knot of very highly learned and brilliant men, who had adopted many of the rationalistic tenets of Strauss and Paulus; and

while they accepted the doctrines of Christianity as the corpus of a sublime and philanthropic philosophy, a philosophy essential to the progress of civilisation, rejected the miraculous history of the Bible as a congeries of myths.

Pressed by Ellen with an uneasy importunity on the subject, George did not hesitate to open all his views to her, trusting to her liberal education, and her undoubted affection for him, for at least a patient tolerance of his conscientious belief. But he had not calculated truly on the effect which such a revolution must have upon her deeply-rooted sentiments, and on the old, hereditary faith of her family. She shrunk in consternation from the divided faith which the future seemed to menace, instead of the spiritual as well as affectionate union which she had relied upon. She saw with equal consternation the terror and anger, and unhappiness which the knowledge of such a dread discovery would inevitably produce, both in her father's mind and in those of George's own parents. They were all of the most strictly orthodox and unswerving faith in the historic truth of their religion, and in the sacred authority of the tenets of their own church.

After George's return to London, the serious and even sad air which nothing could prevent falling over

the features of Ellen, soon excited the anxiety of both her father and of the Widdringtons; to whom the same perceptions and feelings became as quickly and invariably common as if communicated by a mesmeric sympathy. Inquiries, wonders, and letters followed with so much activity, that the fatal secret could not long remain one. The old people on both sides were struck dumb with dismay. Old Mr. Mowbray sent for George down, and every means which parental affection and authority could desire to drive this heresy from his mind were exerted, but in vain. All that George pleaded for was that they should give him time to reconsider his opinions, and to satisfy himself further on what concerned himself especially. But this was what Mr. Mowbray could form no conception of. He was so hereditarily rooted in his own religious faith, that he could not conceive of any one entertaining a doubt on any part of it, without a feeling of indignation and horror. He, therefore, reminded George of all he had done, and all he proposed to do, and expressed his deep chagrin to find that it had been all wasted on a young man who had displayed such weakness. He concluded by declaring that until George abandoned his absurd and wicked fancies, he should withhold his friendship and assistance.

George Widdrington issued from the old familiar

doors of the Grange in a state of indescribable misery. Ruin or a contemptible hypocrisy were before him.

- We shall not attempt to describe the horrors of the night which succeeded this cruel interview. When he entered his own home, his parents and brother sat in a dejected silence. No word was said, and he went up to his room, and flung himself in a stupor of grief on his bed. But with the rising sun he stood on the door-stone of his native cottage, with a small valise in his hand, and with the air of a traveller. It was a splendid morning. The dew lay thick on the grass, glittering in the sun like myriads of diamonds, but everything except the birds was profoundly still. The landscape itself, and the dwellings of men in it, yet seemed to sleep. The house slept, as it were, with all its inhabitants, for it was an hour when even the early dwellers in the country were not yet astir.

As the young man stood there for a moment, years of bright summers passed over his heart. All that was happy, and beautiful, and tender, came up as from a sacred fountain in his soul. The spirit of the past with all its heavenly sweetness and affection, well nigh conquered him. He cast one quick look into the future, where all his household gods lay shattered around him, and the dreary solitude of it appalled him. He paused—almost yielded; but

some new idea shot across him, and he bounded down the slope and disappeared, pursued by the trenchant thought that perhaps he should never see the beloved ones he thus left any more.

We shall not dwell on the gloomy period of affliction to all parties which followed. George reflected in consternation and deepest wretchedness in his chambers, on his position and prospects. His brilliant hopes were suddenly destroyed. To pursue his legal career was impossible. True, he could procure an engagement in a lawyer's office, but his proud spirit revolted at the retrograde movement; and in the depth of his dejection, a new vision suddenly presented itself. The wonderful tidings of the gold-fields of Australia had just burst on the public. He would go.

He acted instantly on the impulse. There was a pleasure in retiring for a while from the domestic storm, in action and change of scene. He sold his books and his few effects, and found himself master of twenty pounds. His finances dictated his position, and though inwardly shrinking from it, he dared it. He took an intermediate passage, hoping that he should meet at the distant port no one who knew him. Once more he wrote letters to his parents and to Ellen, overflowing with all the tenderness that he

felt, protesting the pain which he felt, in the pain which he knew that he must have given. Before he set sail, he received answers equally full of sorrow and affection. Ellen, in the tone of her old attachment, approved of his resolution to make this voyage, and most tenderly united in his hope that its result might be every way auspicious. There was balm in this, though he knew the tendency of the hope expressed.

The ship was on its way, and George Widdrington found himself in a new world, and among strange associates. There were about two hundred passengers in the second class, and when he went below to his berth, he stood confounded at the scene before him. However he might have resolved to suppress his feelings, he could not see his quarters for the next three or four months without a feeling of disgust and repulsion.

In a long apartment, divided off into small stalls, as it were in a market—stalls of some seven feet long by three or four feet wide, and in which there was just room for a half-yard wide mattress—he made one of a rude crowd with whom he had no sympathy, nor for the language and spirit of many of them even toleration. The very lowest purlieus of Whitechapel and Ratcliffe Highway seemed to have furnished a liberal quota of the throng; and the squalling of chil-

dren and messes of cooking were to him something frightful.

The first few days were rather stormy. Luckily George was well, and could escape to the deck. As he emerged from the hatchway, however, one of his fondest hopes was at once dissipated. He was met with an exclamation of surprise by an old acquaintance. It was Adam Swinburne, who had passed his apprenticeship as a surgeon in Newcastle, and was here as the ship's doctor.

"George Widdrington! and below there! What in the name of all wonders is the meaning of this?" was the young man's exclamation. George took him by the arm, and leading him forward, explained so much of the mystery as that he had suddenly resolved on a trip to the gold-fields, and as it, of course, had at first been done without the knowledge of his friends, he had from necessity taken an intermediate berth. He begged Adam Swinburne to keep his confidence as to who he was, and hoped there were no other people from the north in the cabin.

"Not a soul!" said the warm-hearted Adam. "But, my good fellow, you cannot stay down there. It is impossible. I have a whole stern cabin, large and airy; that's your place, and a pleasant time we will have of it. Come along."

But George hung back. "It can't be, Adam. It would require forty pounds to advance me to the dignity of a cabin passenger; and see, I have just four," pulling out that number of sovereigns. "My mother sent me sixty pounds; but I guessed well enough where it came from, and I sent it back with my soul's thanks."

"That's all right," said Adam Swinburne, "but now hear. I shall have half-a-sovereign for every passenger on arrival. There are about two hundred. I'll settle all that, and we'll balance out of the first nuggett."

"But if we are drowned," said George, smiling, "who's to pay for me then?"

"Why, let the proprietors come after us for it," said the kind-hearted youth, and laughing, lugged George away by the arm into the cabin.

"A patient already?" said the Captain, who was still sitting at the breakfast-table, with a number of ladies and gentlemen.

"No; a passenger," said Adam, still going on towards his cabin. George seemed to breathe again as he entered its airy space with its books and comfortable furniture, and recalled the filth, and stench, and darkness below, with all its motley crowds. The business was soon arranged by Adam with the Cap-



tain. George's trunk was carried in, and a fresh bed added. George's intelligence and gentlemanly bearing soon made him a welcome inmate of the cuddy, and, as the voyage went on, he saw ample cause to congratulate himself on escaping from below. Two hundred people who had been accustomed on land to lives of daily labour, and to a degree of restraint from the presence of their employers, here thrown together for weeks and months, without an object but to drink of the plentiful stores of brandy which the ship afforded; to gamble, and sing, and fight, ere long presented a strange spectacle, in which the coarse rioted, and the meek and more refined shrunk aside and suffered. The pleasantest hour for contemplating this class was that after sunset, when, by common consent, they nearly all turned out, solaced themselves by singing, and on moonlight nights by a dance. Repetition, indeed, wore away even the charm of this, when "The Red Cross Knight," "The Pope," "Cheer, Boys, Cheer," and "Nora the Pride of Kildare," had been each chaunted their fiftieth time. Listening, one evening, as they leant against the poop-rail, George heard a lonely voice singing this homely ballad:—

"The lord said to his ladie,  
As he mounted his horse,  
Beware of Long Lonkin,  
That lies in the moss.

"The lord said to his lădie,  
As he rode away,  
Beware of Long Lonkin  
That lies in the clay.

"What care I for Lonkin,  
Or any of his gang?  
My doors are all shut  
And barred with a stang.

"There were six little windows  
And they were all shut,  
But one little window,  
And that was forgot.  
And at that little window  
Long Lonkin crept in."

"That's a Northumbrian!" exclaimed George.

"Ay, that it is," said Adam Swinburne. "It is no other than Tom Boyd, a shepherd of Todstead; and what do you think? That he is bound for the diggings? No; but to wander after a flock in the far bush."

"I wish him joy," said George.

"And he'll have it," said Adam, "for he has a lot of old books, that he has picked up at the stalls in London, with a lot of old ballads and legends in his head, and he actually revels in the idea of years of uninterrupted solitude. But, hark!" Tom Boyd

was still humming at the ballad, to the wonder of the town-growth of singers :

“Where’s the ladies of the hall?  
Says the Lonkin :  
They’re up in the chambers,  
Says Orange to him.

“How shall we get them down?  
Says the Lonkin.  
Prick the baby in the cradle,  
Says Orange to him.

“Still did she prick it,  
And “Bee-ba” she cried,  
Come down, dearest mistress,  
And still your own child.

“Oh! still my child, Orange,  
Still him with a bell.  
I can’t still him, ladie,  
Till you come down yersell,” &c.

Tom’s song was “caviare to the general;” but from that day, many a pleasant talk had George and Adam with the shepherd of Todstead, while the ship rushed through the waters of the tropics, and with the long summer days came long memories of mountain, wave, and stream in the Northern dales. Many a long, silent meditation had George Widdrington, as he glanced over the ship’s side, where sad regrets and

deep mortifications mingled with fondest thoughts of those he left behind.

But now the ship was at land. The two friends stepped on shore in wonder. Where, seventeen years before, spread a green forest, peopled only by kangaroos and houseless natives, a great metropolis, and a countless throng of busy people met their eyes. Ships were crowded at the quays; piles of merchandise lay on the shore; and thousands of people—all eager in quest of gain—all hurrying to and fro, intent on their own thoughts and affairs, and on nought beside—waded along it knee-deep in mud, amid the din and confusion of drays, shouting drivers, mobs of horses, omnibuses and droshkies, bearing uncouth freights of hairy-faced men and flaunting women.

They hurried as fast as they could out of the town, having put into the care of a trusty Northumbrian merchant, letters for home, and a good remittance from Adam to his mother and sister. Still more extraordinary were the scenes on the road, if road that could be called, which was one ghastly reiteration of frightful bogs, ploughed yards-deep by incessant wheels; yawning gullies, and rocks and hills. The whole of this Tartarean track was thronged by huge drays, heavily laden, and dragged along by enormous teams of bullocks. Carts, drays, bullocks,

horses, lay in ruins and in death along the whole line, and still the wondrous stream of life and labour dragged, rolled, and tumbled along, amid a deafening din of oaths and curses, amid smashes and crashes; vehicles stuck fast in hopeless morasses, or dashed over ledges and precipitous gullies; people confounded by their difficulties, or brought to a stand by a tremendous break-down.

Still our travellers marched on in wonder, but in comparative ease, carrying only their rugs and damper at their backs, with the indispensable panikin, quart-pot, and revolver at their girdles. In about a week from leaving Melbourne, they found themselves at Sawpit Gully, only four miles short of Forest Creek. They had halted for the night, stretched their little blanket-tent over a cord fastened to two trees, kindled a fire in front, and were preparing for tea. Adam was arranging a couple of beefsteaks on two pointed sticks at the fire, and George was returning from the creek with the quart-pots full of water, when up came three men dressed as diggers, but armed with guns. One of them stayed with Adam at the fire, and the other two confronted George at some little distance. They presented their gun-muzzles simultaneously at his head, and said, "Quick, mates! Shell out!"

George took a glance at them, and set them down for two of the most strong-built and brutal vagabonds that he had ever beheld. They had bushes of black hair about their faces, and a genuine devil's expression. But they did not leave him much time for criticising them. They repeated the word "Quick!" and backed it by a fierce oath. George, who was not only courageous, but most adroitly expert in his movements, stooped as to set down his water, and rose with his revolver in his hand. With his left arm he knocked up the gun-muzzle of one of the villains, discharged one of his barrels at his head, and, with the rapidity of lightning, seized the gun of the other, and repeated his fire. This time the ball went through the fellow's hat, but not through his head, and he darted away through the bush. The other lay dead on the ground. George was in the act of sending a second bullet after the flying thief, when he beheld his friend Adam struggling on the ground, and a large fellow leaning on his chest, busily plundering him. George sprang towards him, when he rose and made off also. A shot was sent after him, and the fellow gave a leap, clapped his hand on his right shoulder, but continued his flight.

George Widdrington had no time to pursue him. For, looking at poor Adam, he beheld him stretched

on his back, his face and hands covered with blood, and no sign of life but a heavy groaning which escaped him.

“Adam! my dear fellow, Adam! can you speak?” cried George, frantically. There was no reply, but another deep groan. “Oh God! he is killed,” cried George, “and what shall I do?” He sprung up, looked wildly around as for assistance; but, seeing no one on the road, he darted away to the quart-pots, and finding one still with its contents in it, he came, and kneeling down, washed away the blood from Adam’s face.

It was a horrible sight. The nose appeared actually smashed. There was a deep wound on the cheek, and the whole face appeared bruised and crushed. The hands were bloody with a wound; the finger, on which his friend had worn a handsome ring, was stripped of skin: the wretch having evidently taken the finger in his mouth and torn off the ring with his teeth. The poor fellow’s gold watch still lay by his side, having been left in the hurry of retreat.

While George was washing Adam’s hands, and dropping tears over him like a child, the mangled man attempted to speak, but could not articulate a syllable; and George, gazing in distraction at him,

believed that his jaw was broken. At this instant his ear caught the rapid tramp of a horse in canter. He started up, and saw a man in a broad straw hat riding along the road. He gave a loud whoop, and was beginning to run towards the road, when the horseman turned his steed and came quickly at his call. A moment's glance at the scene, and he comprehended the whole of it.

"Bushrangers!" he exclaimed. "Is your friend alive?"

"I hope so," replied George, sadly; "but he is awfully hurt."

"Then, there is no time to be lost. I'll send you a surgeon; but there is an empty cart coming along. It is mine. Stop it, and keep it here."

Away the storekeeper—for such he was—galloped, and soon after the cart came in sight, and George stopped it. The man who was with it said, looking at the wounded surgeon, "Those infernal bushrangers again, I see. There is a ferocious set of them hereabouts. Have you given your mate a little brandy?"

Without stopping for a reply, he pulled a quart bottle from his pocket, poured a quantity into his panikin, and George raising poor Adam's head, the carter poured a little between his teeth. Adam, as if



the fiery liquor choked him, gave a short cough, opened his eyes, and again attempted to speak.

“What is it, dear Adam?” said George, stooping eagerly down to him. “What is it?”

“O, don’t bother him yet!” said the man. “You see he’s coming about by degrees. There’s nothing like a nobbler after all, mate. Tak’ a sup yourself.” With that he poured out a full panikin and handed it to George. George took a draught, for he was ready to sink with excitement and exhaustion.

“Pugh, man, that’s nothing, that’s not a thimbleful.” George shook his head. “Well, well, all’s one,” said the fellow, and draining the panikin, added, “And here comes the doctor—all right!”

The doctor leaped from the saddle, threw the reins to the carter, stooped and took the wounded man’s wrist.

“All’s well here,” he said; “I suspect there is no injury but this ugly outward bruise; but that’s bad enough. A little more water. Let us see.” He felt the lacerated nose, traced the course of the jaw-bone, and said, “Can you open your mouth, my friend?” Adam opened his mouth, and spoke. “No harm to the jaw, but there is a heavy bruise behind the head.”

The doctor drew out an instrument case, containing scissors and adhesive plaster, and with much care,

strapped up the wounds; the patient was laid on the cart, and a rug thrown over him, George riding with him to steady and support his head on the jolting road. The doctor rode forward, telling the carter to come to his tent.

Arrived at the doctor's tent, Adam was soon able to explain to them the way in which he had received his injuries. Having his last twenty pounds in his pocket, he was not inclined to part with it, and prepared for a struggle with his antagonists. But one of them, just before advancing towards George, felled him by a blow of a gun-stock on the back of the head. Recovering his senses, however, he found a fellow ransacking his pockets. Instantly grappling with him, both had a desperate struggle on the ground, till Adam getting uppermost, and beating the wretch well about the head, he suddenly seized his hand in his teeth and bit it furiously. This compelled Adam to let go, when they both sprang up together, and while Adam was in the act of drawing his revolver, the bushranger seizing his gun by the butt-end and by the barrel brought it down across his face with all his might. He fell senseless, and knew no more.

The following day the little blanket tent was set up near the doctor's, who continued to attend to the

patient with the kindest assiduity, and to send the friends supplies from his table to this little tent. It was two days before Adam was able to turn out, and then with his face so swollen and patched, that he declared, with something of his old humour, that he had forsworn looking-glasses for ever.

As soon as Adam could be left alone, George set out to try his luck at digging. The scene that met his eye as he drew near to the Forest Creek was strange enough. Twenty thousand people, at least, were all scuffling together like ants in an ant's nest, or tadpoles in a pool. The whole valley, through which ran the creek or brook, for several miles was in the act of being turned upside down. Close as the crowd could press upon each other so as to leave the prescribed number of feet to each party, they were digging, delving, throwing up earth, carrying away bags of it, supposed to contain the gold, to the creek, and there delivering it to other crowds who, at a long line of cradles, were in as great a bustle, throwing in the earth, rocking it to and fro under deluges of water from tin dippers. There was an incessant noise of rattling cradles, and shouting voices. Strange figures all yellow with clay, and disguised in bushy beards, and veils to keep off the flies, seemed too desperately busy to have time to

breathe. It was all one agitated scene of elbowing, swearing, hacking, hewing, and shovelling. Not a tree was left standing over the whole great space, and the sun flamed down on unsheltered heaps and holes of gravel, with a burning, sweltering force.

George wandered along in astonishment and despair. Where was any one who had not the qualities of Sam Slick's Kentuckian, half-horse, half-alligator, to set in amongst that rude and confused crew?

At length he pitched, in utter desperation, on a little vacant space.

"Avast there, mate," shouted a great, tall sailor, "that belongs to a Dutchman, don't you see his pegs?"

George saw the pegs, and moved on. It was long before he could see a single yard of unoccupied ground, but at length he discovered a small triangular spot between three other claims. He took one pick.

"Hands off there, old fellow! That is mine," said the huge head of a huge brick-red man, just lifted above the ground out of a hole.

"Yours?" said George, mildly. "Why, you have one already."

"Yes," replied the large head, "but that's my

little parlour; d'ye object? If so, I'll get a neighbour to occupy it."

"No," said George, and walked on, saying to himself, "Is this a scene for a gentleman?"

Many a long hunt, and many a rude rebuff he experienced before he could secure a claim; and when he began to dig he was speedily reminded of the romantic accounts he had read, of just turning the gold out of the soft earth a few feet deep, as you would turn out potatoes. The gravel that he had to delve into was as hard set as a brick wall. Totally unused to manual labour, though yielding to no one in strength, he soon found that it was not very like wielding a pen at a desk. The sun seemed at once to burn off the very skin of his face, neck, and hands, and to melt him down as a contribution to the stream. His hands were soon covered with blisters, and a painful sense came over his mind that if he found gold he would have most dearly earned it when got. Wearied, dejected, and sore, as if the sun had really flayed him alive, he returned to the tent at evening, and sat down silent, and on the verge of despair. Never, since he was born, had he had such a suspicion that he was a fool.

But Adam set about to cheer him up, told him all would go well in a while, and insisted the next

day on going to look on, if not to help. Very soon he jumped into the hole, took his turn with the pick and shovel, and from that day worked regularly and stoutly. In about a week, they had got down to nearly the depth of the surrounding holes, whose owners had already finished, and were gone away to fresh ground.

“We are certainly about down,” said George, striking his pick into the gravel at his feet; when down indeed it went, and he tumbled into a hole like a cellar beneath! The active neighbours had undermined their claim, and had walked off with the booty! Soon there was a crowd of diggers round the hole, pretty well aware of what would take place, and loud was the laughter at “the gentleman’s cellar,” and loud exclamations of “what a sell!”

We shall not follow our heroes step by step, through this arduous field. Their experience was varied, often comical, but by no means amusing to them—least of all, profitable. The four pounds of George Widdrington—their sole resource, for Adam’s little fund was gone—were rapidly melting away; and of all the tons of gold which had been secured, not an ounce had yet fallen to their share. They had worked on the hill and in the valley; in the wet and

in the dry. They had rushed away to new rushes, and tried fresh spots for themselves, with the same result. Starvation stood before them. "This will never do!" exclaimed Adam Swinburne. And the next morning there stretched across the front of their little blanket-tent, occupying some six feet by five, and three feet high, in large black letters traced on a piece of calico with the end of a bruised stick, and by the aid of a blacking-bottle, this magnificent monograph, "MEDICAL HALL. DR. SWINBURNE, FROM THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS."

Let us see what will come of that.

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As the great Dr. Swinburne could not leave the Medical Hall, he set himself about enclosing it with post and rail, and ornamenting it by the importation of various flowering shrubs from the neighbouring forest. He had neither mortar nor scales, nor any drugs to weigh and compound in them; so he proposed to supply himself from a druggist's not far off, should he be fortunate to obtain any patients. And these were not long wanting. Accidents were con-

stantly occurring on the field, and George, who was prowling about for fresh claims, was sure to cry out, "To Dr. Swinburne's!" and helped to carry the patient there. Adam's real cleverness was soon perceived, and practice followed rapidly. Not a word of advice was given under a sovereign, and a few doses of medicine were rewarded with an ounce—that is, an ounce of gold, value three pounds seventeen shillings.

"Who would dig?" said Adam, triumphantly, as he tossed the first real sovereign in his hands. "George, you shall be tent-keeper and cook, and we'll go halves till there's enough for you to start as a lawyer with in Melbourne; and then you shall give me halves for the first year. There! That I know is a good bargain for me."

George set to work in his new post. Soon, they had a Medical Hall of really grand dimensions for canvas, and not only a pestle and mortar and medicines, but Adam had his horse, and rode far and wide through the diggings. George was groom; and, as they had little to be robbed of in the tent—for Adam every evening carried his cash to the gold-office at the government camp—when Adam was on his rounds, George amused himself by felling poles in the woods just by, and peeling stringy-bark, with



which he soon built a stable near the Medical Hall. The horse was fed on hay and oats at a shilling a pound each; and they themselves on bread at five shillings the quartern loaf, potatoes at one shilling a pound, and fresh butter at five shillings. But what then? The gold now flowed in in a royal stream. Adam plucked out a digger's tooth—a pound; clapped a piece of sticking-plaster on a bruised arm—a pound; gave a dose of salts in a bottle of water and a little colouring matter—a pound. Nothing was done under a pound popped into the hand at the moment. A particular case, and down came "an ounce."

"Doctor," a digger would say, "just look at my leg."

"Ha! I see," replies Adam. "You must give over drinking."

"That's true," says the fellow. "But doctor, I've no money, but there's an ounce."

There was a deal of dysentery. Adam might have said with a certain doctor, "A world of sickness! Providence has been very kind to us lately!" but he was too humane. Nevertheless, he could not but exult in his unbounded success. "This is the true gold mine, George; you'll soon have to be off to Melbourne, and commence conveyancer. And yet,

what am I to do without you? Who is to watch my tent, and cook, and keep all straight, and have my horse ready, and in such condition? It is really a shame, George, to make a groom and butler of you; but there is nobody that can do like you. Well, a few weeks." In fact, Adam's practice was already at the rate of eight thousand a-year.

One morning Adam started up, for he had a hard day's ride before him. Typhus fever was raging in a low flat, where quantities of stagnant water had collected, and heaps of offal and all kinds of impurities were scattered over the ground, and rotted and festered in the sun. He had been there day after day for the last week, not only attending to the numerous poor people who were attacked by the fever, but in seeing sanitary measures carried out, by burning or burying the putrid matter. He had been led by the foetid odour brought on the wind to a hill which overlooked the flat, and there had discovered a scene that made him stand in utter astonishment. It was a slaughter-yard, which had been recently deserted by the butchers being actually driven away by the intolerable stench, and the legions of flies which enveloped them at their business, and made it impossible to proceed. And what a scene! The whole hill-top was one mass of dried gore and piles of bullock's

heads, all rotting in an inconceivable fœtor, and blackened over with flies, which rose up with a sound as of thunder. Torrents of gore had rolled down the sides of the hill, and the fenced slaughter-yard was hung with hides which had curled and dried to the hardness of boards in the sun. No wonder at the typhus which raged below.

Adam rode off to the government camp, where an inspector lived with a salary of three hundred pounds a-year, whose main business was to prevent these very nuisances. But the man said no men were to be got to cover up the decomposing mass. Adam appealed to the commissioners, who replied with a shrug, and asked where the men at a pound a-day each were to be found. Without waiting to give a reply, he rode back to the flat, called together the diggers, and told them they must either relinquish the gold in the flat, or their lives; or they must come to the rescue, and bury the horrible Golgotha. At once, and to a man, they shouldered pick and shovel, mounted the hill of abomination, and in a single day its horrors were buried deep and secure from evil or offence.

This morning poor Adam, however, reeled forward, as he rose from his bed, and fell on the floor.

“ Gracious heavens, Adam, what ails you ? ” cried George, springing to his assistance.

But Adam had already partly recovered himself, and sitting up, rubbed his hand across his forehead, and said, “ Oh my head ! my head ! What’s this ? ”

“ What is it ? ” asked George, in alarm ; “ how do you feel, Adam ? ”

“ Dizzy ! dizzy ! ” said Adam, “ the tent goes round with me—the ground reels—Heaven help me ! I must lie down.”

He lay down again on his bed, while George, leaning over him in the utmost terror and anxiety, said,

“ I’ll run for the doctor, Adam ; you are very, very ill, I know.”

“ Yes,” said Adam, “ do, dear George ; I know what it is—it is that fatal typhus.”

George darted from the tent like one possessed, with nothing on but his shirt and trousers. With bare feet, and careless of the myriads of broken bottles which strew the ground of every digging, he rushed along, unmindful of wondering looks and numberless inquiries from the surprised spectators. The same kind-hearted medical man who had attended Adam before was soon at his bedside. Adam was lying still, but pale ; the slightest attempt to raise

his head producing the same reeling, rolling sensation. The doctor at once pronounced it an attack of typhus, and that it had seized powerfully on the system. It must, he said, have been gathering head for several days, but had been unperceived by Adam from his state of active exertion and excitement. He ordered the tent to be kept cool and well open to the air, and sent in immediately the necessary remedies. He promised to see him again in a very few hours, and to get another young surgeon to attend Adam's patients. When he left the tent, George threw himself on his knees by the bed, and, seizing Adam's hand, he said,—

“O, Adam! if I could but suffer this for you—you who are so much wanted—so useful—and I who am of no use to anybody.”

“You, George! why you are everything to me. What could I do without you now? Listen, and yet don't frighten yourself, but let me speak to you while I can, for I may become delirious.”

George gave a groan, and turned deathly pale.

“Nay, now,” continued Adam, “you are frightening yourself, and yet all may be well, and most likely will, for I am young and strong, but it is necessary to be prepared. Hear, then. If anything happens to me, you are to take everything for the present—

sell everything; and with the money in the bank, go down to Melbourne, and commence your career; you will succeed; and when you can do it without inconvenience, settle the few hundred pounds on my mother and sister—they are poor, and will miss me.”

Here Adam was silent, as if serious thoughts pressed on him, and George was weeping and sobbing, strong man as he was, in an utter abandonment of grief. But Adam said again:

“Why, how now, George! that is really weak of you—I have no fear any way myself—if the fever should carry me off, God’s will be done! but I am not imagining that; I only tell you what I should, as a prudent man, tell you. Pray get a branch, and drive away these flies.”

George recovered himself, brought at once a leafy branch, and began waving it near Adam’s head to keep the flies from his face.

“That is a delicious fan too,” said Adam, with a smile; “and if you could read to me a little in the Gospels, that would indeed be luxurious.”

George took the book, and began. His heart now clung to every word as to the sole anchor of earthly existence.

But Adam’s precautions soon showed themselves just. The disease, spite of the most skilful and un-

remitting efforts of the doctor, grew and went on resistlessly. The weather was intensely hot; the flies, drawn, no doubt, by the miasma of the complaint, poured in by legions—eager, fearless, intensely active, and assailant legions—and it required all George's exertions to whisk them away with his never-resting branch from the face of his friend.

Adam's head was become more confused, his thoughts wandered, he was already delirious, though quietly so, and his mind was busy in the home of his youth. He told his mother and sister what he had been doing for them, how successful he had been; a few more years, and he should come back a very, very rich man, and then they should never know any more poverty, any more necessity with all its curtailings and contrivings. There was another being—a Mary Hepburn—who made a beautiful part of the picture of that fair future, and his dear friend George, his friend and brother, how were they all to love him for his kindness and faithful affection to him.

As he uttered these things, George listened with a heart ready to break, and often started up wildly, as if he would snatch and tear away the clinging evil that enveloped him. He saw here revealed the daily thoughts which reigned in the mind of poor Adam—which had made his rides so delightful, his

duties so easy; and now, if the worst happened, what was to become of those beloved beings for whom he had thus planned and toiled? How was he himself to bear it?

His reflections were interrupted by the entrance of the doctor, attended by another medical man. George's heart felt a spasm at the sight; it was proof that the doctor was himself alarmed. They requested George to allow them to be alone for a few minutes, and then the doctor, stepping out with a grave air, said to George:

“ You must be courageous, my friend; you must not be cast down; but I fear the fever will prove too strong for us. It is a bad case, and I am very sorry. Poor Swinburne! he is a fine fellow, a noble fellow! I think I never saw such a man. So clever, so modest, and so good. If ever there was a martyr to a kind, generous heart, it is our friend. But what are you about?” perceiving George standing as if frozen to the spot, and trembling in every joint with emotion.

“ You must not give way, Mr. Widdrington—you must not, indeed; we'll try yet—we may succeed. All is as God wills, and as for you, you have so much to do. You must keep the tent as cool as you can; and these cursed flies, don't let them tease him;



moisten the patient's lips with water, keep these cooling wet cloths to his head, and I'll be back presently."

The doctors in silence took their leave. George went in, threw himself down by the sufferer's bed, kissed passionately his burning forehead, and his fevered, dry hand, while poor Adam slept soundly and unconscious of his friend's affliction. What a watch of deep and speechless wretchedness was that of George Widdrington! With no soul to exchange a thought, a care, with—all alone in the world with this great grief, this overwhelming terror and trouble. Yet incessantly he waved the protecting bough, keeping back the undaunted pestilence of flies, and replacing cool cloths on the burning head of his friend, and moistening his parched lips.

The doctor re-appeared.

"He sleeps!" cried George; "sleeps deep and quietly—that must be well."

The information elicited no approving nod, or brightening expression, from the doctor.

"It is comatose sleep," he said; "it bodes us no good."

George was struck dumb, and the coldness of death seemed to go through his very marrow.

In that warm season of a climate so much warmer than our own, the progress of disease was rapid.

Adam slept on. Night came; the tormenting flies withdrew, and George sat motionless by the sick bed, the picture of desolation. Adam moved, opened his eyes, and seeing George as he there sat, haggard and ghostlike with watching and harrowing anxiety, put out his hand and said,

“Dearest George, we must part. I feel it—and I imagined it before. But you must bear up. You have many dear to you. If you are not happy in this country—go to them—that is the best fortune. And—but I will not repeat it—you will be kind to my beloved ones, as you have been kind to me. And now, dear George, one more chapter of St. John.”

George was beside himself with grief; he sobbed hysterically, but could not speak a word. Yet he rose, brought the Bible, and after a hard struggle with himself, he opened the book and read, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my father’s house there are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you.”

At this point George felt a strong pressure of Adam’s hand. He looked at him. Adam gave him an inexpressibly affectionate smile, and once more his eyes closed—his grasp relaxed—and George sat silently gazing upon him. This had continued about a quarter of an hour, when he perceived Adam

slightly move, give a faint sigh, and lie still. It was an ominous stillness. George started up, put his hand to his mouth, and sank back into his seat, clasping his head hard between his hands. Adam was dead!

If ever there was a desolate spot on earth, it was that tent that night; if ever a grief-prostrated being, it was poor George. Through those long dark hours he sat, and the whole world seemed dark with him. Till that moment he never seemed to have known all the goodness and pleasantness of his friend,—never to have valued him aright. That cheerful, hopeful soul,—that generous, unselfish nature,—that mind so full of knowledge and sunny thoughts, and cordial, genial humour. From the sight of the future he shrunk back; from that dark solitary road that he must travel amongst rude strangers alone.

But time stops for neither the happy nor the miserable. Morning came, and with it the doctor and the flies. In a kindly but energetic tone, he told George that he must rouse himself; that the funeral must take place that very day, and covering over the body with a sheet, he bade George go and attend to the horse while he went and gave the necessary orders. When he returned, he forced George away with him to his own tent, and kept him there.

We must not dwell on this melancholy part of our story. In a few days the remains of Adam Swinburne slept in the already populous cemetery of Forest Creek. George, exerting himself under the kindly influence of the doctor, had sold the tent and effects, the doctor wishing to purchase the horse, and for which, spite of George's remonstrances, he paid a very handsome price, though his medical attendance had, of course, been gratuitous to his brother practitioner. The money George had transferred to the Bank of Australasia, in Melbourne, with the exception of a small reserve for his own necessities, and as a loan, and sent an order to pay it over to their bank in London, for Adam's mother, to whom he wrote the melancholy news of her son's decease.

For himself, the prospect of a sedentary life in Melbourne, even with the hope of achieving a brilliant fortune, had at present no charms. At his heart there lay a heavy, cheerless weight. He seemed to need action, constant, restless action,—the air of the hills, the free freshness of the forest, hard travel, hard labour, to drive the deadly torpor from his spirit, to give him sleep at night. There was a fever in his blood that seemed to urge him on and on. So, in the rude phrase of the digger, he once more humped his swag, that is, threw the rolled-up blanket on his

back, with pick, shovel, and tin dish, and set out for fresh scenes.

We need not follow him too minutely. He travelled from one gold-field to another, and dug laboriously, and with varied success. But he was always a solitary digger ; he never felt as if he could take a stranger into the place of Adam the inimitable. Autumn found him at the Ovens, much improved in his funds, but still restless and melancholy. Besides the death of Adam Swinburne, he had other griefs which lay heavy upon him. Since he set foot on Australian ground he had never received a single line from any one at home, nor could he learn from any new arrival that his letters homeward had been more fortunate. Every one attributed the fact, which was by no means a solitary one,—there were thousands of like cases, — to the inefficient condition of the Melbourne post-office, which, from a false economy of the colonial government, was not half manned, and was become an unfathomable limbo of letters and newspapers.

But this theory did not remove the fact that George had had no communication with his home friends, and a thousand uneasy and gloomily-shaping fancies haunted his mind. Had he not acted a foolish part? Thrown recklessly away the brightest

prospects for a mere ignis fatuus? Might not Ellen Mowbray have gradually come to consider him in the long period for serious reflection, as a fickle, impetuous, and not very sagacious character? The only person who could give him any news from home was a sailor, who had originally been a Warkworth fisherman, then had sailed in a Hull merchantman, and run off to the diggings. From him George heard that his own family was well: but that Mr. Mowbray was dead. When the man spoke of Miss Mowbray, he seemed to give George a look, as if he said, "Ay, and did not you miss it there, Master Widdrington? What a beautiful lady Miss Mowbray was grown! How she was admired! There was not a woman in Northumberland fit to carry her shoes after her; and now so rich as she was, he reckoned she would marry a lord or a duke at least."

That was the only news George had received since he landed; and poor and mere hearsay as the information of such a man was, it did not fail to disturb him. He resolved to return home, not as the prodigal son, unless he found open doors to receive him, but with the little capital he now possessed, to commence practice in Newcastle. Wonderful rumours were at this moment flying to and fro

of a new gold-field at Lake Omeo, on the Gippsland side of the snowy mountains. It was an expedition that seized powerfully on his feverish, restless mind. New scenes in the wildest mountain regions, a stout walk by swift rivers, and through mountain forests, over snow-crowned peaks, and amid the vigorous winds of autumn,—his heart felt cooled and lightened at the thought of it. From Omeo to Alberton was but a few days' journey, and then he would take ship for Melbourne and home.

The distance to Omeo from the Ovens was a hundred and seventy miles. In three long days, he had rounded the spurs of the mountains near Reid's Mill, and traced a good long track along the banks of the Mitta-Mitta. The river had ceased to pursue its quiet course in the lowlands, and came gaily and with a crystal clearness and vivacity through the steeper valley. Our hero, in his scarlet blouse, belted at the waist, and displaying there his trusty revolver, and with his rug rolled neatly on his back, his shovel slung by its handle on the elve of his pick, cut a striking figure as he strode along. His tall and graceful form, his elastic step, bid those who followed him to expect a face of equally fresh and handsome character to turn upon them as they passed; and there was an evident feeling of surprise

manifested in the grave looks of the passers-by, at the really handsome but careworn features of the young man. Handsome brown hair beneath his ruddy wide-awake, and a short, rather golden-hued beard, ought to have belonged to a youthfully cheerful face, but they shaded fine features on which there lay a sickly hue, and a settled gloom.

George Widdrington was seated on a fallen tree by the wayside on the evening of the third day of his journey. He was thinking whether he should there pitch his little tent for the night, or make another step onward. The country was become hilly, and increasingly toilsome for the traveller. Green ranges, thinly scattered with trees, rose finely at the feet of still more lofty and thickly wooded heights; and his eyes rested on the scenery with a pleasure which strongly tempted him to stop there for the night. While these thoughts were passing through his mind, a couple of equestrians appeared ascending the road. The one was an elderly gentleman, the other a young lady of striking figure, and in a fashionable habit and riding-hat. The lady was mounted on a remarkably handsome horse, and came slowly on, conversing with the elderly gentleman in a voice which excited, by its musical and cultivated tones, the wonder of our



traveller. "Do these deserts," he said to himself, "send forth apparitions like these?"

As the strangers passed, they both gazed earnestly at George, as if they saw more than an ordinary digger in his appearance. He involuntarily raised his hat to the lady who rode nearest to him, and she returned the courtesy by a graceful inclination of the head and a pleasant smile. But George Widdrington followed the lady with a fixed regard that partook of no little astonishment. What a lovely, sensible face: and what a strong likeness to Ellen Mowbray! The form was taller, the face of a more mature character; there was a wide difference, and yet a most wonderful resemblance. It was Ellen, and it was not: but who could it be having so kindred a look in this far-off world? George was lost in astonishment and greatly excited, and while his eyes were still fixed on the strange vision, he saw her speak to her companion. They stopped their horses, and the gentleman came back.

There was a remarkable mildness and gentleness in his appearance, and addressing George, evidently as a gentleman, he said:

"You are bound for Omeo, probably?"

"Yes," replied George.

"The night is coming on," said the stranger, "and

the roads beyond here are very steep. Had you not better stay here? My hut is just on the hill there" — pointing to a white house, not far off, that stood boldly overlooking the country.

"Thank you," replied George, smiling, "but I carry my house with me," touching his swag.

"But I think mine is better," rejoined the amiable old gentleman, "and it is much at your service. The night, I think, will be stormy. The birds are flocking in crowds down from the mountains, and that tells of wild weather in the hills."

"You are very kind, sir," said George, whose own curiosity drew him vigorously to learn something more of the lady. "I will gratefully accept your hospitality."

"That is right," said the gentleman, heartily. "You will see the track above," and he rode on.

George followed, full of strange thoughts and feelings, and wonderfully struck, when he reached the level of the range on which the station stood, at the view of the country around. Above and before him ascended lofty piles of hills, dark with forests, and bold with projecting forelands and retiring coves. Below lay a vast country and boundless breadth of dark woods, and near at hand green and swelling fields, having a soft yet bold beauty and a verdure

sprinkled with graceful trees, as if human cultivation and taste had been at work there, instead of the spirit of nature, which alone it was.

As he drew near the house, he saw that it was embellished by a large garden, in which apple-trees hung with their autumnal crop in the most prodigal profusion, in such abundance that they were obliged to be propped to prevent the branches being torn off by their load. In front, seats were placed on turf under the trees, and everywhere there were proofs that people of superior taste lived there, who had ideas beyond mere squatting. George took his way to the apartment where casual callers of the digger class were generally entertained, and deposited his load on the floor. But the master of the house speedily appeared, and requested him to accompany him to his own sitting-room, first offering him an adjoining bed-room to wash in.

On entering the sitting-room, which likewise presented many instances in its furnishing of the same superior style of living as was obvious without, he was presented to the young lady he had lately seen, and who, having put off her riding-dress, was busy preparing tea, which was on the table.

The likeness to Ellen Mowbray was not now so striking, and yet there was a likeness, in expression

as well as feature. But her form was taller and more slender, and she could not be less than six or seven-and-twenty years of age. She advanced as her father introduced George, saying, "Here is our guest," with the most affable and yet lady-like sweetness, and offered the young man her hand, thus, as well as by his instalment in their own apartment, showing that she knew him to be a gentleman, though a digger in costume.

"You have done well, I think, sir," she said, while motioning him to be seated at the table, on which stood not only tea apparatus, but substantial dishes of meat and pies, "to stay here, for the mountains are becoming almost too winterly for tent lodging."

George said he certainly was much better off here on many accounts.

"Do you know," said her father, who was busily helping their guest to some smoking beef-steak, "that I fear you will find yourself too late at Omeo for this season? The winter rains are certainly coming, and there will be too much water to allow you to work."

"I shall then only have my usual luck," said George.

"You have not been lucky?" asked his host.

“Not as diggers call luck,” the young man replied.

“But as gentlemen find it, I suppose,” said the lady, brightly smiling. George bowed.

“But how must I call you my young friend?” continued the father, “for one is awkward without names.”

“My name is Widdrington.”

“George Widdrington?” added the young lady, fixing a blushing and earnest, yet brightly smiling gaze at him.

“How!” exclaimed George. “You know my name!” He sat fixed with amazement.

“Oh!” continued the lady, rising suddenly and seizing his hand, “it is a name very familiar to us.” And at the same time he found his other hand seized by the old gentleman, who, with his eye lighting with emotion, exclaimed, “Welcome, Mr. Widdrington, welcome—right welcome—to Mount Tracy!”

“But may I ask,” said George, more and more overpowered with wonder, “by what means you know me, and who are they by whom I am thus so kindly accosted.”

“Tracy is our name,” said the young lady.

“Tracy! If I were in New Zealand the mystery would be clear; but here——”

“Here you see the very same Tracys,” said the lady, still holding George’s hand, and with features beaming with pleasure.

“Then you are the cousin of Ellen Mowbray,” said George, more and more astonished, “and there goes another mystery, your strong likeness to her.”

“Am I like her, think you? But, my dear father, was I not right when I said that was very like George Widdrington who sate by the road?”

“Again, you amaze me,” said George. “You never saw me before; then how could you know me?”

“Do you think I had no reason to recognise you?” added she, taking down a miniature which hung amongst others on the wall, and presenting it to him. It was one which he had, shortly before leaving England, given to Ellen Mowbray, and saying, “I see,” he sate down in a state of strangely mingled emotion.

“But this will be joyful news for your friends: we must lose no time in sending it off.”

“Have my friends inquired after me?” demanded George.

“Have they inquired?” exclaimed Miss Tracy. “What! have you never seen advertisement after advertisement in the Melbourne papers, making all

possible inquiries after you? Don't you know that not a word has reached England respecting you since you left it?"

"I can't believe it," said George; "for no news, except one slight fragment of intelligence through a stranger, has ever reached me. As for the papers, I never read them."

"That is still more strange," said Miss Tracy, "for not a month passed without letters having been written to you."

"Of which," replied George, "I never received one."

"Then we have much to tell you," said Miss Tracy, first whispering a word in her father's ear; and then followed a long revelation of events and messages which gave George the most profound satisfaction. His own parents and brother were all perfectly well; Miss Mowbray was the same; and the very facts of her having sent over his portrait to her cousin, and set her to make every possible inquiry after him, were unmistakeable evidences that her feelings towards him were in no degree changed. The whole was to him like a sudden opening into heaven. A deadly weight was thrown from his bosom. The hovering shade cleared wonderfully from his brow. As by a strange enchantment, he found himself

at once in the house of affectionate friends, and in communication with his own nearest and dearest connections. The vast circle of the globe seemed suddenly reduced to compassable dimensions, over which the voices of those he loved could at length reach him.

After Mr. Tracy had retired for the night, he sate with Miss Tracy, and soon found that she was perfectly acquainted with his history. She left him in no doubt as to the warm and unshaken attachment of her cousin to him, and of the zealous and continued exertions she had made to trace him out, both for the satisfaction of his anxious family and her own. She produced and read him many extracts from Ellen's letters, and George went to bed that night and dreamt dreams of youth and happiness renewed. In the noble heart of so devoted a woman as Ellen Mowbray he felt himself richer than if he had dug up all the gold in the creeks of Victoria.

The next day, Miss Tracy, whose good, clear sense, and warm-hearted character he more and more admired, took him a long ride through the woods and hills, which greatly raised his ideas of the country there, and on their return, as he waited for dinner, he heard voices in the adjoining room, which was the sleeping-room of Miss Tracy, the house being



only of one storey, which made him wonder what guest had arrived in his absence. It was the voice of another lady, very like in its utterance to that of Miss Tracy. Presently, as the conversation grew more earnest, he caught a tone which thrilled through his heart like fire. It was the very tone of Ellen Mowbray, as he had heard it in her happiest moments, and as he thought he never could confound with any other. But that could not be hers; she could not be here.

As he stood full of wonder in that most wonderful house, which at every instant gave him a new surprise, a bright face appeared at the door, an exclamation of delight was given, and Ellen Mowbray herself was in his arms.

There she was, glowing and trembling with emotion, beautiful as ever, but with the expression of a saddened experience, and a woman's deepest anxiety, stamped on those lovely mind-ennobled features. George now learned that after her father's death Ellen, on learning that her uncle Tracy had removed from New Zealand to this colony, had determined to pay them a visit, and learn, if possible, the fate of her lover. She had left her property in the care of George's father. She had been here three months, occupied — hitherto in vain — with inquiries after him.

The quick eye of Miss Tracy had detected him, or he might have crossed the mountains and returned to Europe, there to find that he had passed her very door at the antipodes.

George now learned another fact, that Miss Tracy was engaged to a neighbouring gentleman, Captain Maitland, who lived about ten miles off, and that Ellen was on a visit to his mother, who lived with him, at the time of George's arrival. Miss Tracy had sent off post-haste a message with the joyful news, and here she was.

There needs no attempt to paint the happiness that now reigned at Mount Tracy. Every one was as blest as human beings can be. There remained no jarring chord in the spiritual harmony of the youthful lovers. Miss Tracy was supremely happy in having thus achieved the happiness of her friends, and Mr. Tracy, whose mild and benevolent heart rejoiced in all human good, was pre-eminently happy in this singular and fortunate reunion.

The next day an expedition was made to Captain Maitland's, with whom George Widdrington soon established a warm friendship. His simple, yet gentlemanly and highly intelligent mind and character, were such as won universally all who were of an elevated or manly grade. His cha-

racter differed much from that of poor Adam Swinburne, and could never take the same sacred place in his heart, but was one for which he soon felt a brotherly affection. The two young men hunted together in the woods and mountains, where the kangaroo and emu still remained plentifully, and where the nightly howlings of the wild dogs told them that they could never want beasts for the chase.

So greatly were both George and Ellen Mowbray delighted with the country, and with the society of their affectionate relatives, that they determined to settle there at least for some years. This resolve was received by their friends with exultation. With such a society they could never be lonely; and the noble features of that mountainous district, with its resources for the chase, and the reconnoitring of its great herds of cattle which ranged the hills and hilly glades, its free, uncircumscribed rides, and an ample supply of books and music from England, gave a grand charm to their existence.

The following spring, George and Ellen, and Captain Maitland and Miss Tracy, were married on the same day, by a neighbouring clergyman. The Captain took his wife to his own station, and George and Ellen remained with the kind and fatherly Mr. Tracy. Since then, George's father and mother have

gone over, and settled near them. Andrew, the other son, sticks to the old dwelling of Windy Haugh. The house of the Mowbrays is let.

Old Mr. Widdrington finds endless subjects of wonder in everything around him: the immense estates over which the flocks and herds wander; the very little land put under the plough; the strange jumping creatures, the kangaroos, and the long-legged runners, the emus, vastly amaze him; and not less that the hares jump like the kangaroos, and the rabbits have got up into the trees. The natives, too, excite his wrath and contempt: poor, feckless things, rambling about worse than gipsies, and downright arrant beggars, where there is such a scarcity of labour. He believes they have grown black by never washing themselves, and rubbing grease over their bodies to keep off the flies, which, he thinks, catch the soot of their fires, that they sit over for days together.

In one of George's journeys down to Melbourne, he came across Tom Boyd, tending his flock on a very solitary station, and as he had read all his books, and was just thinking of going home, he has persuaded him to exchange sheep for cattle, and Tom has done it, and gone up to Mount Tracy, lured by the promise of more books, and the opportunity of talking with old Mr. and Mrs. Widdrington, real Coquet

Dale people, and who know all about Simonside Moor, Otterburne, and the Border.

We think it would be difficult to find a more congenial knot of people than is now settled about Mount Tracy. Sometimes, indeed, the Widdringtons and Tom Boyd talk themselves into such fits of enthusiasm, about Border raids, the Douglas, the Percy, and all the tales of the moss-troopers that lay about Liddesdale and Tynedale, with wraiths and haunted castles, that they think there's no place like Northumberland, and that some day they will go there again; but in our opinion it will not be to-morrow, nor the next day, no, nor the day after.

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After Charles's return from his tour with Mr. Farbrother, he accepted a very different offer, that of accompanying Randall into New South Wales, to hunt up what is called a mob of horses for the Melbourne market, a most arduous, but a most profitable business. They had to gather these from distant stations; help to collect them from the wild forest; and then bring them down, keeping these wild creatures together in the open hills and pastures, swimming them, and swimming with them across rivers, and watching them by night. It was a pursuit which required desperate riding, violent exercise,

perpetual vigilance, and boundless patience. These noble animals, accustomed all their lives to run free in the boundless woods, were wild as the winds; and when their proposing captors approached, made off with snorting nostrils and flying tails and manes in the magnificent grandeur and grace of free nature. The hunters, for such they might be called, had to follow, to tire down, to outstrip, to turn and turn them with thundering whips, and fierce shouts, and headlong galloping, till they had sufficiently quailed them, and impressed them with the ascendancy of the spirit of man, to cause them to move on before them in a throng or mob, without any tie or coercion but the conscious restraint of a power exceeding their own, till, with many adventures, many partial rebellions, many fleet gallops for escape, they landed them in Melbourne, cooped them in yards, and by whip and shout, and alternate soothing tones, finally reduced them to the halter and the trace, compelling them to resign their beautiful citizenship of the woods, and become the slaves and drudges of man's cupidity and dominance.

When Charles once more reached home, another year had rolled round, and Tallangetta stood bright and calm on the scene, as if it would stand there for ever. The chase, and the intercourse of visitants,

which were now more or less frequent at Tallangetta, were the only things which varied existence; and many a time did a deep impatience of some great *denouement* urge the heart of Charles in his bosom.

Nothing so broke up the monotonous calm of this period, as the warm spirit of controversy, which, on many points, had sprung up in the colony, and, sending their animus into every quarter of it, were often strenuously discussed at the dinner-table and in the barrack-room at Tallangetta. We should not give the reader a thorough view of the Squatter's Home at this juncture, if we did not relate something of what took place there. First and foremost amid all questions stood the Waste Land question, and as it affected more than all the interests of the squatters, and the counter-interests of the public, so was it discussed with proportionate energy, noise, and often violence, by persons of the different parties. Then there was the question of want of a proper supply of religious teachers for the bush and the diggings, and with this was mixed up wonderful stories of the wonderful growth of sudden riches amongst the trading and speculating classes of Melbourne. We cannot go argumentatively into these questions; we leave that to the traveller and the statistician; but we think we can give their leading features and

bearings in some narratives which were related at the table, around the nicotian fumes of the barrack-room.

“Here’s a new song for you, Charles,” said Georgina one day. “And, by the bye, I wonder where that Spenser Grayson has picked up all his information, his anecdotes, his witticisms, and, above all, his songs. Why, he is a first-rate poet, do you know, and he sings his own songs. He has most admirable songs of this colony, equal to the Squatter’s Song, which you heard at Bendigo, or the Bushranger’s Song, that you heard too. His Commissioner’s Song, oh! it is a most rare burlesque; but now listen to my song, which, as a digger, you ought to sing.” And Georgina carolled out in a mock serious sort of style, which greatly amused Charles,

#### JEPHTHA’S DAUGHTER.

Old Jephtha Slaughter sits amid  
 His mates, the diggers three,  
 And he lifts his can, just like a man  
 That fain would merry be.

He is a grim old cove, is Jephtha,  
 And all his mates are so;  
 And deeds they’ve done, ay, every one,  
 Should have hanged them long ago.



But Dinah Slaughter sits alone  
 Under the Banksia tree,  
 And all alone she makes her moan,—  
 “Not a man will marry me.

“No, not a man will marry me,  
 Though I'm pretty and girls are few;  
 For I'm come of a stock that gives a shock  
 And a frightnin to Jemmy Drew.”

Oh! Jemmy Drew was close behind,  
 And in his arms he caught her;  
 Says “that's not true, for here's Jemmy Drew,  
 And he'll marry Jeptha's daughter.”

“Bravo!” cried Charles. “I must have that. I know plenty of old Jepthas.”

But who was this colonial poet, this Spenser Grayson, this man of wit and story? He was no fictitious character. The annals of the colony and the pages of the *Melbourne Argus* can give full information of him under another name, and furnish the curious reader with curious specimens of his talents, with which he favoured that journal, or our friends at Tallangetta.

This Spenser Grayson, or Dr. Spenser Grayson, was a gentleman who had turned up since Charles went away. He professed to be a naturalist, and had taken up his quarters at a hut on the Quarriers' run,

near the Goulbourn, where the shepherd's wife cooked for him, and from whence he made his rides, appearing and disappearing at irregular intervals, and bringing home with him a quantity of plants and stones, which he examined by a book, and laid up in an old box. He was a wonderful favourite at all the stations round, and was a continual guest at Tallangetta, where every member of the family was charmed with him. At table he was the life of the party. His anecdotes of life in London, where he had lived; his exquisite mimicries of celebrated characters, and droll stories of them, convulsed all who saw and heard them with laughter. He had been in India, in the Mauritius, and South America; and his information appeared immense. He was a tall, well-made man, of at most five-and-thirty. His hair was black as a raven's. His beard, which he wore short and crisp, gave to his olive complexion and handsome oval features a somewhat foreign appearance; yet his style, tone, and language were essentially English. He wore a dark suit, dark grey pantaloons, and black boots, cut round and plain at the top, a little below the knee. His hat was a black felt, with a broad brim, a broad band, and flat crown. His hands were soft and delicate, and adorned with jewelled rings of great value.

Altogether he was a most striking man in person and style. Charles had soon an opportunity of making his acquaintance, and was as much fascinated by him as the rest.

It was not many days, indeed, after Georgina's singing of Jephtha's Daughter that Grayson sate in the barrack-room, with his meerschaum in his mouth, gravely listening to a fierce debate on the Squatter's Right question, betwixt Messrs. Quarrier of the Goulbourn, and Parson Docker of the Ovens on the one part, and Dr. Owen and Mr. George Thompson on the other, the latter of whom were on their way to the Ovens from Castlemaine to attend a monster meeting on the subject. When every one had argued himself into a fever, Grayson said, "Come, I'll give you all the practical truths of the subject in a real narrative that has come to my knowledge. We will call it the Old Squatter and the New."

## CHAP. XVI.

## THE OLD SQUATTER.

IN the year eighteen hundred and thirty-five wonderful rumours spread themselves over the pleasant little island of Tasmania of new regions on the other side of Bass's Straits. At little more than a hundred and fifty miles' distance, it was said, there spread beautiful pastures, green and fertile and beautiful woodlands, where the forest trees were so lightly and airily scattered, that the turf grew strong, and fresh, and sweet beneath them, as on the openest plains, or the fairest downs. These park-like expanses, stretching themselves for hundreds of miles in all directions, were here washed by the ocean, and here stretched at the feet of far-off blue-glancing mountains. Rivers and lively brooks wound invitingly through them, and occasional lakes gave their refreshing charm to plains of most luxurious fertility.

Certain adventurous men who had assumed the profession of whalers, it was said, had for some time haunted these elysian shores ; now skirting their lofty

and more thickly-forested portions, and now anchoring in secluded creeks and bays, where they varied their ocean life by hunting the kangaroo and emu through the lovely pastures and the pleasant evergreen woods. So charming had they found this life, that they had resolved to enjoy it continually, and had therefore built huts on the shores of a fine bay, and had stealthily carried over in their whale-boats flocks and cattle, and all that was necessary for a jocund and plentiful Robinson Crusoe life.

But such fairy lands, wherever they lie, are too alluring to remain long *terre incognitæ*. King Arthur is supposed to have lain hidden some thousand years or more in the isle of Avalon, waiting for the day when it shall be necessary to turn out and save his country, and as said country appears yet very able to save itself, he may, with our consent and that of posterity, probably stay there another thousand. But that is the only instance in which a man can keep such a desirable country to himself. Little Tasmania, having been only inhabited by the white man about thirty years, was already become glutted with his flocks and herds. Fertile as were the valleys of Van Diemen's Land, a great portion of the island was occupied by wild, rugged mountains, and still more by dense and often barren forests. In these

thirty years of European possession the population had reached the sum of forty thousand, of whom no less than seventeen thousand were England's expatriated criminals. The little more than twenty thousand free men already found themselves masters of eight hundred thousand sheep, which were palpably becoming too many for the capabilities of the pasturage, especially in summer, when the grass was scorched, and, as it were, dead.

The news of the new regions of fertility and boundlessness, "on the other side," as the phrase became and remains, were, therefore, listened to with avidity. Not only did individuals hasten to get over, but companies were formed, to purchase vessels, and large tracts of country from the natives, when they had reached the promised land. First and foremost among these adventurers were John Pascoe Fawcner and his associates, who, procuring a ship from Sydney, steered across with their cattle and people from the heads of the Tamar in Van Diemen's Land, to the present bay and site of Port Phillip.

But the spirit of enterprise was awake, thousands were on fire to expand themselves over limitless regions of fertility; the cry of the whole island was "to-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new;" and others had contrived to outstrip the Fawcner party.

As their vessel, bearing, as they supposed, the nucleus of a new colony, made its way up the spacious bay of Port Phillip, a man descended from an eminence, now called Indented Head, and warned away those who had hoped to be the first patriarchs of the soil. This was one John Batman, who, with a company of fifteen others, including a Mr. Gellibrand—an eminent lawyer of Van Diemen's Land, destined to perish by the tomahawks of the natives, and give his name to several hills in the new country—had not only outstripped Fawkner, but had purchased a tract of six hundred thousand acres of the natives.

Thus he came down on the people of the little ship *Enterprise*, not only as a prior arrival, but as a proprietor of the ground. But John Fawkner, who was destined to cut a much greater figure in the new country than Batman of the Indented Head, sailed coolly up the bay, and planted his standard on a rising ground at its head, and near the mouth of a pleasant river. Here, disregarding the aboriginal claims of Batman, he built the first hut, opened the first inn, ploughed up the first ground, issued the first newspaper—a manuscript one—and became the founder, if not of the colony, as he yet styles himself, the undoubted founder of Melbourne. The Messrs. Henty, a year or more before, had established

themselves as the first settlers at Portland Bay, Batman had established himself at Indented Head, but neither of these were to become the capital of the new El Dorado: Melbourne was to be its Rome, and John Fawkner its Romulus.

Of the strifes and rivalries of the new pastoral invaders,—how John Batman came indignantly and sate himself down face to face with the equally indignant but imperturbable Fawkner, on that pleasant round hill still called Batman's Hill; how the British government, claiming to have a much better title to the land than the natives, the all-prevailing one of

“He shall take who has the power,  
And he shall keep who can,”

disallowed Batman's purchase from the wild tribes; how Batman dwindled and Fawkner grew, till he became, and remains to this day, a conspicuous member of the legislative council, and has seen his settlement expand in twenty years from a knot of six individuals to a city of ninety thousand inhabitants;—all these wonders are to be found written at length in the chronicles of Victoria.

Amongst the tribes of adventurers who followed in the wake of Fawkner and Batman as circumstances permitted, we shall select one group, and follow it as



descriptive of the fortunes of the many. The group consisted of three men; a tall, active young fellow of not more than thirty years of age, accompanied by two sturdy, rough-looking louts of considerably maturer years. Tom Scott, the leader of the party, had the air of a clever young farmer. He was full six feet in height, of a fair, fresh-coloured complexion, with brown hair, and a brown, somewhat thin beard, kept short, but unshaven. His face was inclined to the oval, his nose good and straight, his eye clear and intelligent, his frame muscular, but remarkably light and active. He was quick in his movements, decisive in his manner, and seemed to possess the most absolute influence over the two heavy but resolute-looking fellows who accompanied him. Tom Scott was mounted on a leanish, wiry black mare, and wore one of those stout cabbage-tree hats resembling straw, which were already exported from Sydney, a shooting-coat of coarse grey cloth, and stout leather gaiters, all somewhat dashed by exposure to weather and the woods. Before him, rolled up tight, he carried a blanket to wrap himself at night, and his two companions bore on their backs a similar roll, with sundry tins, axes, and knives hanging from their belts. Every man carried his gun, that of Tom Scott

being slung on his back, while a brace of large pistols showed themselves at his side.

These men drove before them what would there be called a little flock of six hundred sheep. They had made the whole cargo of one ship, some eight or ten of which vessels were bringing from thirty to forty thousand a year. Our friend Tom Scott had therefore no expectation of finding a free pasture near the coast. He had, indeed, made an exploratory trip beforehand; and following the great stream of pastoral immigration which flowed westward, had found a rich, fine country, but already occupied by numbers of people, who were wrangling, and even fighting about encroachments on each other's claims and boundaries. Tom Scott, therefore, resolved to steer northward, in which direction boundless wilds seemed to invite him. But, in truth, his sheep were in no hurry; probably they had not found much store of provender on ship-board, for both they and Tom's mare began voraciously to devour the grass of the green slopes where now run the busy streets of Bourke, Swanston, Elizabeth, and Collins, displaying their gay shops, townhall, banks, newspaper-offices, and churches, raised on ground as costly as if it were of solid gold.

But all then was open forest, fresh and pleasant.

It was the vernal month of September. The ground was scattered with flowers, the grass was luxuriant as in the meads of England. The dusky gum-trees were but sparsely scattered over hill and dale, giving to English eyes the aspect of a park ; and along the clear river side grew masses of acacias, heavy with the weight of vegetable gold, which spread their fragrance over the whole scene. Our Arcadian trio, seeing their flocks were well employed in the green glades of the forest, threw themselves down under a venerable red gum-tree, drew forth provisions from their swags, and one of the bushy-bearded comrades being dispatched to Fawkner's public, a little bark hut on the opposite hill, for brandy, and the other down to the river for water, they were soon lolling in great comfort on the sward, taking a leisurely survey of the scenes around them, and considerably approving of this first specimen of the new country. This scene consisted of the cheerful open forest slopes, trending downwards towards the river, with wooded plains and low hills beyond ; and amongst the trees around them the white gleam of scattered tents. Here and there were open spaces where the trees had been felled, and huts of bark or slab, thatched with reed, or long coarse grass from the river-banks, were erected, with some little enclosure

for a garden, fenced in by heaps of the gum-tree boughs with all their dried leaves upon them. A few fowls, goats, and a stray cow or two — these were the sum total of the Melbourne of that day.

So soon as the party found that the flock was willing to trudge forward a little, they slowly ascended the slopes, and as evening drew on, took up their station for the night on the crown of the hill, which displayed to them beyond a wide stretch of unknown country, looking one unbroken mass of forest, with different mountain ranges showing themselves over it. As near as we can guess, they camped their flock for the night on the very spot where another shepherd now watches his — namely, the Bishop of Melbourne, whose palace of solid native trap-stone marks unintentionally the first pastoral resting-place of Tom Scott and his sheep.

Here they saw sights which their successor, the chief shepherd of the Melbourne of to-day, is too late for. Numbers of the natives were scattered about over the hill and on the plains below, where the river wound along between its deep banks, and overhung with lofty trees. Each family was squatted down under a few gum-tree boughs, which reached their highest idea of domestic architecture, all except the unmarried young men, who were located in

groups at bougheries of their own. Fires were burning in the centre of these sable family groups, at which they were roasting pieces of the flesh of the kangaroo or the opossum, and of fish from the river; and they seemed to have a particular penchant for meat done rare. Miserable groups they looked, some with worn and tattered mantles of opossum-skin, some clothed only in the bare skins provided by nature. Lots of little tun-bellied children, innocent of all wrappings, tumbled about amongst a tribe of hungry, fire-singed dogs, and women whom the graces never deigned to recognise, cowered behind their lords, and caught, ever and anon, some half raw and inferior morsel flung to them over their spouses' shoulders.

As the night approached, throngs of the natives, men, women, children, and dogs, were all seen moving to one spot, now the quarters of a different race — the mounted police. No sooner fell the darkness, than out blazed a number of huge fires round this space, made of the boughs and trunks of trees. Round one of these, a number of women took their places, squatting on the ground. Then came numbers of naked men, their swarthy bodies hideously painted with red, and striped in various barbarian figures and lines of white with pipe-clay. Every-

one carried in each hand a small branch of the flowering wattle, and anon they ranged themselves in a wide circle, all, with elevated and outstretched arms, crossing between man and man their wattle-twigs. At once the women burst forth with a wild kind of song, beating time simultaneously with the right arm, and away went the dance of the men in obedience to the chant and to the directing motions of a native band-master, who stood on the trunk of a huge fallen tree at hand. Wildly whirled the demon-looking crew—now in circles, now in crescents, now in squares, and strangely intersecting lines. Still wilder grew the cries and songs of the women—quicker, quicker, quicker; shriller, louder rang their notes—faster, furiously, frantically waved their arms, and rapidly, rapidly, wildly, weirdly, madly danced and shrieked the men. Top!—all was still. Then slow and low and plaintive awoke once more the song of the women, and slow and mournfully moved the now long lines of dancers. There was something spectral, haunting, and unearthly in the scene. The movements were as silent and flowing as those of spirits; and the fluttering of the fire flames, and the wind in the trees, were the only sounds which mingled with the faint and mournful dirge of the women. But once more the scene changed. The

songs of the women became gradually louder and more agitated; the grim dancers accelerated their motions and threw fresh force into their bounds. Again the dance grew fast and furious, and the shrieks of men and women, the barking of dogs, the flashing of fires on blood-red bodies, wild glaring eyes, and grinning teeth, the whirl and change of the madly-leaping and bacchanal route, produced a scene of appalling wonder that can only be expressed in the words, savage life.

A day earlier, and our adventurers would have been arrested in their progress by having to witness a native battle, where boomerangs and spears flew in marvellous confusion, and heavy waddies thumped on bark shields; and where each contending army might have reported, in the true Gortschakoff style—the enemy did us no harm whatever. This was the feast of reconciliation.

These did not seem very auspicious circumstances under which to make a progress up a wild country; but they were, in truth, the very best. The natives were drawn to this one spot from many a score miles of wild woodland, and all the securer the little party drove on their little flock. But in the absence of natives, there were still many dangers and difficulties in the way. The wilds were untracked.

They made their way by noting every day the quarter in which the sun arose and set, and where it cast the shortest shadow at noon. Sometimes they found themselves obstructed by miles of bogs, and had to wander round them. Occasionally, at this early season of the spring, they were overtaken by several days of heavy, incessant rain, and, destitute of a hut to flee to, as in their abandoned home in Tasmania, they were drenched through and through. Fire they found it impossible to kindle, or keep in; everything, like themselves, being soaked with wet. Occasionally, they could find a hollow tree into which they could crowd, and where all day they stood steaming and shivering; but at night they were compelled to be on the alert, for troops of wild dogs came down upon their flock, and at the first furious bark of their own dogs, giving the alarm, they must out, though it poured torrents, and chase away the sneaking, wolfish beasts, or their flock would speedily be dispersed through the bush, and scores of them killed.

In the course of a fortnight, they had made considerable progress; but they had almost perished with cold and wet during the rainy weather; and inured as they had been to years of forest life and labours in Van Diemen's Land, they were now attacked with rheumatic pains, and were hoarse with



colds, from living day and night in their wet clothes. What flour and tea they had they carried with them; there were here no shops, or road-side inns to resort to; and though Tom Scott had turned his mare into a pack-horse, and carried along with them their stores in panniers covered with a bullock's hide, they were compelled to be extremely sparing of their resources, for they did not know when they should get more. Their only chance of supply was from stations, and stations yet were few and far between, and only newly settled. The inhabitants, therefore, were themselves mostly at their wits' end, and when they had the necessary commodities were not willing to part with them. Their only chance of maintaining subsistence was to arrive at a suitable location for sheep, that was still unappropriated, and then to build their hut, and send down to Melbourne for fresh stores.

Meantime, they spared their flour as much as possible, by killing game, but ammunition too was precious, and they rarely expended it except on the amply remunerating mass of a kangaroo. Parrots and bronze-winged pigeons flew in flocks around them, but they could not afford to waste powder upon them, and the opossum, dragged from his hole

in the hollow tree, furnished them and their dogs with meat, when better failed.

Thus they wandered on, looking daily for the desired spot, where they should build their hut, and call the place their home. And many such they saw. Here pleasant undulating lands, thinly scattered with trees, and clothed with richest turf, offered amplest pasture for their flock. Here valleys stretching between forest hills, and watered by clearest streams, presented all the elements of a pastoral home. Here richest meadows, lying at the feet of the mountains, suggested dreams of roaming herds, and the uplands on the spurs of the hills for their flocks. Vast plains, capable of grazing boundless flocks, and green conical hills, which gave immense prospect over them, invited them to stay. But it was nature alone which invited them; man bade them sternly move on. Other adventurers were already tracking these wilds; other flocks and herds were already seen streaming up through the woods, as it were, in inexhaustible trains. Men, eager, in hot haste, keenly fired by the spirit of acquisitiveness, as in the most crowded city, were running and riding onwards to seize and to possess the world that had so marvellously opened upon them, with its rich pastures and green-swarded woods. Meum and Tuum were abroad with all their furious,

jostling, hostile-hearted tribe, and sleepless eyes were restlessly, fiercely glancing before, and behind, and sideways, to descry a goodly heritage, and strong, clutching, armed hands were quivering to clutch, and pounce upon, and hold. To clutch, and hold, and defend. Wherever our travellers stopped to camp for noon, or for night, some strange wild object came riding from the forest, and cried "This is mine! move on!"

When they thought themselves all alone in the woods; far, and immensely far from any human being, the first blaze of their evening fire was the signal for some one to start forth, from what appeared the desolate and manless woods, and cry, "What are you doing here?"

How far these men of the woods, these self-constituted lords of the wilderness, extended their claims; how many scores of square miles they grasped in their giant embrace; what boundaries of seas, rivers, lakes, or mountains they had set themselves, our travellers did not know, and it was vain to ask, for whether they turned right or left, these large-souled men still cried, "This is ours!" They could not see the extent of their assumed domains, but they could see the men themselves, and that was enough. They were of a

countenance and a kind not only to take but to defend *vi et armis*. They rode well foreseen with rifle and pistols, as well for the resistance of their countrymen as of the blacks. They were from the Tasmanian Isle many of them, where they had been accustomed to shoot down, indiscriminately, kangaroo, wolf, native, and marauding felon. Years of conflict and danger, of onslaughts from banded convicts, and onslaughts on natives, when a Michael Howe led the one, and a Musquito the other. Days of rough riding and nights of watching, years of climbing rugged mountains and threading dense forests, far unlike these which they now inhabited, in search of new fields or of old enemies, with their homes suddenly burning about their ears at midnight, and their families rushing forth from the flames, and anon carrying the conflagration of vengeance into the retreats of their assailants—these were the men that they often found themselves front to front with; these were the men that they must fight with for the land if they had it.

Of the seventeen thousand criminals, burglars, highwaymen, assassins, *et hoc genus omne*, who flourished on the island they had left, many had found this a brave opportunity to escape, and try a new life of adventure in these boundless forests. And of others,

who came with the name of freemen, who could trace all the secrets of their origin and career?

Enough, the Tasmanian knew his fellow; he was familiar with the marks and signs of the various descriptions of his brother islanders; Cain's mark is broad and indestructible; the various shades of character are shades, the various lines of life are lines, and the practised eye reads them off as readily, as rapidly, as infallibly as you could read the title of a book in boldest type. Tom Scott and his faithful followers, Ben Brock and Joe Kitson, still moved on.

Once or twice they thought their opponents' pretensions so unreasonable that they were inclined to dispute them; and, looking at the comparative apparent strength of the two parties, they thought they could make good their ground. Scott was a bold fellow, a first-rate rider, a dead-shot, active, vigorous, undaunted, and indefatigable. He wanted no amount of spirit when he saw cause to exert it, and his stalwart associates were the strong and unflinching instruments of his will. Strong as oxen, slow, but ponderously powerful, they were like the very trees around them in solid resistance, and where their blows fell men fell under them. But in these cases where they stood somewhat inclined for battle, a few days brought up allies on the other side. Once

settled on the soil, there appeared to spring up in the squatters a principle of mutual defence, and men ready for the fight seemed to start by magic out of the ground and come forward to the rescue. There were no justices of the peace, no Crown Land Commissioners here to settle disputed claims, and, as Scott and Co. had come out to seek a fresh chance of life and not of death, they prudently went on.

They went on through scenes of strange contrast. Over those plains, under the interminable trees, amid those monotonous wastes, where one score of miles of unbroken country looked exactly like that before, and that behind it, in those deep valleys at the foot of far-stretching and wooded mountains, by those deep and solemnly journeying rivers, by those lesser streams enveloped in the dense shade of the tea-tree and the acacia, amid the barren, grey, and desolate region of granite, or on the green and airy down where only the graceful tresses of the shiock sighed in the wind, Nature seemed to have established the peace and the brooding solitude of ages. But that reign of profound calm—varied, but not disturbed, by the many voices of birds, the whirr of the cicada, and the audible breathings of the wind—was now over; and men, greedy, grasping, insatiate, and pugnacious, were encountered in loud and angry altercation.

Fierce defiance, resolute intrusion, calls for division, denunciations of unreasonableness, and taunts, and scoffs, and jeers, and blows, and vows of vengeance,—these were the scenes and sounds that stunned the ancient heart of the wilderness. The fairest place excited the foulest contention. Men had not to seek out and sit down upon their claims: they had to fight out their possession of them, and maintain it by right of conquest.

At length Tom Scott and his companions reached a spot where Nature smiled on them, and no man was present to frown. It was a region of low hills, where the trees grew pleasantly apart. The turf was fresh and clear of underwood, or, in the colonial phraseology, scrub. Two or three little runnels followed the course of the valleys, and promised water. Here they set to work, and built a small hut of stringy bark, and made a pen of boughs for their flocks. They had not lost more than a hundred sheep in their advance up the country, in the intricacies of the scrubby forest, by the wild dogs, and by the natives or low squatters who had managed to drive stragglers to their own folds. That was no great matter: they had five hundred sheep to begin the world with in a clean, open country, and they were full of hope. Their hut was of the humblest description. The

earth was its floor, and its only furniture were their beds raised on a framework of boughs on three sides of it, and consisting of a mass of leafy twigs, on which they lay wrapped in their blankets. The luxury of changing their clothes they never knew. Their great refreshment was washing in the little stream below, and there also washing their extra shirt. Their fire was made, in front of this rude abode, against the bole of a huge tree that had long lost its head in some tempest. Their cooking was of the simplest. They had long ceased to possess flour or sugar; their daily food consisted of the flesh of opossums broiled on the embers, without bread, and thankful they were still to retain a little salt and a little tea. Their ammunition, with all their economy, was exhausted, except a few charges which they kept in case of attack.

But the heart of the adventurer is not made to sink at small difficulties; hope in a brilliant future still bears him on; and Tom Scott was adventurously sanguine. In every struggle he was patient, in every annoyance he was buoyant, and cheered on his fellows; in the worst provocations he remained calm, though the colour often flushed into his face, and his hands longed to inflict chastisement on vulgar insolence and selfishness. But he looked onward, and resolved to



achieve a position of his own without contention. And here he seemed to have it. Neighbours, as yet, he could find none. Dreary and sandy plains on one hand seemed to extend for many leagues, low and swampy grounds on the other, which some day might become a rich summer run for cattle.

But now famine impelled, and he and Kitson must away to the embryo Melbourne for stores. Ben Brock must be left in charge of the flock, and, strong and resolute as he was, it was an anxious matter. While they were absent, he alone must bear the brunt of all visits from natives, wild dogs, or unprincipled adventurers. There was, however, no alternative, and the only thing was to make as expeditious a journey as possible. So black Peg, the mare, was mounted, and ridden alternately by the travellers, and they made all speed through the woods. They had nothing to carry: their provision for the way was a few handfuls of tea and their tin cans, and an opossum, dragged from its hole during the day's journey, and broiled on their evening fire. Before this fire, wrapped in their blankets, they slept; and one day was like another, till they reached the town. Tom Scott purchased as much flour, tea, and sugar as Peg could well carry, and they made their way back again with all speed. But it was now late in

November; the heat was become intense, and the country already bore traces of its withering effect. The grass was brown and crisp, the streams and pools had wonderfully shrunk, and it required a good long rest at noon to enable both men and horse to continue their journey. But by degrees they neared their station, and saw with increasing anxiety the change that a fortnight only had made. The plains over which they passed were scorched to a pale brown; the water had wonderfully vanished. Where there had been pools, there were dry hollows; where there had been streams, there were grey ravines. With difficulty they gained their own location, and stood riveted in consternation. The whole was one black waste; fire had passed over it, and mowed the grass cleaner than any human scythe. The fallen boughs were reduced to white ashes; the shrubs and young trees were burnt black, or singed into the ruddy hues of autumn.

After a moment's paralysis of terror, Tom Scott sprang forward, leaving his companion to follow with the horse. He was soon on the hill where their hut had stood. There it lay, a heap of ashes; the ashes of the sheep-fold fence marked a melancholy circle on the ground; and all around was a burnt waste. Where Ben and the flock had escaped to, if they had

escaped at all, was the question. Scott snatched the panniers from the mare as Kitson came up confounded with wonder; leapt upon her back, and commenced galloping in a wide circle. In this circle he came upon the singed carcass of a sheep, on another, and another. There was his clue; and still following it, he soon found himself in the swampy hollows—swampy which had been, but which were now baked as hard as a stone floor, and covered only with thin withered grass and shrubs. It was not, however, till towards night that he caught sight of Brock, with the miserable remains of the flock, in a deep hollow where there was yet some grass, and one small pool of muddy water.

Ben's tale was soon told. The heat had speedily dried up the little streams, burnt up the pastures, and compelled him to seek food for his flock in the swamps. These rapidly dried up; and to add to his anxiety, not being able to quit the neighbourhood till their return, every night he had been visited by troops of wild dogs, which, spite of his dogs and his own exertions, overleaped the fence of the pen, and committed havoc amongst the sheep. A week's watching had quite worn him out, when he found himself also attacked with ague, from lying with his sheep by day in the vapours of the drying swamps; and while

prostrated by this despot of a complaint, he suddenly saw the hills on fire, amid the screeches and halloos of a number of natives. The fire, kindled with practical regard to the wind, swept the whole district with a flying roar, and the blacks then came down upon him with showers of spears and horrible cries. Ben gave himself up for lost, but determined to sell his life dear. There were six of the natives; and, sheltering himself behind a tree, he coolly watched his opportunity, and shot down two of them. Before he could charge a third time, they rushed in upon him, flinging showers of stones as they advanced, and in another moment he fell senseless, struck on the head by a waddie.

How he still remained alive, he knew not; but on recovering consciousness, he found his gun still lying beside him, the natives gone, and the remains of his flock scattered in the woods. With infinite pains, still weighed down by the intermittent fever, consumed with thirst, his head dizzy and inflamed with the effects of the blow, he had hunted up the fragment of the flock—now only a hundred and eighty—the dogs and the natives having destroyed or driven the rest beyond recovery. Ben himself presented a woful spectacle; his head bound in an old handkerchief, his flesh wasted, his lips parched and cracked,

and the whole man reduced to a something betwixt a spectre and a scarecrow.

This was a miserable result of the expedition to Australia Felix. And here we may say that Tom Scott, born to no heritage but his hands, a brave heart, and a clear head, had raised his little flock by years of care, constant watching, and self-sacrifice. Every individual sheep was to him as a child, and he sate down at this blow, and, resting his head on his knees, gave himself up for a few minutes to despair. But in Van Diemen's Land he had left a fair and strong-hearted wife and two infant children, and at the thought of them he sprung up, wiped his hand across his eyes, as though he would whisk away his troubles, and cried: "This is of no use, my lads. Let us on, and try again."

And here, too, we may as well let the reader into another secret. The two followers of Scott were originally two convicts, two ticket-of-leave men. He had given them employment, discovered good in them, persuaded them to make a fresh effort for a good name and honest fortune, and had found them ready to follow him to the world's end. If he succeeded, they were to reap the benefit of it.

The three sad, but not utterly daunted men, went on once more. This time they selected a place where

there was more show of permanent water, and all seemed to go on well. Once more they built their hut, and employed themselves in attending to the autumnal increase of their flock ; for in that country the flocks often produce lambs in autumn, and another portion in spring. But winter came, and with its rains they found their station laid almost wholly under water. Again they were compelled to go on in search, and at length came upon a tolerably fair stream, now called the Loddon. Here were wood, and rich valley, and upland ; a change and a resource for all seasons. Here Tom Scott built himself a log hut ; found himself in as fine a country — beautiful with its wooded hills, its broad expanse of rich meadow lands, its grassy uplands, and unfailing river — as the colony could show. Here, if ever, he must prosper. But his flock was terrifically reduced, his means of purchasing more were small, and nothing but a life of incessant care, activity, economy, and perseverance could enable him to avail himself of the splendid lands on which he had sate down. For ten years our squatter maintained himself there ; and we may now, in a few sentences, relate the upshot of his fortunes.

Miserable were the first few years of our settlers. The lands on which they had settled were splendid, and therefore they were soon beset by rivals, en-

deavouring to get each a good large slice of the run. One sate down here and another there, and Tom Scott saw himself likely very soon to have to pasture his little flock on something less than nothing. He set about, therefore, lustily to drive off the invaders, who drove his sheep as constantly back again. Then came hard words, blows, threats, and animosities. Luckily, this state of things all over the colony compelled the establishment of Crown Land Commissioners and a mounted police, to protect the squatter both from black and white neighbours; and Tom found himself legally the master of an ample run. But his flock was miserably small, and he and his fellows must live. And they did live, but such a life as none but men in the utmost extremities, and with nerves and resolutions of iron, could endure. All their hope was in the increase of their flock; money they had none to purchase more; and sheep then were excessively dear, for the demand to supply a whole new country was immense. To spare the flock, they lived chiefly on tea and damper, a heavy unleavened cake, and never indulged themselves in the taste of meat except when the wild dogs had destroyed and left some of their sheep on the ground.

These wild dogs were a terrible and incessant nuisance. For ages unmolested by the natives, they

had increased into myriads, and nightly came down on the folds in crowds. As yet the grand blessing of the squatters, strychnine, which has now reduced the destructive troops of these animals to an insignificant number, was unknown; and daily and nightly it was a constant stretch of watching and anxiety to preserve his little remnant of a flock from their jaws. Sun and rain, the cold — intensely cold — nights of that otherwise fine climate, had to be constantly endured by Scott and his companions, and told in woful cramps and rheumatisms on their frames.

Still the flocks grew and multiplied wonderfully, almost doubling themselves every year; and in four years the flock had actually augmented itself into the number of two thousand. Tom had fetched over his wife and children, having previously built them a hut, and, encouraged by his wife's cheerful spirit and unfailing sympathy, Tom looked forward to some day when sheep should be worth something, and repay all his cares. But sheep multiplied, and the population did not multiply in proportion. Wool was low, and there was no demand for mutton. Tom had to pay his hard money, that is, so much per head for his sheep and cattle, to pay for stores from Melbourne, to purchase a dray and a bullock-team, and wool-bags. Yet his flocks still wonderfully increased.



People began, in 'thirty-nine and 'forty, to flock over to the colony, and a bright future seemed to dawn. It was a delusive one. Lord John Russell's order that no colonial land should be sold at less than one pound per acre arrived; immigration stopped short at once, as at the command of an evil genius; and the squatters gazed in consternation on their wonderfully multiplying flocks, which were thus absolutely reduced to no value at all. In eighteen hundred and forty-two came the crash of ruin on the land, and sheep were valued at a shilling a head.

Meantime, Tom Scott had had to pay heavily for labour in splitting slabs and shingles for his woolshed, for the fences of his paddocks, for plough, harrow, hurdles, and watch-boxes; for stores, stockyard-fences, milking-bail, calf-pen, garden-fencing, and planting, and heaven knows what besides; for all which a huge balance had run up against him at his merchant's, in Melbourne, spite of his wool sent down, which seemed, indeed, swallowed up as nothing; while sixteen per cent. interest, which was charged on all the balance, and had been growing like a foul monster from year to year, stood there against him, in the books of Davy Macleod, as a most formidable something.

In eighteen hundred and forty-three, you would have said, had you looked on Tom Scott's station,

that he was a flourishing and a happy man. He had come thither with something less than two hundred sheep, and now they numbered eight thousand! Four shepherds regularly watched as many flocks, at four different huts, on the noble run, which included hills and woods, emerald meadows and beautiful uplands—an estate befitting a prince. But if you looked on Tom himself, the delusion vanished. That clean-built, clever-looking fellow, with that fair and good-souled countenance, had shrunk into an old man. Not seven, but seventy years, seemed to have settled on him. His face was withered, his head was bald, his body stooped; his bony and knotted fingers clasped a stout staff, which enabled him to drag along a pair of legs that stooped feebly at the knees; and feet that seemed too large for the man, and were shrouded in shoes slit and slashed, to give ease to their rheumatic deformity. That was the work of outward exposure, and the inward drag of a monstrous oppression. Care, and the fear that kills, had done their work, as well, or rather worse, than the elements. Tom Scott was actually perishing of past adversity and present abundance. His flocks had flourished and grown till they had positively annihilated their own value.

That year, douce Davy Macleod sent him word that the balance against him, on his books, was seven

hundred pounds. That his eight thousand sheep, at one shilling each, reached to the value of four hundred pounds; that the colony was ruined for ever, and that, therefore, his hut and few other traps must be thrown in, the station made over to the said unfortunate Davy; and he must endeavour to content himself with a bad bargain.

Behold poor Tom Scott suddenly reduced, after all his years of enormous exertions and incredible sufferings, from a squatter to a mere overseer! In the midst of a flock of eight thousand sheep, and on an estate of a beauty and extent worthy of the best prince that ever lived, a pauper and a cripple. Old in comparative youth; destitute in the midst of abundance; a ruined man in fortune, frame, and mind. Poor Ben Brock, one of his faithful companions, had long ago wandered away in that strange kind of insanity which attacks the lonely shepherd of the lonely Australian woods. The waddie of the native had destroyed the equilibrium of his brain. Kitson still lived, hale, faithful, and gloomy.

For three years poor Scott continued to manage the station of the *soi-disant* unfortunate David Macleod, who, absorbed in raking together, from the wrecks of his neighbours' fortunes, in the great commercial tempest that had passed over the colony,

good pennyworths, had never come up to look at his bargain on the Loddon. Besides, David had not ventured to journey so far up into the wilderness. He possessed all the prudence of his nation; and there had been awful rumours of the doings of the natives.

At first, as in all new countries, these natives had been friendly, and inclined to rejoice in the presence of the white fellow, in his mutton, his brandy, and his blankets; but deep and shameful outrages on the part of numbers of low and sensual wretches, who, in one character or other, spread themselves over the country, produced their invariable effects; and then came vengeance and retaliation. The flocks were attacked and massacred; the homes of the squatters were fired, and their families destroyed. The native knew nothing of the principle of property. To him, the white man's kangaroo (the sheep) was as much the free growth of the woods as his own. The white man preyed on his kangaroo, and he preyed on the white man's. The white man injured him, and he speared the white man. But the squatters soon mustered their steeds, collected in bands, and pursued the natives with the deadly onslaught of fire-arms. The natives repaid the murderers' visits in stealth, and perpetrated deeds of horror on

unprotected women and children, in the absence of the men. Thus, returning from one of these commandoes, Tom Scott, who could still mount black Peggy, and forget his pains in his indignation at the cruelties of the blacks, found one day his hut burnt to the ground, and the bodies of his wife and children buried in the ashes.

Like Logan, the American chief, no drop of his blood now flowed in the veins of any living thing, and giving a dreadful curse to the spot of such year-long disappointments, and of such a tragedy, he plunged into the woods, followed by the faithful Kitson, and disappeared. That was the fortune of the old squatter: the original pioneer of the wilderness, one of the forerunners of the present great Australian race of pastoral magnates, one of the founders of the present magnificent trade in wool. But Tom Scott was no solitary victim: he was only one of a thousand. The same causes swept off the majority of the same class of men. Some yielded sooner, and some later, to the irresistible momentum of adverse circumstances; but small was the remnant which escaped altogether. Theirs was the fate of the first heralds of human progress, and the whole victim race of discoverers, inventors, and projectors, the advanced guard and the forlorn hope of the army

of the world's destiny. They laboured, and others have entered into their labours, lay claim to their honours, and put forward marvellous demands on the strength of their misfortunes. Thy poverty, poor Tom Scot, has evoked the affluence of the sleek and prudent Davy Macleod. The racking of thy sinews, and the aching of thy bones, have smoothed his pillow; thy pains are his pleasures; thy battles have produced his peace; thy watchings his sleep; thy drenchings in the midnight forests his dryness of lodging. On every pang, and grief, and care of thine, he has built his present heaven; and the last blast of desolation that laid prostrate in the burning ashes all that the world held dear to thee, is the grand godsend to him, on which he boldly asks that the rewards of his country shall be added to his already unwieldy affluence.

We will look a little nearer at this wondrous son of fortune, this great lord of the antipodes, this man of many merits — the New Squatter.

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Whilst Grayson was relating the history of poor Tom Gordon, vehement was the desire of Messrs. Quarrier and Docker to break in and comment, and

correct, and annotate, but the Messrs. Thompson and Owen cried, "Hear! hear! order, order!" and Grayson gravely insisted on no interruptions till he had done. When he had concluded this portion of the history, he knocked out the ashes from his pipe, took a good draught of cold tea, and saying, "the rest to-morrow, my friends," walked composedly out, taking no note of the loud voices and comments of Quarrier, Docker, and Co., or the rejoinders of the orators of the diggings. Loud and strong was the discussion which followed, however, at which he gravely smiled to himself as he took another pipe under the veranda outside, and appeared to contemplate the grand constellations of Orion and the Southern Cross. Having finished his contemplations and his pipe, he retired to a distant room, and plunged into the arms of Morpheus out of those of Narcotine, still smiling at the storm he had raised, and which went on, roaring as loudly as ever till after midnight.

The next evening he took his accustomed seat in the barrack-room, amid the lowering or the expectant looks of the fiery debaters of the last night, and whilst he gently pulled the ear of a huge kangaroo hound which lay near him with one hand, and gently

jingled the stirrup of a saddle that hung on the wall with the other, he said, with the utmost *sang froid*, "Gentlemen, I now give you the rest of the veritable history of poor Tom Scott, and of his successor."



## CHAP. XVII.

## THE NEW SQUATTER.

IN the Gallowgate of Glasgow many years ago, a crowd one evening was collected round the entrance to a narrow wynd, at which stood a shabby sort of hired carriage, to which was harnessed a lean, bow-kneed, spavined jade of a horse. The crowd was composed of the very poorest and dirtiest portion of the very poorest and dirtiest of "the auld town" population. The occasion which had drawn this respectable assembly to that spot, at that hour of six o'clock, was no other than a wedding, the amiable actors in which public spectacle had to issue from that little smutty passage. What circumstances beyond the perpetual and universal interest which attaches to such an event, drew this crowd, and riveted its eyes in evident intensity on that murky outlet, it never was our felicity to learn, for there were certain influential characters on the outskirts of the throng who maintained a most effectual guard

against any curious intrusion by people in clean linen. These were a squad of lively urchins, who, with bandy-sticks, were amusing themselves in a sham game by striking up the Styx-black fluid of the open kennel against the members of the expectant mass, which was too deeply absorbed in watching for the advent of the happy couple, to notice the sable and odoriferous sprinkling, or too indifferent to regard it.

But not so indifferent was a rosy, full-bodied, and apparently choleric old gentleman, who, while carefully endeavouring to escape any share in this Stygian baptism, by taking a considerable circuit round the mob, received a flying and liberal salute on his cheek, his snow-white cravat, and his sleek and velvety broad-cloth. With a sudden clutch and flaming visage he had seized in the next moment a remarkably shabby lad by the collar, and while giving him sundry vigorous shakes and cuffs, exclaimed, "Ye daft, feckless, mislear't callant, ha'e ye naething better to mind than to spulzie a' decent bodies claes that gae by?"

The lad looked up in his face astonished, and said, "Naething ava, sir."

"Naething! — naething!" said the old gentleman; "come to me the morn's morn, to me, Baillie Glas

o' the Trongate, and I'll gie ye some wark, ye gilpie, ye."

The next day the lad was busy with a clean white apron before him, sweeping out the shop of the eminent grocer and baillie, Sandieman Glas, and grinding at the pepper-mill. Anon, he was behind the counter, anon, mounted upon a high stool in the counting-house behind the shop, and five years afterwards was out of his apprenticeship, and off to London with a letter of recommendation to an eminent Scotch house in the sugar-trade in Eastcheap. David Macleod, for it was no other, was one of those corks, that if you will only fling them into the world's waters anywhere, will float away to the world's end. No storm can sink them for more than a minute; they are sure to bob up again, and go swimming and dimpling forward, through fair and foul.

David did not stay long in London. Some brilliant chance, as he thought, lured him out to the Cape; from the Cape to Sydney, from Sydney to Van Diemen's Land, and, finally, he turned up in the right nick of time in Little Bourke Street, Melbourne, as a small grocer and dealer in sundries. Here David plodded on, as it appeared, for some time, in profound obscurity. Nobody seemed to know nor cared to know the rather uncouth, slow, Scotch bodie, that

hung cocoa-nut mats at his door, and tied up old-fashioned conical pounds of sugar, at a very small counter, in a very small shop, elbowed up by all sorts of miscellaneous articles—soap, candles, besoms, bags of very brown sugar, drums of figs, and Bath bricks. But David's obscurity was like the mole's; though little observed, it was onwards, and people were presently astonished by David's purchasing a great warehouse in Market Square, and standing forth in great prominence in the wholesale line. Many a heavy-loaded bullock-dray was seen to leave his ample warehouse door, and direct its course up the country. As time advanced, many a squatter stood deep in David's books, and when the evil day came that shook the colony to its yet but loosely-laid foundations, many were the wonderings and the queries how it could stand with the man whose beginnings were remembered to have been a few years ago so little and obscure.

But David was one of those men who, in building the fabrics of their fortune, knock their bricks well down into their mortar, and make every nail and screw fast as they go on. Squatters fell before the blast, and owed David large sums, but he was found to have taken secure liens on their stock and stations, and, cork-like, he floated on even more buoyantly

than before. True, David pulled a fearful long face, shook portentously his head, and bemoaned himself dolefully, as the most unfortunate of men. All these dead, useless, worthless properties falling upon his hands! What was to become of him? The colony ruined, ruined for ever, gone out and cut, and past redemption; his money all gone; his good hard-earned money; and what to show for it? Heaps of good-for-nothing sheep, that would not pay for shepherds at twenty pounds a-year each, and rations, tea, and sugar, and flour,—heaven help us! and wool just no price at all! and the flocks all eaten up with scab, and foot-rot, and catarrh! Was he to run from Dan to Beersheba, from Gippsland to the Wimmera, after them, to see them dressed, and washed, and clipped, or to trust them to overseers, expensive fellows at forty pounds a-year, and their keep? Goodness guide us! it was enough to craze the strongest head in Christendom. Was he to be the Atlas of the South, and carry the whole country on his back? Was one man to bear up under a pile of burdens, each single one of which had sunk its man, and all better men than himself?

Yet David did manage to bear up under it all; to bear up, ay, and to float gallantly onward too, bobbing and nodding, though solemnly, to all that passed

him on the stream. David knew very well that it was one thing for a man to be crushed that was already struggling under a burden of years, and under the high pressure of sixteen and twenty per cent. interest, and another for a substantial man to "wait a wee," for better times, with flocks and herds grazing by thousands on lands that paid a mere nominal rent. That what was obtained for almost nothing could not well get less. Nay, David had most comfortable inward inklings that things were very likely to grow rather than to diminish. He had profound faith in the old saw that when things are come to the worst, they begin to mend. And now at the worst they assuredly were; so this was the turning point—the cold hour before dawn. Come the worst that might, his stations, and herds and flocks, would balance themselves in his ledger, at least half the cost of purchase being his sixteen per cent. interest. Come good times, and David was a millionaire!

And very soon the soundness of David's reasonings began to show themselves. Wool was evidently on the advance in the market, and Australian wool growing in favour. Next came a wonderful rumour of a mode of turning the overgrown flocks into tallow, by which sheep bought at one shilling would

realise ten! David sat down and calculated, and rose up and rubbed his hands. "All right!" said David, when he had shut the door. "Thirty thousand sheep at a shilling—fifteen hundred pounds; thirty thousand at ten shillings—fifteen thousand pounds! Good!" And then all the cattle and horses, and the good-will of the stations under these improved circumstances!

David had much ado to force down the mighty exultation, and keep it out of sight. Keep it down in the lowest corner of his heart, and keep down the corners of his mouth, with their established demure melancholy. Several of the squatters who had thought themselves ruined came, and suggested that David should now amply repay himself out of their flocks, and restore the overplus to them. But David stood astonished at such ingratitude. "What! when he had so nobly stepped in to save them! when he had relieved them from all their embarrassments—rescued them from bankruptcy, snatched them from the jaws of ruin, and left them to begin the world anew; he could not have thought human nature half so bad. But they were not children—these matters were too serious for child's play." In fact, David had made all fast, and he bowed them

out. Where would be speculation, indeed—of what benefit carefulness and higher sagacity, if men were thus to be expected to give up their just rewards?

So, as we have said, David continued to rake amongst the ruins of the Melbourne of eighteen hundred and forty-two, and many a weighty find and precious jewel he dragged up from the mud and débris of the desolating torrent that had passed through it. Many a house, many a piece of land, many a heap of goods did he secure at nominal prices, which anon became literally worth their weight in gold. All these matters comfortably arranged, David set out on a tour of discovery amongst the various stations which had fallen into his hands, and which he averred pulled so heavily at his heartstrings. We shall not follow him in his travels, not having the same interest in the matter. We shall allow him to gloat inwardly and shake his head outwardly at the deep grassy meadows, and luxuriant swamps of Gippsland, where he found hundreds and thousands of splendid cattle feeding and flourishing for his benefit. At the far-stretching plains, and beautiful uplands of the west, where his tens of thousands of sheep grazed at the foot of the picturesque Pyrenees, and clear, dashing streams came down from the hills, reminding him of



those which he had been used to see on his journeys of business for the worthy Baillie Glas, in Perthshire or Ayr. But, as we have sympathised in the fallen fortunes of Tom Scott, we shall just follow the unfortunate David Macleod to the Loddon, to see what sort of a burden that luckless fellow had left upon his hands there.

As David journeyed up the country in a stout-built gig, accompanied by a stout serving man, he internally gladdened his heart at the sight of the rich plains, the green valleys, the wooded hills, and the velvet slopes studded with noble, but thinly-scattered trees. As he rolled along over the hard, solid ground of low hilly ranges which gave him the varied view of forest, glen, and winding stream, with here and there smoke rising up from the chimney of some solitary station, or more solitary stockman's hut, he could not help saying in his heart of hearts—"Fine country! plenty of room for squatters! Plenty of squatters, plenty of squatters' accounts." And then he would fall into a calculation, how many goods each station would need in the year, how many hundred pounds these would cost, and what would be the average profit upon them. Next, he speculated on the weight of wool, and the probable proceeds. All this was so agreeable, that he must have

sung, in the private parlour of his soul, had he known the stanza :—

“O, pleasant are the green woods,  
Where there's neither suit nor plea,  
But only the wild creatures,  
And many a spreading tree.”

But then would come a shock from the wheel against a stump, which would nearly precipitate him over the splash-board, or a plunge into a morass, that would threaten to swallow him up bodily, and on all these occasions he did not keep his feelings to himself, as he did his more agreeable calculations and cognisances. He would denounce bitterly and cruelly the whole country, its bogs, its barren flats, its more sterile hills, its stony tracks, its yawning, precipitous gullies. Was this a country for a Christian! Was this a place for a decent man to waste his years in looking after the effects of broken-down settlers! Was this howling wilderness a country into which a quiet, religious character like himself should have to come, struggling after the wreck of his fortune, trusted—O! thoughtless, too soft-hearted David!—to spendthrifts and ne'er-do-weels. An unco' place, where there was neither church nor chapel, neither prayer nor praise; but swearing bullock-drivers and heathen blacks? A godless country, “Caumel,”—turning to his man,—“an awfu', godless country.

Would thou and I were well out of it, and treading the fair pavements of bonny Glasga !”

David had made good use of his squatter's map, and duly each evening he contrived to turn off the track to some comfortable station, where he was hospitably received, and made himself pleasant over a mutton chop, a panikin of bush tea, and a comforting glass of toddy. Before he turned into bed, he had taken care to speer significantly after the growth of the flocks, the prospects of the wool-crop, and before he left next morning, he would contrive to have a peep into the squatter's store-room, where his practised eye ran with a telegraphic rapidity over the various articles which are to be found in that indispensable apartment of a station,—over the stock of shoes, boots, wide-awakes, ready-made clothes of all kinds, sugars, teas, flour, salt, tobacco, rice, spirits, bridles, saddles, and crockery. He would cast a glance at the number and extent of the buildings, and suggest to himself whether he might not calculate on an extensive order for Tasmanian shingles. How the squatter was off for drays, or bullock-yokes, chains, or hobbles. What sort of a wool-press he was in possession of. Whether he had one of the newest construction, or still continued to fill his bags by means of the old contrivance of a huge beam

balanced on a post, and weighted at the condensing end with a huge piece of rock. Nothing escaped the lynx eye and the capacious soul of David the deeply cogitating; and thus he went on his way most profitably observant, with a grumble, ever and anon, for the ear of Perdy, and a Eureka! to himself.

As he drew near his own station, the station of the umquihile Tom Scott, his heart beat stronger and more pleurably, for the country grew ever more and more delectable. The valleys were as rich as those of the Land of Goshen; most charming slopes and swells descended from the woods, which would have fascinated the eye of a painter, and were most agreeable to that of David, because they grew delicious grass. Now, they ascended hills covered with giant trees, and fragrant with the blossom of shrubs; now, they descended from the silent and stony regions of the forest, and saw around them hills and rocks thrown up in all the prodigal wild beauty of Nature's most original moments. Here the poet's eye would have seen the future shaping itself with cottages and granges, with all their hanging gardens, and vineyards, their crofts and orchards about them. Cows, and goats, and fowls, appearing on the soft meadow flats, or clambering to the most airy pinnacles of cliff. Down they went, and issued

into a valley which made David Macleod rise in the carriage, and spread out his hands in rapture. "Eh, sirs! and whaten a place for the bulls of Bashan and the cattle on a thousand hills!"

In truth, human eye seldom luxuriated on a more superb scene. A magnificent valley extended up and down, far as the eye could see, deep in grass, yellow with the golden flowers of early summer, in which large herds of cattle were grazing, of a beauty never surpassed, in its free grace and untamed spirit, on the meads of Trinacria or on the Pampas of Brazil. On either side rose wooded hills of manifold heights and forms, whose bluffs and spurs towered breezily in the upper air, or descended, studded with the verdant gracile forms of the shiock and the olive-like light-wood, into the luxuriant vale.

The travellers took a side-way, which led them between these Arcadian declivities and a fair, winding river; from which rose, in vast clouds and with a wild clangour, thousands of wild fowl, which made hasty flight to a distance. Anon they saw the smoke of habitations, and as they drew near, by degrees revealed themselves a variety of wooden buildings. This was the station. It was seated on a mount occupying a natural little amphitheatre midway in

the hills, to which they ascended by an easy winding road. Arrived on the mount, even David Macleod, whose soul dwelt so snug and satisfied in the profitables, could not help being struck with it.

The mount seemed to have been formed, in the old plastic ages, by some huge landslip. Above it impended hills and rocks gashed with deep ravines, and scooped out in green concaves or coombes, and shagged with giant, and in many cases far-projecting masses of the stringy-bark and iron-bark forest. Down one of these came dashing and foaming a little stream, which collected itself in the centre of the mount into a large natural basin, between which and the hills stood the cluster of wooden buildings which constituted the station. Near to the little lake, and facing it, stood forward the chief hut; right and left, and behind, stood others, including stables, cowsheds, kitchen, and stockmen's huts. Around the lake the grass was smooth and green as on an English lawn, and on the sides of the mount lay gardens and vineyards, presenting a most vividly light green contrast to the native foliage around. Beyond the broad valley rose again noble masses of woods; beyond these stretched the unbroken surface of vast forests, over which looked distant ranges of hills, one chain showing over the other; — the near, dark with

clothing woods ; the farthest, blending with the azure distance.

It was a seat fit for an emperor. So thought the delighted David ; so before him had thought the unfortunate Tom Scott. His was the discovery, his the building of these dwellings, the planting out of these gardens, and the fencing in of ample paddocks for corn and hay, and for the security of horses and milch kine, in the sheltered hangers below.

An active young countryman, his overseer, was ready to receive the great man in his bush home. Donald Ferguson had been on the look-out for him for some days, and had a table spread ready for the hungry man, on which the utensils were humble, but the fare was substantial. A haunch of kangaroo, more delicious than any hare, succeeded kangaroo-soup, that would have delightfully astonished the palate of a Lord Mayor, and furnished new topics to the appetising pen of Miss Acton. Wild turkey, black-duck from the river, bronze-winged pigeon (a luxurious substitute for partridge), patties of quince marmalade, preserved peaches and cream, followed in a succession which spoke eloquent eulogiums for the cook ; and a dish of early figs, the first produce of the summer, closed the rear with a bottle of port, which the enraptured squatter declared could not be

matched in Melbourne, nor scarcely in Glasga. We say nothing of vegetables, rare in the bush,—green peas, already plentiful; new potatoes; scorzonera-root, worthy to stand on the right-hand of sea-kale; salads, and pickles of mango and green melon. Never was a dinner more to the taste of hungry traveller,—never did one so convincingly proclaim a land of plenty and of dainty delights.

“Where in the world, Donald, did ye discover this paragaun of a cook?” cried the transported squatter.

“He discovered himself,” replied Donald. “He walked in one day as we were at our wit’s end to find some one to cook our damper and fry our chops.”

“And noo you live like the Heir o’ Lynn! I’ll fear me, thoo, that the chap ’ull be rather extravagant.”

“O, no!” replied Donald; “we keep him close to the chop and the cake when we’re alone.”

“Aweel! this is an orra time, I reckon. But dinna ye ken where the chiel comes frae? Nane but a lord could want the like o’ him.”

“I believe,” said Donald, “he was head cook to some great man, and was just sent over to the other side on a suspicion of poisoning him.”

“Poisoning! poisoning his ain maister! An’ ye



tuk him in, and dar to eat and drink of his devil's bannoks and bree? Oot wi' him! oot wi' him! or we are a' dead men!"

"Not a bit of it," said Donald smiling; "don't be alarmed; there's no danger. He has cooked for us these two years, and an honest fellow does not live. In fact, he says, and I think so too, the cook that poisoned the great man was his own gormandising and boozing; for he was regularly carried to bed dead drunk every night of his life."

"Weel, weel," said the startled squatter, "there may be something in that; but to me it seems naething mair nor less than a tempting o' Providence."

"We get used to such things here," said Donald; "we can get no women-servants up here, and not easily men; and half our workmen and shepherds, and I must say the best half, are notorious transported thieves and burglars."

"An' ye dar to gang through the woods with these gallows-birds all alone wi' ye, an' nae Christian creature within miles of ye?"

"Just so," added Donald coolly; "we can't help ourselves, and nothing happens."

The great squatter had begun to think the bush not half so pleasant as it appeared over the roast turkey and port; and his alarm was the more in-

creased when, on going to his bed-room, he found neither lock nor latch to his door, and the moon shining through vacancies, between the slabs of which it was built, large enough to put a hand through, much more the muzzle of a gun.

“Donald, my man! Donald!” he shouted; “hoo’s this? Nae lock, nae latch, nae stang?”

“Oh, no,” said Donald; “we don’t want them; there is nothing but a latch to the front door.”

This was worse and worse, and the great man, clapping the only thing like a table in the room against the door, and shoving a heavy box against that, resolved to make short work of it in the bush. But, presently, the habitual shrewdness of the man began to operate, and suggesting to him that the inhabitants of the bush knew best, and that all was right, he dropped asleep, and awoke in the beaming morning cured of all his fears, and more delighted with the scene than ever.

The hut in which he lived was but a wooden hut, with a mud floor, and a huge open chimney, on the hearth of which burned a fire just enough to keep hot the kettle, and nothing more; but on the breakfast table there appeared, with the tea and coffee, chops, steaks, roasted wattle-birds, quails, and other dainties.

After breakfast Donald Ferguson rode out with the Squatter to show him something of the run and its stock. But this was no work of a morning like the riding over an English farm. Seven flocks were tended upon it by seven shepherds, each with his different hut and district of pasturage; and, to reach these, they had to ascend lofty hills, thread deep and hidden glens, cross streams, and ride on through woods that appeared endless. Then, again, they came out on plains, or high and extensive downs, where was descried the immense flock rolling along, as it were, over the grassy level like a cloud, or a low fog before the shepherd, always on the move, and grazing as they went. There is something pastorally grand in the idea of these numerous flocks all daily radiating from one central circle of homesteads, and grazing in profound calm through the silent and boundless waste, returning at evening to their resting-place, and so on from day to day, and from year to year, swelling serenely into living expanses of affluence.

David Macleod soon found that it would require weeks to take a survey of his possessions, and he contented himself with finding the fragment explored all orderly and prosperous. Strychnine had now decimated the dingoes, or wild dogs, the squatters had driven back the natives, and a profound peace

brooded over these wild realms of pastoral riches. Readers, lift up your imaginations; spread them out on their broadest pinions, and conceive the squatter occupying the county of Kent, or Surrey, for his run, at a rate, including license-fee, and head-money, of some fifty pounds a-year, and you form a tolerable idea of the squatter's domain, — a domain which this country so bountifully consigned to him, — and perceive why he should so fervently desire to hold it for ever.

Ever and anon, as he followed the indefatigable Donald, through far-off valleys, where it would require a compass to direct the stranger, a troop of beautiful horses would turn, gaze at them for a moment, and then with flying tails and manes, and snorting nostrils, bound away with a grace of motion, a conscious enthusiasm of freedom and strength, that the steed of the wilderness only displays.

“Whose are those fine horses?” would ask David, and “Yours, sir,” was Donald's reply. Ever and anon, a huge herd of wild cattle would run startled at their approach, and, led by a stupendous number of bulls, dash with crashing fury and thundering hoofs through the dark bush of wattle, or the green hop-scrub, and away in the limitless woods. “Whose are these, Donald?” “Yours, sir.”

Ever and anon, on some lonely upland, a flock of

kangaroos would turn their tall heads, gaze silently a moment, and leap rapidly away. Anon, thousands of wild fowl rose with a stunning rush and thunder, from a rarely-visited swamp, and myriads of parrots, wild pigeons, and other birds, glanced in the tree-tops, or saluted you with their quaint cries. To David's wondering mind, it appeared like some chapter of romance, like some hidden kingdom reserved for some great prince, and stocked with everything that could enrich the table, fill the purse, and supply the most boundless passion for the chase. He returned to his station an immensely greater man, in his own estimation, than he even was before.

Here, one of these days, he would come and build a castle befitting his own importance, a very palace of the wilderness. Around him he found at some twenty or thirty miles' distance, other aristocrats of the wild. These were, most of them, half-pay officers, medical men, or lawyers, who had found it slow work in Europe, and had just been drawn to Victoria by fame, in the very nick of time, when the crisis had swept away the original race of squatters—the veritable pioneers of the wilderness—and left them their places on the easiest possible terms. These gentlemen's hope and expectation had been, not the achievement of great fortunes, but that of an easy

and care-free life, a rural peace and plenty, and a wider horizon for their children. But a more wondrous fate was in reserve for them. They thought they had bought merely an old lamp, but it was the genuine miracle-machine of Aladdin. They dreamed only of being gentleman-graziers, and they sprung up at once, the lords and princes of a new empire.

Several of these had made a morning ride of thirty or fifty miles to call on their new neighbour; and David felt that they were of a caste, an education, an intelligence, far beyond his own homespun actuality. How was he to put himself on a due footing with them? The upshot of his reflections was, that it could only be—a big, fine house, and a gorgeous equipage.

It was while meditating deeply on these future glories one summer's forenoon, alone in the inner apartment of the hut, that, raising his eyes, he saw a strange and startling figure standing motionless before him. He had heard some one enter, but supposing it the cook, had not even given him a glance. The man, if man it were, stood tall, gaunt, and clad in a rude, coarse, green jacket, ragged and soiled. A belt round his waist showed a brace of large pistols; his left hand held upright as a support, a long gun. On his head was a slouching brown wide-awake, and

an enormous beard buried the lower half of his face. It was a face that seemed shaped to inspire horror; long, bony, and withered; tanned by sun and breeze into a mahogany hue, and from the deep sunken sockets his eyes gleamed fiery, yet still and fixed with a spectral expression on the squatter.

“Who are you?” exclaimed David, “and what is your business?”

“Justice!” said the man, with a singular emphasis.

“Justice! And why came you here? Who has wronged you?”

“You!” retorted the man, and the fire gleamed more fiercely in his eyes, but he moved not a limb, nor a muscle.

“Me! Now, Heaven help me! I never saw you before,” said the evidently-alarmed David. He looked hastily round, as if for assistance; but Donald Ferguson was out in the woods, and the cook was in the distant kitchen; if he shouted, he would never hear him. He glanced out of the front window; all was silent and basking without. The sun blazed and glanced on the little lake, and not a living thing seemed to stir. He cast a look out at the side window near him. He could see far down the slope, where lay the shadow of the woods: but all was motionless and soundless as at midnight. A feeling

of faintness and desperation came over him; he would have shouted, but the fear of the man's fire-arms kept him silent.

"You never saw me before?" said the uncouth and gloomy figure. "No! this man you never saw. This blasted, withered, cursed, and deformed frame you never saw. It was before the thunder-bolt had fallen on me; before the scourge of misery had consumed me, and the vengeance of blood and massacre had stamped the devil upon me. Then you saw me, then—young, strong, full of hope, happy, though fighting with the frightful odds of life, because there stood precious ones beside me to cheer me on. Then you saw Tom Scott."

"Tom Scott!"

"Yes; Tom Scott. Listen! I am a blighted and blasted tree. In all the world of forests for thousands of leagues round us, there stands no such spectre of the woods as stands here. On me there remains no leaf; in my veins circulates no sap of life. I am rootless, branchless, heartless; and yet I live, and for what? To slay, as mine were slain; to crush, as mine were crushed; to burn, as mine were burnt; and to give a loose to vengeance, because it is the only thing which has flourished with me. I once had kindly—O! most kindly—feelings; tears,



prayers, and deeds of eager devotion for the suffering. I thought that I was born to win my way to success. I believed that a high heart and a clean hand could and would snatch a blessing. But men and a forward luck dragged me down. Except from two honest rude creatures, out of my own family I never received aid or kindness. The world would have me a devil, and it is done. But, David Macleod, what are you? Men say you are religious? Is it religion to take a man's all for a few hundred pounds, when that all may shortly become a prince's heritage? Look round on this lordly scene. Who made this place?"

"God Almighty," said the confounded squatter.

"God and Tom Scott," said the stranger. "God Almighty raised these hills, spread these valleys, planted these everlasting forests, vaulted over them yon glittering sky; and, wherefore? That a canting hypocrite, a craven, demure, and ruthless oppressor, might revel in them, and vaunt himself in them? Tom Scott built these houses, planted these gardens, enclosed these pastures, and raised these flocks and herds from a mere handful to ten thousand; and was that, think you, of no more value than the deficient balance of a paltry hundred or two of pounds?"

The man raised slowly and steadily the long gun from the ground, and lowering its muzzle towards the stupified squatter, said, "David Macleod, one little crooking of my fore-finger, and you are in eternity. In vain will then be all your scraped-up riches, in vain all these lordly woods and hills, in vain all your flocks and herds, your houses, and your parchments. But I lower once more my piece, give one more moment, and say — Justice!"

"As God lives, Tom Scott," cried the terrified man, his eyes almost starting from his head, and his hand put out as if to avert the threatened deed, "I will do all — Help! help! in God's name, help! Murder!" shouted he, suddenly from the side window descrying three horsemen approaching the house; and, darting to the window, which was open, gave one more frantic cry, and sank senseless on the floor.

When the squatter came to himself again, he cried, "Stop him! hold him! for worlds, don't let him escape!"

"Let who escape?" asked two or three voices, amongst which was that of the cook.

"Who! why, Tom Scott, to be sure. He was here this minute; where is he?" and he rushed out to see. Nobody had seen Tom Scott. Since the

day that he disappeared, he had never been seen here nor anywhere near here. His fame, as a merciless pursuer of the natives, was unrivalled; but no one could say that he had seen him anywhere.

David Macleod returned hastily to town. The glory and beauty of his giant estate had departed. The image of Tom Scott reigned there in intensest horror. East and west, throughout the colony, millions of acres spread their bosoms to the sun, with all their hills, woods, waters, and living things, which owned him for master, but David Macleod never approached them; for Tom Scott might be there.

Years went on; wealth rolled in upon him in torrents; and, as if fortune would visit him and his brethren of squatterdom with her wildest wonders, it was discovered that the colony was one great region of gold. Gold was everywhere. Its earth, its rocks, its rivers, were all teeming with gold! Thousands upon thousands rushed from all the ends of the earth to snatch a share in the marvellous booty; and suddenly the value of the squatters' possessions jumped up five and tenfold in value. No longer were boiling-down establishments requisite to keep down the astonishing increase of the flocks, and yield some tolerable return from them. No longer bubbled those huge cauldrons into which the mangled

limbs of whole hecatombs of sheep were thrown daily and hourly, and seethed down for their fat. There were hundreds of thousands of hungry mouths in the colony, ready to consume, and of hands full of strangely-gathered gold to pay liberally for them.

These wanted, moreover, bullocks and horses to draw up provisions to the swarming diggings, and carry down the gold,—to prosecute the incessant traffic in the towns, and the speeding of escorts and eager passengers. Sheep advanced from five shillings to twenty-five per head; oxen from twenty shillings to twenty pounds; horses from five pounds to seventy and a hundred. The amazed squatters stood astonished at their own affluence. Theirs, indeed, was the Midas touch which turned all to gold, without its ancient penalty. David Macleod calculated up his gains. He was now, in one quarter or another, master of fifty thousand sheep, ten thousand cattle, and two thousand horses. In stock on his stations he was actually worth more than a quarter of a million! What a metamorphosis! Can that great senator ever have been the little dirty boy of the Gallowgate kennel? Never in the world's history had there been so fabulous a period, outfabling all fable. The great patriarchs roaming on the vast plains of Mesopotamia, with their

immense flocks, multiplied and prospered by the express favour of heaven, can present no parallel of fortune with the squatters of Victoria; for the patriarchs had no diggings to consume their mutton at sixpence per pound. Each party held their estates on equally cheap tenure, that is, just about for nothing; but the balance of profit was infinitely in favour of the patriarchs of the antipodes.

Job had seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and was a marvel of wealth amongst the ovine and bovine magnates of the east; but Job himself would have cut but a sorry figure amongst the wondrous men of the south. Arabia Felix to Australia Felix?—a sandbank to a paradise! Never since the world began—under no régime of a most propitious Providence—had mortal men been thus, without any merit or demerit, forethought or sagacity of their own, so blessed and pressed, loaded and bedded, rained on in deluges, and bolstered with bags of riches. Never again till the world winds up its motley accounts of bankruptcies and beggaries, monied plethora and coffers of Cræsus, destitution and surfeit, will any nation continue to pitchfork such piles of gold-sacks upon a knot of good honest men, astounded at their own greatness.

But no state has its entire exemptions from the shadow with the sun — the Bubbly Jock with the grandeur. As Tom Scott, with his one stern word — Justice! stood suddenly before the startled David Macleod, so with the in-rushing multitude which bought the squatters' mutton, came a new cry for the squatters' land. Those who had gold wanted homes; those who had homes wanted farms. The cry was — Land! land! and the squatters recoiled in terror before it. What! those noble estates, those woods, and mountains, and charming valleys all their own? Those lands yielding millions of sheep at sixpence a pound, and paddocks yielding hay at sixty and one hundred and twenty pounds a ton? Give them up, or any part of them? Reader, if Government gave you the run of the Isle of Thanet to-morrow, would you like to restore it the next day, or next year, or next hundred years? How much less, then, the whole County of York? Believe me, you would cling to it as to dear life. No man could renounce, without a pang, and a bitter one, so glorious a domain, so vast and fascinating a power.

Therefore the squatters hurried into the legislative Council, and, in a serried phalanx of anxiety and indignation, denounced the unreasonable demands of multitudes clamorous for land. Then was raised

a wild cry of "the hated squatters, the injured squatters, the squatters who had raised the flag of enterprise, built the metropolis of Melbourne, created the enormous wool-trade, suffered unheard-of miseries in the bush, driven out the natives, annihilated the dogs, and sold mutton to tribes of famishing men." In vain! From the inexorable Fawkner and O'Shaughnassey came the ominous and repeated echoes of—Tom Scott!

They stripped from the unfortunate squatters the glorious coats of other men's merits, in which they had so comfortably wrapped themselves. True, there had not been many actual Tom Scotts, the story had been more commonplace, but not the less real. As James Montgomery says of the Reformation—

"Luther, like Phosphor, led the conquering day,  
His meek forerunners waned and pass'd away."

So the early squatters, the real pioneers and sufferers, had, for the most part, passed away, and the present generation were, in a great degree, the easy sons of a most wondrous fortune, who reaped where other men had sowed. Gentlemen amiable, and hospitable, and accomplished, numbers of them, but still, verily, they have had their reward. When they talk of compensation for the loss of land, Fawkner asks, Whose

land? The nation's. For their improvements,— O'Shaughnassey reminds them, that their tenure forbids them to make any, except on the homestead, which they are allowed to purchase, at a proportionate price. When they talk of the injured squatters, the *Argus* points to their enormous wealth, and to the injured public. When they bemoan themselves as the poor squatters, all the world laughs, and the jolly rogues laugh in their own sleeves.

These are your new squatters, the autocrats of boundless wilds, the most favoured of all Fortune's sons. May they live a thousand years! But may it be still following their flocks in the van of settlement and civilisation. With the sound of advancing millions behind them, with the plough, the hammer, the shuttle, and the railroad, a hum of human activity and happiness, and before them the pleasant wilderness, the calmly-pasturing flock, the wild majestic herd, and the neighing troop of unlimited steeds, till the great continent of Australia shall be the England of the south, traversed by steam, surrounded by busy fleets— vast, populous, mighty, and at peace.

Dire was the war which went on in the bosoms of Messrs. Quarrier and Docker, as this phasis of the



story proceeded, and nothing but the assistance of Messrs. Owen and Thompson, who demanded a fair and full hearing of facts previous to discussion, could have enabled Grayson to go on at all. At length the story ended, and the narrator, leaving the belligerent parties to fight out the merits of the question at large, rose, and without moving a muscle, walked out, relit his meerschaum in the verandah, and once more contemplating the constellations, listened to the roar of the tempest within as a dweller on the seaboard often listens to the roar of the ocean, and hugs the more vividly his own comfort. Long swelled the sounds of contest and of indignant assertion and reply, but he who had raised the hurricane was soundly sleeping in the distant wing of the building.

## CHAP. XVIII.

## THE MELBOURNE MERCHANT.

THE next evening, when the hour of smoking, often the smoke of battle, had arrived, the learned doctor stepped in, expecting to be assaulted by the vehement sons of squatterdom, but to his agreeable surprise, he heard a well-fed and cozy gold-buyer, Mr. Sam. Tattenhall, who had flourished in the tents of Bendigo, saying, in a jolly and unctuous voice, which fell like oil on stormy waves, "Gentlemen, last night we heard some curious things about the lucky fellows in Melbourne. Now I can tell you a case of that kind in my own family. It's all true, and need offend nobody. It is the story of

## THE MELBOURNE MERCHANT.

My brother Uriah rang at his gate at his snug retreat of Trumpington Cottage, Peckham, near London, exactly at a quarter to six—his regular hour—when the omnibus from the city set him down at

the end of the lane. It was December, but the weather was fine and frosty, and as it was within a few days of Christmas, his children—four in number—two boys, just come home from school, and two girls, who came home from school every day—were all on the alert to receive him, with a world of schemes for the delectation of the coming holiday-time.

My brother Uriah was an especial family-man. He made himself the companion and play-fellow of his children on all occasions that his devotion to his business in the city would admit of. His hearty, cheery voice was heard as he entered the hall, and while he was busy pulling off his over-coat, and hanging up his hat: "Well, my boys; well, George; well, Miss Lucy, there. What are you all about? How's the world used you since this morning? Where's mamma? The kettle boiling, eh?" The running fire of hilarity that always animated him seemed to throw sunshine and a new life into the house, when he came in. The children this evening rushed out into the hall, and crowded round him with such a number of "I say, pa's," and "Do you know, pa?" and "Don't tell him now, Mary,—let him guess. Oh! you'll never guess, pa!" that he could only hurry them all into the sitting-room before him like a little flock of sheep, saying, "Well, well, you

rogues,—well, well,—let us have some tea, and then all about it.”

The fire blazed bonnily, as it was wont, in the bright grate, and that and the candles made the room, with light and warmth, the very paradise of comfort. Mrs. Tattenhall, a handsome woman of five and thirty or so—she might be more, but she did not look it—was just in the act of pouring the water from a very bright little kettle into the equally bright silver teapot, and with a sunny, rosy, youthful, and yet matronly face, turned smilingly at his entrance, and said, “Well, dear, is it not a very cold night?”

“Not in this room, certainly, my dear,” said my brother Uriah, “and with such a snuggerly before one, who cares for cold outside?”

Mrs. Tattenhall gave him a brighter smile still, and the neat Harriet coming in with the toast, the whole family group was speedily seated round the tea-table, and the whole flood of anticipated pleasures and plans of the younger population let loose, and cordially entered into, and widened and improved by my brother Uriah. He promised them an early night at the very best pantomime, and they were to read all about the pantomimes in the newspapers, and find out which was the best. He meant to take them to see all sorts of sights, and right off-hand on

Christmas Eve he was going to set up a Christmas-tree, and have Christkindchen, and all sorts of gifts under it for everybody. He had got it already done by a German who came often to his warehouse, and it was somewhere, not far off just now.

“Thank you, papa,—thank you a thousand times. Oh! what heaps of fun!” exclaimed the children, altogether.

“Why, really, my dear,” said Mrs. Tattenhall, delighted as the children, “what has come to you? You quite outdo yourself, good as you always are. You are quite magnificent in your projects.”

“To be sure,” said Uriah, taking hold of the hands of little Lucy, and dancing round the room with her. “To be sure; we may just as well be merry as sad; it will be all the same a hundred years hence.”

Presently the tea-table was cleared, and, as they drew round the fire, my brother Uriah pulled out a book, and said, “George, there’s a nice book—begin and read it aloud: it will be a very pleasant book for these winter evenings before all the dissipation begins. It is Pringle’s Adventures in South Africa, and is almost as good as Robinson Crusoe. I knew Pringle well; a lame, little man, that you never would dream could sit on a horse, much less ride after lions and elephants in that style.”

“Lions and elephants!” all were silent, and George read on. He read till eight o'clock, their bed-time, and the whole group—parents and children—were equally delighted with it. As they closed the book—“Now,” said the father, “would it not be grand fun to live out there, and ride after the lions and elephants?”

“Ah! grand fun!” said the boys, but the mother and the girls shuddered at the lions. “Well, you could stay in the house, you know,” said Bob.

“Right, my fine fellow,” said the father, clapping him on the shoulder. “So now off to bed, and dream all about it.”

When the children were gone, my brother Uriah stretched out his feet on the fender and fell into a silence. When my brother's silence had lasted some time his wife said, “Are you sleepy, dear?”

“No; never was more wakeful,” said Uriah; “really, my dear, I never was less inclined to be sprightly: but it won't do to dash the spirits of the children. Let them enjoy the Christmas as much as they can, they will never be young but once.”

“What is amiss?” asked Mrs. Tattenhall, with a quick apprehensive look. “Is there something amiss? Good gracious! you frighten me.”

“Why no, there is nothing exactly amiss; there

is nothing new; but the fact is, I have just taken stock, and to-day finished casting all up, and struck the balance."

"And is it bad? Is it less than you expected?" asked Mrs. Tattenhall, fixing her eyes seriously on her husband's face.

"Bad! No, not bad, nor good. I'll tell you what it is. You've heard of a toad in a mud wall. Well, that's me. Twenty years ago, I went into business with exactly three thousand pounds, and here I have been trading, and fagging, and caring, and getting, and losing, business extending, and profits getting less and less, making large sales, and men breaking directly after, and so the upshot is,—twenty years' trade, and the balance the same to a pound as that I began with. Three thousand I started with, and three thousand is precisely my capital at this moment."

"Is that all?" said Mrs. Tattenhall, wonderfully relieved. "Be thankful, my dear Uriah, that you have three thousand pounds. You have your health wonderfully, we have all our health; we have children, as good and promising children as anybody is blest with, and a happy home, and live as well and comfortably as any one need to do, or as I wish, I am sure. What do we want more?"

"What do we want more?" said Uriah, drawing

up his legs suddenly, and clapping his hands in a positive sort of a way on his knees. "Why, I for one, want a great deal more. We've children, you say, and a home, and all that. Heaven be thanked, so we have! but I want our children to have a home after us. Three thousand pounds divided amongst four, leaves about seven hundred and fifty each. Is it worth while to fag a whole life, and leave them that and a like prospect? No," continued Uriah, in a considering manner, and shaking his head. "No, I want something more; more for myself; more for them; more room, more scope, a wider horizon, and a more proportionate result of a whole human existence. And do you know, Maria, what I have come to as the best conclusion? To go out to Australia."

"To go out to Australia!" said Mrs. Tattenhall, in astonishment. "My dear Uriah, you are joking. You mean no such thing."

"But that is just what I do mean," said Uriah, taking his wife's hand affectionately; "I have thought of it long, and the toad-in-the-wall balance has determined me. And now what I ask of you is to look at it calmly and earnestly. You know the Smiths, the Browns, and the Robinsons have gone out. They report the climate delicious, and that



wonders are doing. A new country, if it be a good country, is the place to grow and thrive in, without doubt. Look at the trees in a wood. They grow up and look very fine in the mass. The wood, you say, is a very fine wood; but when you have looked at the individual trees, they are crowded and spindled up. They cannot put out a single bough beyond a certain distance; if they attempt it, their presuming twigs are poked back again by sturdy neighbours all round, that are all struggling for light and space like them. Look then at the tree on the open plain,—how it spreads and hangs in grand amplitude its unobstructed boughs and foliage: a lordly object. Just so, this London. It is a vast, a glorious, a most imposing London, but thousands of its individuals in it are pressed and circumscribed to a few square yards and no more. Give me the open plain,—the new country, and then see if I do not put out a better head, and our children too.”

Mrs. Tattenhall, now she felt that her husband was in earnest, sat motionless and confounded. The shock had come too suddenly upon her. Her husband, it is true, had often told her that things did not move as he wished; that they seemed fixed, and stereotyped, and stagnant; but then, when *are* merchants satisfied? She never had entertained an idea

but that they should go on to the end of the chapter as they had been going on ever since she was married. She was bound up heart and soul with her own country; she had her many friends and relations, with whom she lived on the most cordial terms; all her tastes, feelings, and ideas were English and metropolitan. At the very idea of quitting England, and for so new, and so distant a country, she was seized with an indescribable consternation.

“My dear Maria!” said her husband; “mind, I don’t ask you to go at first. You and the children can remain here till I have been and seen what the place and prospects are like. My brother Sam will look after business—he will soon be at home in it—and if all is pleasant, why, you will come then, if not, I won’t ask you. I’ll work out a good round sum myself if possible, or open up some connection that will mend matters here. What can I say more?”

“Nothing, dear Uriah, nothing. But those poor children ——.”

“Those poor children!” said Uriah. “Why my dear Maria, if you were to ask them whether they would like a voyage to Australia, to go and see those evergreen woods, and gallop about all amongst gay parrots, and great kangaroos, they would jump off their seats with joy. The spirits of the young are

ever on the wing for adventure and new countries. It is the prompting of that Great Power which has constructed all this marvellous universe, and bade mankind multiply and replenish the earth. Don't trouble yourself about them. You saw how they devoured the adventures at the Cape, and you'll see how they will kindle up in a wonderful enthusiasm at the promise of a voyage to Australia. What are pantomimes to that?"

"Poor things!" said Mrs. Tattenhall. "They know nothing about the reality; all is fairyland and poetry to them."

"The reality! the reality, Maria, will be all fairyland and poetry to them."

Mrs. Tattenhall shook her head, and retired that night—not to sleep, but with a very sad heart to ruminate over this unexpected revelation. My brother's words were realised at the first mention of the project to the children. After the first shock of surprise and doubt whether it were really meant, they became unboundedly delighted. The end of it was, that by the middle of February, my brother Uriah, having had a handsome offer for his business and stock, had wound up all his affairs; and Mrs. Tattenhall having concluded, like a good wife and mother, to go with the whole family, they bade fare-

well to England, Mrs. Tattenhall with many tears, Uriah serious and thoughtful, the children full of delight and wonder at everything in the ship.

They had a fine voyage, though with very few passengers, for the captain said there was a temporary damp on the Australian colonies. The order of the Government at home, to raise the upset price of land to one pound per acre, had checked emigration, and as there had been a good deal of speculation in Melbourne in town allotments, things just now looked gloomy. This was in eighteen hundred and forty-three. "But it can't last long," said the captain, "that silly order of raising the price of the land is so palpably absurd; while America is selling land so much nearer at a quarter of the price, that it must be repealed; and then all will be right again."

It was in the middle of May when our party arrived in Hobson's Bay. It was very rainy, gloomy weather—the very opposite to all that the climate had been represented in the accounts sent home—but then it was the commencement of winter, the November of our season. Uriah got a boat, and sailed up the winding river to the town. The sail was through a flat tract of land densely overgrown with a mass of close, dark bushes, of some ten feet high, somewhat resembling our sloe-tree, the

tea-tree of that country. On reaching the foot of the town, which stood on a range of low hills, Uriah and his companions stepped out into a most appalling slough of black mud, through which they waded till they reached the town, which was of no great extent, scattered over a considerable space, however, for the number of houses, and with great intervals of woodland, and of places where the trees had been felled, and where the stumps, a yard high, remained in unsightly nakedness.

Uriah walked on through a scene which, somehow in keeping with the weather, fell heavily on his spirits. There was nothing doing, or stirring; houses in various degrees of progress stood as they were. There were piles of timber, lime, shingles, posts, and rails, empty waggons and carts, but no people employed about them. On every hand he saw lots marked out for fencing or building upon, but there they remained, all stationary.

“Is it Sunday?” Uriah asked himself. No, it was Tuesday. Then why all this stagnation—this solitude? In a lane, or rather deep track of mud and ruts, since known as Flinders’ Lane, but then without a name, and only just wide enough between the trees for a cart to pass, Uriah wading and plunging along, the rain meantime pouring, stream-

ing, and drumming down on his umbrella, he came face to face with a large active man in a Mackintosh cloak, and an oilskin hood over his head. Neither of them found it very convenient to step out of the middle mud track, because on each side of it rose a perfect bank of sludge raised by the wheels of drays; and stopping to have a look at each other, the strange man suddenly put out a huge red hand, warm and wet, and exclaimed:

“What! Tattenhall! You here! In the name of all wonders, what could bring you here at this moment?”

“What, Robinson! is that you?” cried Uriah. “Is this your climate? This your paradise?”

“Climate—paradise—be hanged!” said Robinson. “They’re well enough. If everything else were as well there would be nought to complain of. But tell me, Uriah Tattenhall, with that comfortable Trumpington Cottage at Peckham, with that well-to-do warehouse in the Old Jewry, what could possess you to come here?”

“What should I come for, but to settle?” asked Uriah, somewhat chagrined at this salutation.

“To settle! ha, ha!” burst out Robinson. “Well, as for that, you could not come to a better place. It is a regular settler here. Everything and every-

body are settled here out and out. This is a settlement, and no mistake; but it is like a many other settlements, the figures are all on the wrong side of the ledger."

"Good gracious!" said Uriah.

"Nay, it is neither good nor gracious," replied Robinson. "Look round. What do you see? Ruin, desertion, dirt, and the—devil!"

"Why, how is that?" asked Uriah. "I thought you, and Jones, and Brown, and all of you had made your fortunes."

"So we had, or were just on the point of doing. We had purchased lots of land for building, and had sold it out again at five hundred per cent., when chop! down comes little Lord John with his pound an acre, and heigh, presto! everything goes topsy-turvy. Our purchasers are either in the bankruptcy court, or have vanished. By jingo! I could show you such lots, fine lots for houses and gardens, for shops and warehouses; ay, and shops and warehouses upon them too, as would astonish you."

"Well, and what then?" asked Uriah.

"What then! Why, man, don't you comprehend? Emigration is stopped; broken off as short as a pipe-shank; not a soul is coming out to buy and live in all these houses; not a soul, except an odd—excuse

me, Tattenhall—I was going to say, except you and another fool or two. But where do you hang out? Look! there is my house,” pointing to a wooden erection near. “I’ll come and see you as soon as I know where you fix yourself.”

“But mind one thing,” cried Uriah, seizing him by the arm as he passed. “For Heaven’s sake, don’t talk in this manner to my wife. It would kill her.”

“Oh, no—mum’s the word! There’s no use frightening the women,” said Robinson. “No, confound it, I won’t croak, anyhow; and, after all, bad as things are, why they can’t remain so for ever. Nothing ever does; that’s one comfort. They’ll mend sometime.”

“When?” said Uriah.

“Well,” said Robinson, pausing a little, “not before you and I meet again, so I may leave that answer to another opportunity;” and with a nod and very knowing look he stalked on.

“Odd fellow!” said my brother Uriah. “He is very jocose for a ruined man. What is one to think?” and he waded on. After making a considerable circuit, and actually losing himself in the wood somewhere about where the Reverend Mr. Morrison’s chapel now stands in Collins’ Street, he again came across Robinson, who stood at the door of a con-



siderable erection of wattle-and-dab; that is, a building of boughs wattled on stakes, and dabbed over with mud; then not uncommon in Melbourne, and still common enough in the bush. It stood on the hill-side, with a swift muddy torrent, produced by the rains rushing down the valley below it, towards the river, as it has often done since it bore the name of Swanston Street.

“Here, Tattenhall! here is a pretty go!” shouted Robinson; “a fellow has cut with bag and baggage to-night who owes me four thousand pounds, and has left me a lot more houses and land. That’s the way every day. But look—here is a house ready for you. You can’t have a better, and you can pay me any trifle you like: something is better than nothing.

He led Uriah in. The house was thoroughly and comfortably furnished, though, of course, very simply, with beds and everything. Uriah, in less than a week, was safely established there, and had time to ramble about with his boys, and learn more fully the condition of the colony. It was melancholy beyond description. Wild, reckless speculation, brought to a sudden close by the cessation of immigration, had gone like a hurricane over the place, and had left nothing but ruin and paralysis behind it. No words that Robinson had used, or that any man could use,

could overpaint the real condition of prostration and of misery. Two hundred and eighty insolvencies in a population of ten thousand, told the tale of awful reality. Uriah was overwhelmed with consternation at the step he had taken. O! how pleasant seemed that Trumpington Cottage, Peckham, and that comfortable warehouse in the Old Jewry, as he viewed them from the Antipodes in the midst of rain and ruin.

What, however, was my brother Uriah's astonishment to see Robinson stalk in the next day, his tall figure having to stoop at every door, and in his brusque, noisy way, go up to Mrs. Tattenhall, and shaking her hand as you would shake the handle of a pump, congratulate her on her arrival in the colony.

"A lucky hit, madam! a most lucky, scientific hit! Ah! trust Tattenhall for knowing what he is about."

Mrs. Tattenhall stood with a singular expression of wonder and bewilderment on her countenance, for the condition of the place, and the condolences of several female neighbours who had dropped in in Uriah's absence, had induced her to believe that they had made a fatal move of it.

"Why, sir," said she, "what can you mean? for

as I hear, the place is utterly ruined, and certainly it looks like it !”

“ Ruined ! To be sure it is. At least, the people are, more’s the pity for me, and the like of me who have lost everything ; but for Tattenhall, who has everything to gain, and money to win it with, why it is the golden opportunity, the very thing ! If he had watched at all the four corners of the world, and for a hundred years, he could not have dropped into such a chance. Ah ! trust Tattenhall ! Make me believe he did not plan it,” thrusting his knuckles into Uriah’s side, and laughing with a thunder-clap of a laugh that seemed to come from lungs of leather.

“ Why, look here now,” he continued, drawing a chair and seating himself on its front edge ; “ look here now, if you had come six months ago, you could have bought nothing except out of the fire. Town allotments, land, houses, bread, meat, sugar, everything ten times the natural price ; and now, cheap, dog cheap ! of no value at all : you might have them for asking for ;—nay, I could go into a dozen deserted shops, and take any quantity for nothing. And property ! why, three thousand pounds cash would almost buy all the place—all the colony !”

“ What is the use,” asked Mrs. Tattenhall, “ of buying a ruined colony ?”

“A ruined colony!” said Robinson, edging himself still more forward in his chair, and seeming actually to sit upon nothing, his huge figure and large ruddy face appearing still larger. “The colony, madam, is not ruined; never was ruined, never can be ruined. The people are ruined, a good lot of them; but the colony is a good and a grand colony. God made the colony, and let me tell you, madam,” looking very serious, “Providence is no speculator, up to-day, down to-morrow. What he does he does. Well, the people have ruined themselves; but it is out of their power to ruin the colony; no, nor the town. The town and the colony are sound as a bell; never were sounder; never had more stuff in them; never had so much. There is the land still; not a yard of it is gone; no great fellow has put that on his back and gone off with it. The land is there, and the houses, and the merchandise, and the flocks, and herds, and horses, and—what concerns you—”

He sat and looked at Mrs. Tattenhall, who stood there intently listening, and Uriah stood just behind her listening too, and all the children with their mouths open, gazing on the strange man.

“Well, what—what concerns us?” said Mrs. Tattenhall.

“To get a huge, almighty heap of something for

nothing," said the large man, stretching out his arms in a circular shape, as if he would enclose a whole globe, and in a low, slow, deep tone, calculated to sink deep into the imaginations of the listeners.

"If we did but know when things would mend," said my brother Uriah, for the first time venturing to put in a word.

"When?" said Robinson, starting up so suddenly that his head struck against a beam in the low one-storied house. "Confound these low places," said he, turning fiery red, and rubbing his crown, "there will be better anon. When? say ye? Hark ye! this colony is—how old? Eight years! and in eight years what a town! what wealth! what buildings! what a power of sheep and cattle! The place is knocked down, won't it get up again? Ay, and quickly! Here are a pair of sturdy legs," he said, turning to Bob, who flushed up in surprise; "but, Mrs. Tattenhall, you did not teach him to walk without a few tumbles, eh? But he got up again, and how he stands now! what a sturdy young rogue it is! And what made him get up again? Because he was young and strong, and the colony is young and strong, madam. Eight years old! What shall I give you for a three thousand pounds' purchase made now, three years hence? Just think of that," said the tall man, "just

turn that over a time or two," nodding solemnly to my brother, and then to my sister-in-law, and then cautiously glancing at the menacing beam, and with a low duck diving out of the house.

"What a strange fellow!" said Uriah.

"But how true!" said Mrs. Tattenhall.

"How true! What true?" asked Uriah, astonished.

"Why," said Mrs. Tattenhall, "what he says. It is truth, Uriah; we must buy as much as we can."

"But," said Uriah, "only the other day he said the clean contrary. He said everybody was ruined."

"And he says so still," added Mrs. Tattenhall, enthusiastically, "but not the colony. We must buy! We must buy, and wait. One day we shall reap a grand harvest."

"Ah!" said Uriah; "so you let yourself, my dear Maria, be thus easily persuaded, because Robinson wants to sell, and thinks we have money?"

"Is it not common sense, however? Is it not the plainest sense?" asked Mrs. Tattenhall. "Do you think this colony is never to recover?"

"Never is a long while," said Uriah. "But still —"

"Well, we will think it over, and see how the town lies; and where the chief points of it will be, probably, hereafter; and if this Mr. Robinson has any

land in such places, I would buy of him, because he has given us the first idea of it."

They thought and looked, and the end of it was, that very soon they had bought up land and houses, chiefly from Robinson, to the amount of two thousand pounds. Robinson fain would not have sold, but have mortgaged; and that fact was the most convincing proof that he was sincere in his expectations of a revival. Time went on. Things were more and more hopeless. Uriah, who had nothing else to do, set on and cultivated a garden. He had plenty of garden ground, and his boys helped him, and enjoyed it vastly. As the summer went on, and melons grew ripe, and there were plenty of green peas and vegetables, by the addition of meat, which was now only one penny a pound, they could live almost for nothing; and Uriah thought they could wait and maintain themselves for years, if necessary. So, from time to time, one tale of urgent staring distress or another lured him on to take fresh bargains, till he saw himself almost penniless. Things still remained as dead as the very stones or the stumps around them. My brother Uriah began to feel very melancholy; and Mrs. Tattenhall, who had so strongly advised the wholesale purchase of property, looked very serious. Uriah often thought: "Ah! she *would*

do it; but — Bless her! I will never say so, for she did it for the best.” But his boys and girls were growing apace, and made him think. “Bless me! In a few years they will be shooting up into men and women; and if this speculation should turn out all moonshine! — if the place should never revive!”

He sat one day on the stump of a tree on a high ground, looking over the bay. His mind was in the most gloomy, dejected condition. Everything looked dark and hopeless. No evidence of returning life around; no spring in the commercial world; and his good money gone; as he sat thus, his eyes fixed on the distance, his mind sunk in the lowering present, a man came up, and asked him to take his land off his hands: to take it, for heaven’s sake, and save his starving family.

“Man!” said Uriah, with a face and a voice so savage that it made the suppliant start even in his misery, “I have no money! I want no land! I have too much land. You shall have it all for as much as will carry me back to England, and set me down a beggar there!”

The man shook his head. “If I had a single crown I would not ask you; but my wife is down of the fever, and my children are dying of dysentery.



What shall I do? and my lots are the very best in the place.”

“I tell you!” said my brother Uriah, with a fierce growl, and an angry flash of the eye, “I have no money, and how can I buy?”

He glanced at the man in fury; but a face so full of patient suffering and of sickness — sickness of the heart, of the soul, and, as it were, of famine, met his gaze, that he stopped short, felt a pang of remorse for his anger, and, pointing to a number of bullocks grazing in the valley below, he said, in a softened tone, “Look there! The other day a man told me such a tale of horror — a sick family, and a gaol staring him in the face, that I gave him my last money — my carefully hoarded money, and of what use are those cattle to me? None whatever. You may have them for your land, if you like. I have nothing else.”

“I will have them,” said the man. “On a distant station I know where I could sell them, if I could only leave my family. But they have no flour, no tea, nothing but meat, meat, meat.”

“Leave them to me,” said Uriah, feeling the warm blood and the spirit of humanity beginning to circulate in his bosom at the sense of what was really suffering around him. “Leave them to me. I will care for

them. Your wife and children shall have a doctor. I will find you some provisions for your journey, and if ever your land is worth anything, you shall have it again. This state of things makes monsters of us. It turns our blood into gall, our hearts into stones. We must resist it or we are ruined, indeed !”

“ Nay,” said the man, “ I won’t impose upon you. Take that piece of land in the valley there ; it will one day be valuable.”

“ That !” said Uriah, looking. “ That ! Why, that is a swamp ! I will take that — I shall not hurt you there !” And he laughed outright, the first time for two years.

Years went on, and my brother Uriah lived on, but as it were in the valley of the shadow of death. It was a melancholy and dispiriting time. The buoyancy of his soul was gone. That jovial, sunny, ebullient spirit with which he used to come home from the city, in England, had fled, as a thing that had never been. He maintained himself chiefly out of his garden. His children were springing up into long, lanky lads and lasses. He educated them himself, as well as he could ; and as for clothes ! Not a navvy — not a beggar — in the streets of London, but could have stood a comparison with them, to their infinite disparagement. Ah ! those good three thousand pounds ! How will

the balance stand in my brother Uriah's books at the end of the next twenty years?

But anon there awoke a slight motion in the atmosphere of life. It was a mere flutter of the air, that died out again. Then again it revived—it strengthened—it blew like a breath of life over the whole landscape. Uriah looked around him from the very place where he had sat on the stump in despair. It was bright and sunny. He heard a sound of an axe and a hammer. He looked, and saw a house, that had stood a mere skeleton, once more in progress. There were people passing to and fro with a more active air. What is that? A cart of goods? A dray of building materials. There was life and motion again! The discovery of converting sheep and oxen into tallow had raised the value of stock. The shops and the merchants were once more in action. The man to whom he had sold the oxen came up smiling—

“Things mend, sir. We shall soon be all right. And that piece of land in the swamp, that you were so merry over, will you sell it? It lies near the wharves, and is wanted for warehouses.”

“Bravo!” cried Uriah, and they descended the hill together. Part of the land was sold; and soon substantial warehouses, of the native trapstone, were rising upon it. Uriah's old attachment to a merchant's

life came over him. With the purchase-money he built a warehouse too. Labour was extremely low, and he built a large and commodious one.

Another year or two, and behold Uriah busy in his warehouse; his two boys clerking it gravely in the counting-house. Things grew rapidly better. Uriah and his family were once more handsomely clad, handsomely housed, and Uriah's jolly humour was again in the ascendant. Every now and then Robinson came hurrying in, a very busy man indeed he was now, in the town council, and moreover, mayor; and saying, "Well, Mrs. Tattenhall, did n't I say it, eh? Is not this boy of a colony on a fine sturdy pair of legs again? Not down? Not dead? Well, well, Tattenhall did me a kindness, then — by ready cash for my land — I do n't forget it; but I do n't know how I am to make him amends, unless I come and dine with him some day." And he was off again.

Another year or two, and that wonderful crisis, the gold discovery, came. Then, what a sensation — what a stir — what a revolution! what running, and buying, and bidding for land, for prime business situations! — what rolling in of people — capital — goods. Heaven and earth! — what a scene — what a place — what a people!

Ten years to a day from the last balance at the

Old Jewry, Uriah Tattenhall balanced again, and his three thousand pounds was grown to seventy thousand pounds, and was still rolling up and on like a snow-ball.

There were George and Bob grown into really tall and handsome fellows. George was the able merchant, Bob had got a station out at the Dandenong Hills, and told wonderful stories of riding after kangaroos, and wild bulls, and shooting splendid lyre-birds—all of which came of reading "Pringle's Life in South Africa." There were Mary and Lucy, two handsome girls as any in the colony, and wonderfully attractive to a young Benson and a younger Robinson. Wonders was the next year to bring forth, and amongst them was to be a grand pic-nic at Bob's station, at the Dandenong, in which they were to live out in real tents in the forest, and cook, and bake, and brew, and the ladies were to join in a bull-hunt, and shoot with revolvers, and nobody was to be hurt, or thrown, or anything to happen, but all sorts of merriment and wild-wood life.

And really my brother's villa on the Yarra River is a very fine place. The house is an Italian villa, built of real stone, ample, with large, airy rooms, a broad verandah, and all in the purest taste. It stands on a high bank above the valley, in which the Yarra

winds, taking a sweep there, its course marked by a dense body of acacia trees. In the spring these trees are of resplendent gold, loading the air with their perfume. Now they were thick and dark in their foliage, casting their shade on the river deep between its banks. From the house the view presented this deep valley with this curving track of trees, and beyond, slopes divided into little farms, with their little homesteads upon them, where Uriah had a number of tenants making their fortunes on some thirty or forty acres each, by hay at forty pounds a ton, and potatoes and onions at one shilling a pound, and all other produce in proportion.

On this side of the river you saw extensive gardens in the hollow, blooming with roses and many tropical flowers, and along the hill sides, on either hand, vineyards and fruit orchards of the most vigorous vegetation, and loaded with young fruit. The party assembled at my brother Uriah's house on that hospitable Christmas Day, descended amid a native shrubbery, and Uriah thrust a walking-stick to its very handle into the rich black soil, and when his friends expressed their surprise, he told them that the soil there was fourteen feet deep, and would grow any quantity of produce for ages without manuring. Indeed, they passed through green corn of the most

luxuriant character, and, crossing the bridge of a brook which there fell into the river, they found themselves under the acacias. By the river side there lay huge prostrate trunks of ancient gum-trees, the patriarchs of the forest, which had fallen and given place to the acacia, and now reminded the spectators that they were still in the land of primitive woods.

“Why, Tattenhall,” said Robinson to my brother Uriah, “Trumpington Cottage, my dear fellow, would cut a poor figure after this. I’d ask any lord or gentleman to show me a fater or more desirable place in the tight little island. Bigger houses there may be, and are, but not to my mind more desirable. Do you know, very large houses always seem to me a sort of asylums for supernumerary servants; the master can only occupy a corner there; he cuts out quite small in the bulk; and as to fertility, this beats Battersea Fields and Fulham hollow. Those market-gardeners might plant and plant to all eternity, always taking out and never putting in; and if they could grow peaches, apricots, grapes, figs twice a-year, and all that, as fine in the open air as they do in hot-houses, and sell their bunches of parsley at sixpence a-piece, and water-melons—gathered from any gravel heap or dry open field—at five shillings a-piece,

plentiful as pumpkins, would n't they astonish themselves!"

"But what makes you call this place Bowstead?" continued Robinson, breaking off a small wattlebough to whisk the flies from his face. "Orr has named his Abbotsford—that's because he's a Scotchman; and we've got Cremorne Gardens, and Richmond, and Hawthorne, and all sorts of English names about here;—but Bowstead! I can't make it out."

"You can't?" said Uriah, smiling. "Do n't you see that the river curves in a bow here, and stead is a place?"

"O! that's it," said Robinson; "I fancied it was to remind you of Bow bells."

"There you have it," said Bob, laughing. "Bow bells! But, as there was a bow and no bells, my father put a stead to it; that's instead of the bells, you know."

"Bless me!" said Robinson: "now I should never have thought of that—how very clever!"

And he took the joke in such perfect simplicity, that all burst into a simultaneous laugh; for every one else knew that it was so called in honour of Maria Bowstead, now the universally respected Mrs. Tattenhall.



The whole party were very merry, for they had good cause to be. Mr. and Mrs. Tattenhall, still in their prime, spread out, enlarged every way, in body and estate, rosy, handsomely dressed, beheld around them nothing but prosperity. A paradise of their own, in which they saw their children already developed into that manly and feminine beauty so conspicuous in our kindred of the south; their children already taking root in the land, and twining their branches amongst those of other opulent families, and they felt the full truth of Robinson's rude salutation, as he exclaimed, on coming to a fresh and more striking view of the house and grounds,—

“ Ah! Tattenhall! Tattenhall!” giving him one of his jocose pokes in the side, “ did n't I say you knew very well what you were about when you came here, eh? Mrs. Tattenhall, ma'am? Who said it? Robinson, was n't it, eh? ”

When they returned to the house, and had taken tea in a large tent on the lawn, and the young people had played a lively game of romps or bo-peep amongst the bushes of the shrubbery, with much laughter, the great drawing-room was lighted up, and very soon there were heard the sounds of violins and dancing feet. My brother Uriah and his wife were at that moment sitting under the verandah,

enjoying the fresh evening air, the scent of tropical trees and flowers which stole silently through the twilight, and the clear, deep blue of the sky, where the magnificent constellations of Orion and the Scorpion were growing momentarily into their full nocturnal splendour. As the music broke out, my brother Uriah affectionately pressed the hand of his wife, faithful and wise, and encouraging through the times of their difficulty and depression, and said "Thank God for all this!" The pressure was as affectionately and gratefully returned. Then my brother and his wife rose up, and passed into the blaze of light which surrounded the gay and youthful company within.

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"Come now," said Quarrier, "that's a rational story and raises no bad feelings." "You are right," rejoined Parson Docker; "give us the sunny side of life, I like that. But now a word from me. I must stand up for my cloth, though people say I have not always done it. Well, there's the more need now then. There's been a great deal said lately of the heathenism of this colony. Good people, and you Scotch people in particular, say you may go from

the Dan to the Beersheba of this colony, that is, I expect, from the Glenelg to the Murray Punt at Albury, and you shall scarcely find a parson, except one or two on the Diggings. That Sunday is just no Sunday, bullock-driving, shepherding, just going forward on Sundays as on week-days, scarcely a church to be seen, scarcely a clergyman to be met with. Well, if it be too true, I for one think it will mend by and by, and I'll tell you why, by telling you what I saw the other day at the Buckland where I went to sell some sheep—sold 'em badly too, but that's not the thing,—what I am going to tell you is the story of the Apostle of the Wilderness.”

## CHAP. XIX.

## THE APOSTLE OF THE WILDERNESS.

“ IN a new colony the institutions and ordinances of religion follow often at a long distance the settlement of its population. Men who emigrate are most frequently driven out, not by religious persecution as were the Puritans to America, but by the pressure of temporal existence, or the ambition which finds itself without a field at home. Men eager for possession of new lands, for securing ample and noble homesteads while the choice is easy, rush out and spread themselves with avidity over wide and remote spaces. Their souls are intent on seizing the advantages of a fresh life, and they leave the cause of a future world to a future day. There may be here and there an isolated man who is weary of the struggle and restless career of European life; who longs for repose, and dreams of a still, poetic, Arcadian existence in new regions, amid woods and far-off mountains, but such men are few. The bulk is

of such as are impatient to plunge into new speculations and rivalries; who are calculating on fresh activities, on a new and impetuous race for great prizes, and who bring with them all the agitated passions and fierce competition of crowded Europe. The scene is but changed, the spirit and the impulses of life are the same. There are the same exhibitions of human character as at home; the same jostlings and heartburnings; the same graspings and contrivings and forestallings, and the spirit of avarice, ambition, petty pride, and selfish clutching at personal importance stands, if either, more nakedly prominent in all its hideous features in the wilderness than in the life-gorged nations of the old world.

To tame and reclaim these feverish sons of Mammon, anon there follow the ministers of a higher principle; the men who, in the pauses of the hubbub of mundane colonization, point their neighbours to still ampler lands, to fresh untrodden worlds beyond the mountains of eternity, and to a peace which even the serenest wilderness of earth does not yield, and for which the most sinewy backwoodsman at length sighs prayerfully.

But in this supply of religious ministrations, the peculiar circumstances of Australia have placed it at a far greater disadvantage than most new countries.

Men here have become graziers and bucolic anchorites. They have sat down at wide distances from each other with their flocks and herds, and the enormous woods seem to have swallowed them up. Few or no villages or towns in the interior have sprung up, as in more agricultural countries. There has been, therefore, over a vast extent of Australia, no possible means of maintaining ministers of religion amongst the rural population. There are no means of bringing any number of them into one spot. At the very stations of the squatters, that principle of dispersion which drove the masters apart from each other, drove the men equally so on each individual run. The solitary shepherds follow their flocks in districts of the bush far from each other; the stockman rides through solitary hills, reconnoitring his cattle all alone. Neither flock nor herd could be left by their protectors, while they seek the distant house of prayer. Consequently over enormous tracts of wild country there have been and there are no houses of prayer. It is too true, I admit, that you travel hundreds of miles and see no spire of the very simplest construction rising amongst the trees; you have no Sabbath bell calling you to God and to a thousand rushing recollections of home, of youth, of bright, beautiful days, and the living and the dead, who are alike lost

to you. Nay, we have often sought in vain in townships of some date for church or chapel; the old necessity of the bush has grown into a habit. To all outward observation, the country is a pagan country, or less than that, for even the pagan temple exists not. In one we found, not long since, the policeman reading prayers in the little court-house to the few who retained the desire for public worship, for there was no clergyman.

Sunday, therefore, in the bush, is scarcely discernible from any other day. The shepherd must follow his flock; the stockman must ride his rounds; at the home station there may be less active movement, but there is no peculiar evidence of a sabbath. In the diggings which have grown to any great size, you find tents which bear the name of church and chapel, and the diggers are forbidden to work under a penalty of five pounds, but nine tenths never seek the canvas sanctuary. Many of them lie in bed, and take a delicious rest from their six days' severe exertions; others, more active, fell trees and build huts, turn water-courses, if they can, near their tents, for that they do not call work; and thousands take their guns and away to creek, and lake, and forest, or to the grog-shop, whose attractions are demonstrated by the extraordinary amount of imported spirits; while on

the roads, the bullock-drivers who are conveying goods to the diggings, and diggers who are travelling from one gold-field to another, are just as alive and numerous as on any other day; nay, Sunday is a favourite travelling day, for travelling is not considered work.

Many are the pious and reflective men who have mourned over this state of things, but few or none who could suggest a remedy. Where you cannot bring the population together, vain even would be the most liberal offer of government aid. Yet we have often wondered that in these colonies government, or the public, have not instituted a mission, and appointed devoted and fitting men to travel each through a defined district, and visit, from time to time, the scattered dwellers in the bush. How cheering and consoling would be often the arrival of a true minister of Christ; not a formalist or a bigot, but the kind and cordial man of intelligence and simple faith! How welcome to the bedside of the dying or the sick; how delightful to those who have not forgotten their past or their future; how opportune to administer the rites of baptism or marriage, where now no minister resides within scores of leagues!

Into this vast and unoccupied field there have been a few, however, who have, at one time or another,



made voluntary expeditions, and there has been one man who has dedicated himself wholly to this service, and with signal success. The Rev. Anthony Pennieket had from early youth been accustomed to learn the languages of pagan and savage, and had lived a long time in India, seeking to Christianise the natives in many a populous village from Malabar to the Himalayas. His heart and soul were in the work, and years of no ordinary happiness had there passed over his head. His wife was a faithful and tender help-meet in his labours, sharing all his zeal, and glorying in all his triumphs. They had a family of several interesting children, all of whom, however, they saw swept away within a week by a contagious disease; and the finishing blow was given to the happiness of the noble missionary by the death of his wife, who, within the space of three hours, he saw well and buried, the victim of cholera.

Anthony Pennieket, though prostrated for a time, rose again, and pursued his labours. His religion was a living reality, and now he had felt its need and its power. All that he most loved were now in eternity, and he felt that he had nothing to do or desire, but to walk thitherward, and collect as many human sufferers on the way as he could. He braced up his loins for the task, and went on. He was a

sadder but not less hopeful man. There was something more heroic and sublime in his life, and a tone in his teaching that reached affectingly God's witness in the bosoms of those who heard him.

But his way, though it was to heaven, was become a solitary way. While he shed comfort on thousands around him, there were none — nothing but the work itself — which could comfort him. In the hours of domestic retirement, there was a blank. The loving voice and the tender hand of welcome were gone thence. Into the sanctuary of his seclusion none could come to dissipate the silence and chase away the ghosts of too happy years. The shock had not passed over him without physical effect. His health failed; the climate began to unnerve him, and the physician's advice to leave India found a strong response in his own restless mind. He has now reached the age of fifty, and has for some years traversed the Australian wilds as a self-constituted missionary. It is the life, he finds, which exactly suits him. He requires little, and that he possesses. He needs no aid, and he has asked none. Mounted on a sober grey horse, his little wardrobe contained in his saddle-bags, clad in a light style, adapted more to the requirements of the climate than to English notions of a clergyman's costume, he rides on through

the bush from station to station, finding everywhere a home and a cordial welcome. Even while he was quite unknown, he made an immediate impression, which opened the hearts of all classes towards him. There was nothing intrusive, assuming, or dictatorial about him. He explained who and what he was, and pressed on no one his advice or his instructions further than they found ready acceptance. He considered himself as sent to no particular church, but to the church of Christ. He regarded less the few differing points of opinion in those with whom he conversed than the many agreeing ones. True to his own faith, he asked others not to desert theirs, but to follow it faithfully. His dark hair was now grizzled by time and trial; but there was a kindly cheerfulness in his manner which set all temperaments at ease, and touched the nerve of kindness in all bosoms. As he sat by the broad, open fire-place of the station or the hut, you would not have said that "he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He was chatty, affable, full of anecdote, and often merry.

Here, indeed, he felt the consolation of society, and of pleasant intercourse in those hours during which, in India, the ponderous weight of solitude had fallen on him. No solitude visited him as he rode along the bush. There he found with the poet

that "Nature never yet was melancholy." He enjoyed the whispering foliage of the trees, the flow of waters, and the thousand sounds and cries of animated things. He had the spirit, and no little of the knowledge of the naturalist, and the whirring of the cicada, the merry laugh of the dace, and the quaint calls of the leatherhead were full of gladness to him. He marked the Iguana run up the smooth stem of the tall gum-tree, and breathed odours, and watched with delighted eyes the rich colours of the flowers as he walked through the forest with the rein of his horse thrown over his arm. Many a time he has lain wrapped in his rug before his fire in the forest, and made himself as much at home in the shepherd's hut, and on his simple fare, as he did in the wealthiest station. He would walk for hours with the shepherd as he followed his flock, and converse with him till the simple man, rarely favoured with human converse, really fancied himself in heaven. Such now is Anthony Pennicket become in this colony; if ever there was a Protestant father confessor, it is he. If we could but hear the stories of dark lives and overburdened souls which he has heard in many a solitary place, and by many a lair of death to which God himself seemed to have led him over vast waste, and deep river, and wild mountain, we should then know

what a precious life is that of this simple-minded apostle of the wilderness in the sight of God. In his belief the mercies of Christ are as boundless as the universe to the really penitent soul, and the arms of the Saviour stretched on the cross are typical of their eternal extension to every contrite creature of the remotest region and the farthest age.

In this country, to which condemned murderers, midnight burglars, and those stained with every crime, have fled by thousands, many a time has he been fetched in all haste to witness the last terrors of men who through their lives had seemed rugged and insensible as the rocks themselves. Especially in the diggings is he frequently called to see wonderful and fearful scenes of this kind. And now he has grown into a great name. Wherever he comes his presence is hailed as a jubilee. Children run and hang on his skirts, and cries of pleasure and faces radiant with joyous welcome meet him everywhere. Everywhere he is regarded as a father and an especial friend. There is a profound respect shown to his simplicity, for he is a wise and mighty counsellor in the hour of need. As you go through some populous digging where no settled clergyman yet lives, you may see some dense crowd collected in the open air around a preacher, and the passing digger, in answer

to your inquiry, says, "Not Parson Tucker, you may be sure!" Here an irresistible smile spread through the barrack-room, "That is a regular brick, that is the good Parson Pennicket, God-bless him!"

This good Parson Pennicket had just arrived at a station on the banks of the river Ovens, near the confluence of the Buckland. It was Christmas Eve of the year 1853, and the family there was rejoicing in his presence. They had invited some of their nearest neighbours, within a circle of twenty miles, and Mr. Pennicket was to perform service on Christmas Day. But while it was yet early in the morning a digger rode up at full speed, entreating him to go instantly to a dying woman on the Buckland diggings. To such a call there was but one answer with Anthony Pennicket; he mounted and rode off, promising, if possible, to return the next morning and perform divine service at the station.

As the digger rode along with him, he told him that he was wanted by a number of other people, by some to christen their children, and by one family to celebrate a marriage. They had ten miles to ride, and there was bare time to reach the place so as to see the sick woman and perform the marriage service before twelve o'clock. They sped away through the bush along the banks of the river, and while they

are on the way we may take a glance at one group at least of the people who are expecting him.

On a woodland promontory, formed by a bend in the river Buckland, a stream issuing from the Snowy Mountains, and here rushing along over its bed of grey clay-slate, between the feet of lofty forest hills, stood a number of white tents. The gold of that district is found only in the bed of the stream, and these were the tents of the few diggers who had appropriated that portion of the river. The whole scene was highly picturesque. The trees amongst which the tents were pitched were iron-bark and stringy-bark gum-trees, whose shagged stems and sturdy looking boughs resembled at a distance English oaks. The river ran between deep, steep banks, over which stooped many of these forest trees full of character. Amid tall mountains thickly clad with woods to the summit, and in the bend of the river, was seen a wild chaos of great grey stones, thrown by places into heaps, and in others built up into rude walls, while the rushing waters turned a number of loudly screaming wheels and pumps, by which the miners cleared portions of the river bottom, and secured its gold.

There were three large tents near each other, belonging to the different branches of a family, who

had all the evidences of being successful diggers. They had secured a wonderfully productive portion of the stream, and they spent as freely as they got. There were the father and mother, three or four sons, and a daughter. They were a large, strong, rather rude-looking set of people, who worked, and ate and drank with equal vigour. The father and sons were generally clad in shirt and trowsers, yellow with the gravel in which they had worked before coming to this spot, and wore an abundance of beard, which gave them a somewhat grim appearance. While they were working actively in the bed of the stream, the mother and daughter were generally as busy boiling and baking at a great fire in the open air, and they sate down to breakfast, dinner, and tea, to a profusion of good things, which, at the cost of the articles of life there, must condemn a princely revenue, and which excited the wonder of those who witnessed it. The bottle and the pipe succeeded in the evening, and the family of the Fulldishes was felt to be making and spending a fortune.

Amongst those who looked on and wondered were the occupants of a small tent near them, and of a section of the stream which they had yet been unable to master. This little family consisted of a father and his two sons. They had secured a portion of the



river, which was rather deep, but was believed to be very rich, but it was clear that they had not sufficient strength to work it. The father was an old man, with the air of a military man, and the sons were youths full of activity, but of not sufficiently robust build and size to conquer of themselves that powerful flood. Various diggers had offered in succession to join them, but the old man declined the proposal; and, indeed, the family seemed to keep themselves very much apart from those around them. They had come there with a cart drawn by a good horse, containing their tent and tools; and both father and sons had worked early and late to construct the necessary large water-wheel, which, fixed in the stream, was to keep in motion their belt-pump. They had now been a month on the ground; they had completed the machinery, and had been endeavouring to fix it in the stream, and to construct a dam, by means of which to drain one half of their river section; but hitherto they had failed. The stream was too powerful for them; and ever when on the verge of success, it broke down their dam, deluged their works, and thus threw them into despair. The Fullishes shook their heads when they saw this catastrophe several times repeated, and said, "These men will never do it." They themselves had drawn

from their claim pound after pound of gold; the father and sons had secured only some few ounces. It was evident that they were very poor, and they were set down for a proud and stuck-up set of fellows. The old man, however, was regarded as the dogged and unreasonable one, who refused assistance; for they saw that when help was offered them, the sons looked anxiously at him with melancholy looks, which seemed to implore him to accept the proffered aid.

The old man was, in fact, a military man. Captain Blantyre had starved through the long peace on the half-pay of his commission; for the greater part of the time, that of a lieutenant. His wife had long been dead, and with his two sons he had spent many years on the Continent. He had there, in France and Germany, given them the very best education that was in his power. He had placed them as day-boarders at good schools, first in Bonn, afterwards at Guisnes near Calais; and as they thus spent their evenings, and nights, and half-holidays at home, he had daily their society, and made himself their companion. The captain was well known at both those places by being daily seen walking about with his two handsome lads. With them he made long excursions up the Rhine, and in the woods about Guisnes. During their school hours, he visited the

news-room and read the papers, or cultivated a little garden, which he made a *sine qua non* wherever he was. Besides his boys, the worthy captain sought little society, an Englishman or two whom he met at the news-room being the exception, and that only there or on the public promenade.

But as time went on, and his boys grew up, Captain Blantyre had returned to England, to endeavour to get his sons into some office or profession. His endeavours had all been in vain. Interest he had little, and money he might be said to have none. His had been the usual fate, of seeing numbers of mere boys, but aristocratic boys, put over his head; and instead of promotion, he had fresh debts gradually growing upon him. These he had met in part by mortgaging a very small patrimony; but still they grew as the little property diminished. His sons were two excellent youths, and they set about and procured for themselves, after much vain application and many rebuffs, small clerkships in merchants' offices. They had full and practical knowledge of French and German, which ought to have insured them handsome salaries, but the wary employers used profitably, and pretended not much to value, these advantages.

All these circumstances working together, operated with melancholy effect on the captain. He grew

fretful and morose. During the long hours that his sons were employed in the city, he brooded over his wretched fortunes and long neglect, and felt greatly embittered against fortune and mankind. His debts preyed with augmenting weight on his spirits, and the visits of duns drove him to desperation. When the young men returned home wearied, and ought to have enjoyed a cheerful hearth, they found it gloomy, and the old man sunk into himself, and captious. It was a woful life, and in the midst of this wretchedness came the news of the gold discovery. The old man had a spark of enthusiasm in him. He had served a short time at the Cape, and in Canada, and his blood warmed at the idea of fresh adventures in a new country, and a last chance of fortune. The proposal was caught at with delight by the young men; their little property was sold to purchase the necessary outfit; and freed from debt, but with the last fragment of their worldly goods in their hands, the father and sons set out for Victoria.

At this moment they had been twelve months on the gold-fields. They had worked, all of them, for the old man, accustomed to the spade at home, astonished all that saw him by his laborious exertions in that warm climate; and as for the sons, they were active, enterprising, and indefatigable in their pursuit

of the desired gold. They might have been seen, equipped in ordinary digger costume, toiling in their hole under a sun at 120°, or hurrying away to some new discovery, laden with tools, provisions, and bedding, like camels. The old man, who, spite of his exacerbated temper, was attached to them in the extreme, often watched them on such occasions with tears in his eyes, and muttered to himself, "Shameful! shameful! that the world has no better fortune for such merit."

The elder of these two noble youths, Leonard, was now about two-and-twenty, and Mark, the younger, about twenty. Leonard was of rather a slight build, but muscular, active, and full of spirit. His features were fine, rather delicately cut, and aristocratic. He was the general caterer and manager, mounting the horse ever and anon, and away to the stores in the diggings, where he procured all their necessaries; and Mark, a fine lad, of a somewhat stronger make, and rounder turn of feature, looked after the horse in the bush, and officiated as chief cook and baker, assisted by Leonard as need required; the old captain, when not himself as fully employed as the lads, as he called them, keeping the tent in order, and preparing breakfast or dinner. Thus they had lived on for twelve months, but with little success in

the main pursuit. Like thousands of others, they had met with more blanks than prizes, and were now reduced to dependence on the daily acquisition of gold, whatever it might be.

They had now, there was no question, a splendid claim in possession, but they were evidently underhanded for it, and Leonard and Mark entreated their father to let them employ a couple of men, all they wanted, for a few days, to build a waterproof dam. There were plenty of strong fellows to be had at a pound a day each. But the old man, who had become more and more irritable as their circumstances grew straiter, asked sharply where the money was to come from. "Sell the horse," said Leonard. "Sell the horse!" exclaimed the father, "and then stick fast here, if we find no gold. Sell the horse, indeed! How then are we ever to get away from this cursed place?"

"But," replied Leonard, "there is every reason to believe that there is plenty of gold in this claim. Every one says there must be; and there are the Fullishes getting hundredweights almost within a few yards of us. They have wanted to join us,—a plain proof what they think of the matter."

"Ay, they are ready enough to be snatching at

our gold," said the captain, "but they'll not get it; I'll take care of that."

"But, dear father," said Leonard, "we shall never get it without help." "No, of course," said the old man, angrily; "of course not, we never do get it. It is not our luck, it never was, and I expect it never will be. Anybody can get it but us; any fool, any rogue, any good-for-nothing scamp, they can get it. Fellows without an idea, without a care what they do; who only spend it in drunkenness when they have got it. These are the fellows who have the luck, the devil take them!"

The two youths sate confounded, and greatly hurt. There was a long silence, when the captain in a sharp, scolding voice broke out: "And what is the use, I should like to know, of our sitting here? That won't fish the gold up out of the stream if it be there. If we are to have it we must get it, as other people do."

"If we really only knew how," said Leonard, "but we have tried everything: we have not the necessary strength, and to battle with the river as we are is only a waste of time." Leonard was evidently suffering the greatest distress of mind, but uncomplainingly.

“Of course we have not strength; of course we can't get it; anybody else could, but we can't. And can I give you strength? Can I make strength? Am I God Almighty?” said the captain, petulantly, and fell into a savage silence. And then, after a pause: “But my strength is going, that is good, that is good; thank God for that;” and he sate again, silent and wrathful.

Tears started into the eyes of both the young men. They rose, and quietly went out of the tent. “If we did but know really what to do,” said they to each other, “but this is dreadful; this is insupportable. This state of our father's mind is dreadful. What shall we do?” said Leonard. “I have sold my double-barrelled gun; I have sold my Minié rifle, and I would sell my revolver, but we want it for protection, and it would not now fetch enough to pay for the necessary help.” The two unhappy young men walked dejectedly away into the woods.

This had now been the state of things for a long time. Poverty hung on them with all her talons. They had nothing left in their little tent but what was absolutely necessary for the barest existence. Their living was confined to the merest consumption of meat, and bread, and tea. But all this they could have cheerfully borne had they not seen the woful



effect of their situation on their father. His temper was rising, and his health was evidently failing under it. Of late, with all his desire to keep up, he could not work many hours together, and he could not sleep at nights. No doubt his misfortunes then came with all the gloomy power of darkness and silence over him. They often perceived that he arose, and throwing his cloak over him, would ramble out into the open air for hours together. This could not last, it made them miserable beyond words; and their sorrow was the greater, because they could not bend his will by any means to reason. His pride would not let him sell his horse; his extreme anxiety to secure the whole of the present gold to themselves would not permit him to share it with more robust men.

It was now Christmas Eve; the weather was intensely hot, the midsummer of Australia. The heat appeared completely to prostrate the poor, dejected, spirit-worn old man; he lay feverish and feeble on his bed. The sons were greatly alarmed, and after consultation, Leonard rode off to the stores, which were about two miles down the valley. He thought that his father needed something strengthening, and he resolved to spend the last shilling that he had to purchase some little luxury. Money indeed he had none; but he had a beautiful pipe and a

Russian leather tobacco case, which the storekeeper had often admired, and for which he had bade him ten shillings. In his London days Leonard, who was naturally fond of everything which was tasteful in dress and gentlemanly in habit, had prided himself both on his wardrobe, small as it was, and on the elegance of his apparatus for smoking — his one little luxury. Here, indeed, under a thousand annoyances and privations, his pipe had been a wonderful resource, and he had many a sunny hour sate on a log, and smoked, and thought, till a calm came over him that was his salvation. Soothed and strengthened in resolution, he had risen up and plodded on in his threadbare path.

He now resolved to sell the pipe and tobacco case, and take the price out in something for his father. When he entered the store, there were numbers of people there, and amongst them one of the young Fulldishers, procuring the provisions of the day, which was to witness at once a christening and a wedding in their family. Leonard waited till he had supplied himself, and stood astonished at the lavish style in which he made his purchases. When he had done, the storekeeper scribbled down the articles on a piece of paper, and threw it to him. The amount stood thus: —

		£	s.	d.
1 doz. of Champagne,	@ 20/ per bottle	12	0	0
6 bottles of Port Wine,	@ 15/ „ .	4	10	0
6 ditto of Brandy,	@ 20/ „ .	6	0	0
1 doz. of Ale,	@ 6/ „ .	3	12	0
6 Quartern Loaves,	@ 5/ . .	1	10	0
12 lbs. of Lump Sugar	@ 1/4 . .	0	16	0
12 lbs. Raw ditto,	@ 1/ . .	0	12	0
4 lbs. Fresh Butter,	@ 5/ . .	1	0	0
Currants, Raisins, Lemon-peel, &c.	. . . .	0	10	0
1 Early Melon . . . .	. . . .	0	18	0
1 doz. Apples,	@ 1/ each . .	0	12	0
2 lbs. Early Grapes,	@ 5/ . .	0	10	0
6 lbs. Potatoes,	@ 1/ . .	0	6	0
Onions, 1/6 per lb., Spice, &c.	. . . .	0	8	4
1 Ham (10 lbs.)	@ 2/6 . .	1	5	0
		<hr/>		
		£34	12	4
		<hr/>		

Young Fulldish threw down three ten pound notes and five sovereigns, and saying “Give me some tobacco for the change,” put his purchases into his cart and drove away.

There was a time when Leonard, after seeing that, would not have ventured to bring out his own little business, but he had had many a bitter transaction to effect, and was proportionately hardened. His father’s illness—for Leonard rightly and sorrowfully included his irritable temper as part of his complaint—steeled him to much, though it could not make him entirely

cease to feel. He, therefore, with a deep sigh, called the store-keeper into the back tent, told him that his father was very ill, and that they had been very unlucky lately, and therefore he would let him have his pipe and tobacco case, and take the value out in goods. The store-keeper's eyes brightened at the sight of the long desired pipe and case, and he hastily asked Leonard what he would have instead. Leonard forced a melancholy smile, and said that he could not purchase in the lordly fashion of young Fulldish, but he must have a pint bottle of ale for his father, a quarter loaf, a pound of potatoes, and a quarter of a pound of fresh butter; that would leave him ninepence, with which he could get a nice beef-steak for his father.

The man handed to him the articles, took the pipe and case, smiled again most sunnily, and then as suddenly, a cloud passing over his face, he said, "No! hang me if I can do it! Take 'em, mate—take 'em!"

"Do n't you want them?" asked Leonard, in alarm. "I thought you did."

"That's not it," said the man. "I'm blessed if I can do it. I know you do n't want to part with 'em. It's only for your ailing father; and though I often see such things, somehow—no! I won't have them, be hanged if I do!"

Leonard stood aghast. "What shall I do, then, for my poor father?"

"Do!" said the man, "why, what should you do? Take the things home as fast as you can, and cook them. I'll trust you, mate;—I'll trust you that, and more." He was hurrying away to his customers.

"But," said Leonard, seizing his sleeve, "if I am never able to pay?"

"Then I'll forgive you, mate—I'll forgive you. That matter will break no squares between us." He was gone.

Leonard hastened homeward, his heart considerably lightened. He had saved his favourite pipe and case, and he resolved, come what would, to pay the good-hearted store-keeper. As soon as he got back, Mark and he began cooking the potatoes and the steak, and boiling the kettle for tea,—the constant accompaniment of every meal. While they were busy over their fire, much busier were the Fulldishes just by. There was a wonderful running and bustling to and fro. The men were all in their best, and the women too, and yet all were busy about the fire boiling and roasting. There was a wonderful array of pots and kettles steaming round the great fire, and women coming out, ever and anon, and lifting up lids with long sticks thrust under the handles, and peep-

ing in, and laying on fresh logs. The clergyman had been and married the young couple, and christened the young child, the mother of which was now out, as well, and gay, and busy as any of them, for the child was two months old. All round through the diggings there was a stunning noise of firing off guns and pistols, and of barking dogs. There was the sound of fiddles, and of people dancing, in a great canvass tent near. There were people streaming to and fro in new wide-awakes and clean slops, some of blue and more of scarlet; and thus was Christmas Eve as noisy, and merry, and much hotter than it ever was in Europe.

But alas! poor Captain Blantyre!—he was excited by all this noise around him to a state of desperate irritability. “Fools! madmen! was that the way when people were lying ill? Could they not make themselves merry without actually killing their sick neighbours with their detestable din? The Commissioner ought to see to it; the police ought to put it down; the clergyman ought to warn them; but what did the parson care if he only got a good dinner!”

Leonard and Mark endeavoured to appease his anger by saying that it was only natural that the people should rejoice; and as to the noise, that was their way. “And dear father,” said Leonard, “if

you were well, you would be the first to enjoy the pleasure of your neighbours."

"If I were well," said the old man; "but then I am not well; and little they care for that. Well, well, a little while, and then it will be no matter."

The poor youths returned to their cooking. They fondly hoped that the sight of the little feast; the savory steak, the potatoes (none of which had entered their tent the last six months), and the panikin of foaming ale, would please him and do him good. They had a square piece of bark of about two feet each way. On this they spread a napkin, and on it arranged the smoking savoury steak, the beautifully boiled and steamed potatoes, the bread and fresh butter, and the ale in its bottle. The old gentleman's bed was on the floor of the tent; and they brought in their simple but inviting tray, and placed it by him. The old man lay with his eyes shut, but far from sleeping, for the heat was most oppressive. The sun for two months had blazed day after day through a cloudless sky, and everything was scorched into dryness; the air was motionless; the flies, as if excited to fury by the heat, were fierce and incessant in their attacks on the suffering old man, thereby immensely aggravating his irritability. Mark took up a green bough, and began beating them away, while Leonard, in

anxious expectation of the result, asked him if he would not take his dinner.

The captain opened his eyes, looked for a moment on the little banquet, and then said, "What is the meaning of this?"

"It means, dear father," said Leonard, "that we know you greatly need something refreshing. I hope you will enjoy these potatoes, and there is a little ale for you."

"Ale! potatoes!—and how did you get them? Where did they come from?"

"From the store, of course," said Leonard.

"Had you money to pay for them?" asked their father.

Leonard paused a moment, then said mildly, "No, dear father, what need?—the man knows me well; I have always paid him, and shall."

"O Lord! O Lord! more debt! more debt!" exclaimed the old man, throwing himself, with a groan, on his back, and again closing his eyes. Leonard stooped over him, entreating him to eat, and Mark waved his branch more agitatedly.

"Dearest father," said Leonard, "do oblige us by tasting the dinner. Don't trouble yourself about the cost; it really cost very little, and think what a pleasure you will give us."



The old man seemed somewhat softened by the distress of his children. He rose up again. "Well, well," said he, "but before I can eat, let me taste your beer."

Leonard, delighted, poured out a panikin, and handed it to his father. The old man took it, tasted it, and setting down the panikin, with a face of intense disgust, said, "Beer!—do you call that beer? It is poison. What might you give for that?"

"Only three shillings," said Leonard; "is it not good."

"Three shillings! three shillings for that stale rubbish; why it is the dregs of the cask! O Lord! O Lord! when you buy any more beer, just drink it yourselves." The old man flung himself down again, and spite of all the entreaties of his sons, refused to touch or taste anything. Leonard took up the panikin, and tasted the ale. His ill luck had attended its purchase, it was unquestionably vile stuff. He silently stole out of the tent, and going hastily into the wood, he there walked on for some time perfectly beside himself. His last fond endeavour to please and benefit his father thus to fail! What he had meant so well, so ill received! His heart seemed ready to break, and he saw nothing before them but, on the very verge of success, for his father to die in

the most melancholy condition that mortal could finish a sad life in.

He was thus at length seated on a fallen tree, sunk in the most gloomy dejection, hopeless, and wishing that they were all dead and buried, when there came the rapid tramp of a horse, and the rider suddenly stopped and gazed at Leonard.

Leonard was too much absorbed in his misery to notice for some time the horseman, but a kind, feeling voice, saying, "My dear young man, what great trouble oppresses you?" suddenly arrested his attention, and looking up he saw the well-known form of the venerable Anthony Pennicket. The good man had instantly been struck by the deep dejection of the youth's whole form and features. He was accustomed to read the faces of men inscribed by the pen of many passions and feelings, and he saw that here was no ordinary woe.

Leonard knew well the divine character of the man. It flashed through his heart that he was sent to be their saving angel, and springing up he seized the good man's hand in both his, and rapidly poured out to him all his troubles, and the crowning misery of the moment. Anthony Pennicket pressed Leonard's hands affectionately, and spoke to him in a manner that made the tears fall in impetuous showers on

the dusty earth. But as he wept he felt his heart relieved, and hope and peace, and a sublime confidence in God and in his devoted servant thus sent to him as it were from heaven, glow in his bosom.

He walked on by the side of Mr. Pennicket's horse towards their tent, answering as they went all that he asked him of their circumstances and his father's illness, and on coming near the place, the good man nodded kindly, smiled, and said he would call on his father directly, and then rode on to the Fulldishes' tent, where it was clear he was expected to dinner. With the tact for which he was as famous as for his piety,—a tact which sprung from the instinct of benevolence,—he at once hushed the noisy merriment there, and before he would sit down to dinner, he hastened into Captain Blantyre's tent, and telling him that he had heard of his indisposition, sat down, and entered into a kind and sympathising conversation with him. If there was a man on earth whom Captain Blantyre profoundly venerated, spite of his angry speech about the clergyman caring for nothing but a good dinner, it was Anthony Pennicket. His unexpected entrance into the tent, produced an effect almost miraculous. The captain was at first struck dumb; then recovering himself as he listened to the

kind and feeling tones of the noble missionary, he expressed himself most highly honoured and delighted by his visit. Mr. Pennicket said that he was waited for to dinner just now, but that he would come in again very soon: and with this cheering promise he left the old man wonderfully elated and improved. He had felt a keen sense of remorse for his unkind reception of his children's intended treat, after they had withdrawn in such evident distress, and thus favourably prepared for this auspicious event, he now sat up, and taking the hands of both the youths bade them forgive his hasty refusal of their kindness, and said he would now have the dinner, and even drink the wretched ale.

The youths, delighted, hastened to freshen up the steak in the fryingpan, and to heat the potatoes in part of the gravy. Dinner was speedily served up, and they drank their tea in unimaginable pleasure as they saw their father eat with an excellent appetite, and insist on their partaking of his steak and potatoes. He would have persisted in drinking the beer, too, vile as it was, to make amends for his ill-humour; but he was spared that by one of the young Fulldishes running over with a plate of grapes and a bottle of port, with Mr. Pennicket's compliments, and begging the captain and his sons to drink the health of the

new-married couple, and the new-christened baby, and the baby's mother.

In the afternoon, came the noble Apostle of the Wilderness himself. He sat down and conversed in such a pleasant, unostentatious, and yet impressive manner, that both the captain and his sons were charmed beyond measure. While Leonard and Mark took a walk into the wood to look at their horse, which fed in a little valley there, the old captain opened all his heart to the soothing, melting touches of the good clergyman's skilful and benign conversation; and Anthony Pennicket, on his part, praised the appearance and the evident goodness of the young men. To all this, and to their cleverness, and unwearied diligence, and affection for him, the captain zealously responded. On their return, the good man entered with a most benevolent spirit into their situation and their plans, and at his suggestion, every difficulty vanished as by magic. He proposed that two of the young Fulldishes, who were plain, uneducated young men, but of really warm hearts and clever heads, should join the two young Blantyre's at the river claim, and the captain consented to it at once.

The young men were struck with amazement; but such is the power of a great, good man. Before the

words of Anthony Pennicket, all difficulties, all hardships, all trouble had vanished. The very next morning, the four young men were at work on the claim. In three days, the stream was forced to contract itself into half its usual course, and the water-wheel screaming and revolving in the flood, was working the Californian belt-pump day and night, and laying dry the bottom of the other half of the river. Enough! after three months' work at that claim, Leonard and Mark found themselves masters of one thousand pounds. They bade good-bye to the rough but kind-hearted Fulldishes, and travelled down to a populous new digging, where the two young men have set up as auctioneers. Leonard is the auctioneer, Mark officiates as clerk, and at once their talents have drawn them an immense business. Tools, old and new, horses, drays, all imaginable kinds of goods, for the supply of the stores and individuals, come under their hammer, and they see themselves in the certain road to a large fortune.

Captain Blantyre has become wonderfully changed. The warmth of a fine, flowing sunshine of success, falling on the evening of his days, has opened his heart, cleared his breast of every irritable feeling, and he contemplates his admirable sons with an

extraordinary pride. He sees them now, as he has all his life longed to see them; wealthy, flourishing, and beloved. He has fallen in with a tall, elderly gentleman, who, like himself, has little to do. While his sons are engaged with business, these two old veterans read the newspaper together, and take together their daily walk. On one point they never can agree. The captain is a profound admirer of Wellington; his new friend is as ardent a worshipper of Buonaparte. On this point, they daily dispute, grow very warm, do n't know whether they shall not hate one another, and are on the point, every day about four o'clock, of leaving each other in a rage, and never speaking again. But Major Tobin, the tall old gentleman, will suddenly smile, put out his hand, saying, "Well, captain, I see we shall never agree on this point;" and so they shake hands heartily, and go home to dinner. And many a pleasant dinner, I may add, have the captain and his old new friend, and his two sons, had together, especially when the noble Apostle of the Wilderness drops in, as he always does on his journeys that way, taking up his lodging there for the time; leaving behind him when he departs a feeling as if the gates of heaven stood nearer to them, and as if soft airs and odours of blessedness were breathed forth from them all around.

“Bravo! bravo!” cried all the listeners. “You can preach yet, parson,” said Drayson.

“Tut, man!” said Docker; “preaching is easy enough, and yet I do n’t pretend to it. It does not become me. I am but one of the guide-post tribe: if I point the way even, I never move myself. But I’ll tell you what it is, doctor. I can tell a real man when I see him, as well as I can a first-rate wether or well-bred horse. That’s it, man. Old Parson Docker is a judge yet; and, in fact, where is there a better, doctor? where is there a better?” With this, the old squatter-parson rolled a rug round him, laid a pair of somebody’s boots under his head for a pillow, and was asleep in a second, by indubitable signs. The next morning, the company dispersed, and Tallangetta stood ready for fresh guests. It was become a sort of inn of the most agreeable description,—for after the feast there came no reckoning.



## CHAP. XX.

## THE GRAND DENOUEMENT.

THINGS were in this position when, one day, a considerable party were seated at dinner at Tallangetta, including Dr. Woolstan and the almost every-day guest, Dr. Spenser Grayson, assembled to meet Mr. Flavel, who, returned from his long tour, had just arrived at Charles's renewed invitation. Charles pleased himself with the idea that not only would the whole of his family be delighted with the aristocratic elegance and intellectual accomplishment of Flavel, but that he and Grayson would be mutually charmed to make each other's acquaintance. He had felt proud in the anticipation of seeing two such men at once under their roof. But, as is the case with many mortal hopes, in this Charles was grievously disappointed. Flavel had arrived, and was at once a favourite with the whole family. Mr. Fitzpatrick knew his father, and was well acquainted with his family history and standing. They conversed with

much mutual interest on many English and Irish topics. But the moment that Flavel was introduced to Grayson, he made a most cold and formal move, and did not even extend his hand to meet the readily extended hand of Grayson; but withdrew and sat down, cold and cloudy, at a distance. The shock was most painful to all present. Dr. Grayson, least of all, seemed to feel it. He appeared quite at his ease, talked, gossiped with the ladies, and told a number of anecdotes with great vivacity and humour. Opposite to him, at table, sat Flavel, handsome, cold, grave, and silent. Charles tried to break this ice, so chilling to all around him, except to the gravely gay and loquacious Grayson, by referring to his visit to Bullarook, to Crouchy, and to the triumph of Randall at the trial, which they had never had an opportunity of discussing. Nothing succeeded: Flavel remained immoveably taciturn, or merely monosyllabic.

The conversation turned on an extraordinary highwayman, who was astonishing the whole colony. This man had robbed a great number of the mails, without the slightest trace of him being obtained. In his audacity of success, he had written to the post-master-general, saying, that he would rob every mail in the colony, and defying him to prevent it. It now

turned out, by comparing this letter with MSS. in the hands of the editors of the *Argus* newspaper, that all this time, this highwayman had been sending to that paper the most beautiful and original poems they had ever received.

“A most curious and amusing anecdote,” said Spenser Grayson, “has come to my knowledge, regarding this man. On one occasion lately, he and his gang, for it appears he has a number of confederates, were seated round their fire in a wood. They were very merry, having been very lucky in waylaying a large quantity of gold, and this man suddenly exclaimed: ‘A capital lark! The Wangaratta mail is just now about coming up. It carries no money of any value, but it will be good fun to take and read the letters; it will help to pass off jocosely the evening.’ No sooner said than done, and thus, not for plunder, but for the joke of reading people’s letters, did these fellows rob the mail.”

“How in the world did you come to know that?” exclaimed Dr. Woolstan.

“Nothing easier,” said Flavel, laconically, now volunteering a remark.

“How! What!” said Grayson; “how so easy, Mr. Flavel?”

“ Nothing so easy,” dryly rejoined Flavel, “ as a man telling his own story.”

The whole table was electrified.

“ Now that is too severe,” said Grayson, smiling, yet reddening at the same time. “ What a strange man is this Mr. Flavel!” thought the ladies. “ What can we do with such a man?”

“ Yes, I recollect, thought Mr. Fitzpatrick to himself; “ there is something in that family,—second-sight,—or, is it something more,—insanity?”

While the company was in this unpleasant, jarred, and awkward state, suddenly a number of horses were heard entering the court hastily. There was a sudden halt, and the next moment, the door opened, and in walked Mr. Peter Martin, hot with galloping in the sun, and with his riding-whip in his hand. If a spirit or a demon had made its *entree* there, it could not have produced a more violent shock. All rose from the table hastily, and with one accord. The ladies, terrified, were already in flight; Mr. Fitzpatrick stood pale, his lips quivering with rage and amazement, yet violently endeavouring to show himself collected before his guests. The amaze of everyone was beyond expression; it was still greater, when, at the back of the abominated Mr. Martin, abominated by the heads of this family, appeared a

sergeant of police, preceding at least a dozen of his men.

Mr. Peter Martin, calm, self-possessed, and confident, advanced into the centre of the room, and turning opposite to Dr. Spenser Grayson, said to the police, "That is your man, make sure of him." When all eyes were turned upon Grayson, that gentleman was seen standing with a pale but determined face, and a revolver already in his hand.

"Whoever attempts to touch me is a dead man," he said, defiantly. The next moment, the head of the police ordered his men to advance and take him. As they made the first move of their feet, the revolver was discharged, but Dr. Woolstan, who stood at Grayson's right hand, struck up his arm, and the bullet passed through the upper part of an opposite window, cutting its way so clean that it made not the slightest fracture, but only left a circular hole, perfect as a wadding punch cuts its round in a sheet of cardboard. The next instant Dr. Woolstan, with a powerful grasp, had pinioned the desperado's arms, and the police flung themselves upon him. After a desperate struggle he was secured and bound.

"And now sir," said Mr. Martin, turning to Mr. Fitzpatrick, "let me apologise for this disagreeable intrusion."

“Oh, pray make no apology, Mr. Martin,” said Mr. Fitzpatrick, with a stern and bitter irony, “whatever you do, at least where I am concerned, is disagreeable.”

“That is only too true,” replied Mr. Martin, gravely, but with feeling. “That is my fate, that is my misfortune; but let me explain this act, and I think you will admit that it is, at least, necessary.”

Mr. Fitzpatrick nodded to him to proceed; the ladies who had nearly reached the door, turned and listened intently.

“The other day a party of highwaymen robbed the Wangaratta mail.” All now listened with a startled attention. “They robbed it, singularly enough, not for necessity, nor for cupidity, but for what they called a lark. They desired to read the letters for their evening’s amusement over their fire.” Why, thought every one, “this is the very story that Grayson has just been telling. How odd!”

“Well sir, they read the letters, and much merriment was produced by the exposure of the private affairs and sentiments of the writers. But the attention of one man was arrested by the address of a letter which fell into his hands; it was to that man,” pointing to Grayson. “The holder of the letter opened it; he had strong reasons for so doing.

He was the paid spy on this family, and the address of this letter was in the hand of his own patron and employer."

"On this family!" said Mr. Fitzpatrick, in astonishment. There was an exclamation of wonder and alarm amongst the ladies. Mr. Martin went on. "A paid spy on this family; he opened the letter and found that there was a second paid spy, on himself, and on this family likewise." Here the sensation was extreme. "That second spy is Dr. Spenser Grayson, better known as the celebrated forger, George Hersant." At this declaration there was a perfect shriek of terror amongst the ladies. Dr. Grayson, the pleasant, the favourite guest, a paid spy upon them; the convict forger Hersant, the robber of mails, the associate of highwaymen!

"Sir," said Mr. Fitzpatrick, "you are of course, prepared to prove all this."

"Oh, most amply prepared. Listen, Sir Thomas."

"I beg, Mr. Martin, you will forego that title; I do not yet know that it is mine; I do not use it, and I count it in those who do simply a mockery."

"Sir Thomas," continued Mr. Martin, "I know you by no other title; I have never acknowledged it in any other man, and I never will. Listen; in a few words I will tell you what concerns you on this

point. From the hour you set foot on this ground your steps have been dogged, and your return to your native land withstood, if necessary, by your death and the death of your son. Need I say with what object, or by whom instigated?"

An expression of horror went through the whole company. When Mr. Fitzpatrick had a little recovered his self-possession, and recalled the strange warning of Dr. Woolstan, he said, "Can this be true?"

"Oh, too true!" continued Mr. Martin. In few words, the case is this: Mr. Patrick Fitzpatrick, the successor of your title and estate, hired a man called Morillier, a Swiss, whom you once exposed and punished for fraud on the course" (Sir Thomas's expression showed that he fully recollected this), "to follow you here. He was commissioned to commit no violence, except in case you or your son contemplated a return to England. That was to be prevented at any cost. The man was well paid, but fell into bad company and habits — as was his nature — and under the suspicions of his paymaster. Then was selected and sent out that serpent who has found his way into your very family; and, under the title of a naturalist, into that of many others. A lucky



accident has brought to light and to an end this villany."

"But," said Sir Thomas, "may I ask how you came to be aware of all this?"

"I have been aware of it from the first. I was at once informed of it by Mr. Banks, your late steward, and now the steward of Patrick Fitzpatrick."

"An arrant traitor," said Sir Thomas; "I would not believe a word of his."

"A most singularly, incorruptibly honest and honourable man," persisted Mr. Martin, "and one of the truest, best friends you have, Sir Thomas."

"What! the man that continued with the knave who robbed his master!"

"Who continued there to serve that master!" said Mr. Martin, emphatically. "It was to serve you, Sir Thomas, that he remained in the service of the usurper. How could he serve you so much?—and how entirely he has served you! At once he informed me of this plot; and that moment I set out to defeat it."

"You! you!—is that possible!" exclaimed Sir Thomas. The ladies clasped their hands in amazement, and drew eagerly near.

"It is for that alone that I came here; for that alone that I am here. What other inducement could

I have? At home have I not fortune, friends, and congenial duties and pursuits? But now I have done what was necessary. Morillier, like many others, thought I was your enemy, because I kept aloof, and he unbosomed himself to me. He has, by my advice, submitted to government, on condition that he shall turn queen's evidence against this villain and the gang, and shall be allowed to retire to New Zealand.

"Can it be possible then that you have been acting as my friend?" said Sir Thomas. "You bewilder me. Why then did you not sooner inform me of this?"

"The time was not come," continued Mr. Martin; "the affair was not ripe; you would not have believed me; besides, I had other work to do."

"What other work?" demanded Sir Thomas.

"Dismiss the police with their prisoner; I will then explain myself. Mr. Waller," he added, turning to the serjeant of police, "you can take your prisoner."

The police withdrew with the quondam Dr. Spencer Grayson in their midst. What a dream it appeared to all who knew him; how curious the instinctive knowledge of his character and even of his deeds by Mr. Flavel.

When they had withdrawn, Mr. Martin said, "Sir Thomas, it has long been my misfortune to stand in a hostile position to you. I will go no farther than is necessary into this unhappy history, because it can do no good; and happily I hold the key to the whole, and, as I believe, the key to perfect concord, and to your full restoration to fortune and title, in my hand." The astonishment of the whole company was unbounded. He continued: "Your mother and my mother were sisters—dear sisters. When my mother died early, your mother behaved to me as to a son. I loved her as my mother; I have loved her memory; and have lived to fulfil her dearest wishes. She always feared what has come to pass—the waste of your fortune—the loss of your title and estate. For some time before she died she had information, the ambassador being dead and his chaplain not findable, that Patrick Fitzpatrick treated her marriage as apocryphal, and would some day attempt to secure the estate. She bound me by an oath to take no part, should such circumstances arise, till you were thoroughly cured by the loss of everything of your ruinous passion for the turf. There you have the secret of my standing aloof, and of never assisting you during your trials by any offer of my ample means. Well, here you are; your fortune,

your title, are usurped by another, and as for you, I rejoice to say it, I am persuaded that you are thoroughly cured of your fatal passion, that you are a new man, —your mother's whole plan is accomplished. I therefore now put into your hand the sealed packet of your mother, and I shall be greatly disappointed and deceived if it do not contain the long, vainly sought certificate of your parents' marriage." He presented the packet, which Sir Thomas took mechanically, but still held as if he were in a dream. The extraordinary recital which he had heard had indeed perfectly confounded and paralysed his faculties.

At once Aunt Judith exclaimed: "Oh, brother! it is our dear mother's letter, let me open it." She was proceeding to take it from his hand, but the action seemed to rouse him; he held it fast, saying: "Nay, Judy, nay; it is for me." He tore it open, gazed a moment on a paper which it enclosed, and let the whole fall to the ground. At the same time he sate down in his chair, laid his head on the table, and burst into a passion of tears. Aunt Judith again rushed forward, snatched up the papers, and running her eyes rapidly through them, exclaimed: "It is so, it is so! it is my mother's marriage certificate. And what is this? it is a letter. 'My Dear Son,—The day that you open this will be a day over

which I shall rejoice in heaven. A day of triumph over yourself and your dark fortunes. May God for ever bless you and yours.

“‘MARY MORTON FITZPATRICK.’”

It would be useless to attempt to describe the scene which took place. The tears, the embracings, the congratulations in which Mr. Martin became a principal figure. All at once comprehended the greatness and nobility of his character, which had made him willing for years to endure the ill-will and misconceptions of his nearest relatives for a sacred duty and the accomplishment of a grand object. Sir Thomas Fitzpatrick was amongst the first to make this acknowledgement. He stepped forward, embraced Mr. Martin with the affection of their early years, and told him he should never live long enough to do full justice to the nobility of his friendship and the beautiful steadfastness of his character. Mr. Martin shook him by the hand, and held it and shook it still, while tears rolled down his cheeks, but he could not utter a word. Where now was that iron stoicism of his nature, that unbendable fortitude? all gone, all melted away in the tenderness and the depth of feelings which always underlie such strength.

What more need we say? Much followed, but

of that we propose to say but little. Charles, after rushing frantically on Mr. Martin, and clasping him in a vehement embrace, as suddenly dashed away, half blinded by his tears, and was gone. Gone whither? He was galloping over the ground towards the station of Bongubine, where he sprung into the house, caught first Sara Martin, and then Mrs. Martin, in an embrace as startling as that he had given to Mr. Martin himself, and then exclaimed: "It is all out! it is all right! We have our own again! My father is restored to his own, or will be; and best of all, it is through cousin Martin, and we are all friends!"

The ladies smiled, for they had been expecting some such news, and Sara Martin blushed very red, and never looked so beautiful as when Charles added: "And now you are mine, and nobody will say nay, not even yourself, you stubborn, good, dear creature."

Charles could not rest till they had the gig brought out, and went off with him to what he called their grand jubilee.

At Tallangetta, a curious as well as merry scene had taken place. After the excitement had somewhat subsided, and Sir Thomas, looking at the marriage certificate, said, "We shall have no trouble. This little document presented in Court will put all the

Patrick Fitzpatrick to flight like a morning mist before the sun. But still it would have been as well if we had had the living evidence of the chaplain who signed it, this Thomas Tucker."

"I have him too," said Mr. Martin. "He is at this very moment in your kitchen, regaling himself on beef and brandy, and killing your servants with laughter at his sallies."

"Indeed!" exclaimed all. "How extraordinary!"

"It was very remarkable," continued Mr. Martin, "but one of the very first names which caught my ear in this colony was that of Tucker — Parson Tucker, as he is universally called, for he is one of the most public men in it. He, long ago, had his gown stripped off because of his habits of carousing. He shook the dust off his feet against the pulpit, and is now a squatter, with his one hundred thousand pounds, and famed for his wit, his sarcasm, his love of low company, and his bottle. No man makes a bargain like him when he is sober, or drinks like him when it is done. I have his affidavit of his identity, and of the genuineness of this signature, taken by the principal law officer of the colony before the governor himself."

No one could sufficiently admire the discovery of this most important man by Mr. Martin, and the

business-like manner in which he had done every thing.

“But,” said Mr. Martin, “here comes the man himself, drunk as a lord.” And there appeared a tall, thin man, with very white hair, and a very red, merry face, who came forward, putting out a hand to shake with every one, and saying, “Ha! ha! my hearties! I am the man. I am Parson Tucker, that married you. Ah! there you are, pretty madam! Bless me!” seizing the hand of Georgina, and holding her directly before him. “Bless me! why, just the same; grown no older! Well, that is wonderful. But, by wattles and gum-tree! that’s not fair, now. I’m grown old, white-headed, have a dozen sons and daughters as big as you. Old Parson Tucker, they call me; and you, why, you’re just the same pretty girl. And Sir Thomas! Aha! well, you are a little older, but not half so old as me yet. Bless me! it must be this climate, and brandy—some say brandy makes one old. But I do n’t know; everybody must get old, only this wonderful young missis here.”

“It was my grandmother that you knew, sir;” cried Georgina, laughing merrily.

“Grandmother! nonsense; I know you. Ah! you were always a merry one. Aha! Martin, my friend; come, you do n’t ask me to drink. What have you



got there? We must have a nobbler together after all this."

"There is wine;" said Mr. Martin. "I have no doubt Sir Thomas will make you welcome."

"Pshaw! wine! trash, trash; give me some good brandy."

"Well, to-morrow;" said Mr. Martin. "But now, it is time to retire."

"Retire! what! go to bed? Nonsense! it is not time; it is daylight:" looking about on the table, and nearly oversetting different decanters. "Fah! I shall go back into the kitchen; there are jolly fellows there, and capital brandy. Good-bye! good-bye!" and feeling his way along the wall for support, he made his way out.

"And that," said Sir Thomas, "is the man that I have heard my father and mother describe as one of the most gentlemanly, modest, agreeable young men they ever met with. What cannot men make of themselves for good or for evil!" In the morning, amongst the guests at breakfast, this same Mr. Tucker appeared, sober, acute, well-behaved, and full of the soundest information about the colony, and curious reminiscences of his life in India, in the South Seas, in Sydney, and here. He invited them to visit him at his house up the country; which some one, when

he was gone, said was one of the finest places in the colony.

And now, for an adieu to Tallangetta. Amid all the joy of this great turn of affairs, every one of the Fitzpatrick's looked with deep regret to quitting it. Three years had just rolled round since they came. The spring was here once more in its glory. Once more, those magnificent prairies were rolling their billows of vegetable gold, brilliant, gorgeous, and fragrant. Once more they gazed from their happy home, over that lovely lake and those vast woods, to the blue summits of the distant mountains. They had found friends, kind, cordial, intelligent, and now dear. With some disquiets and anxieties, their short years of life here now assumed an aspect of pre-eminent beauty, newness, and happiness. Great duties, and great advantages, called them back to their native land, or they could well have been content to remain here. It was not possible to think of tearing themselves away without heartfelt sadness.

They were even glad of the excuse of staying till they had disposed of their station, and sent on the necessary documents and orders to reclaim their property in England, and rid it of the intruders. These were sent; but as for the station, Mr. Martin said, why dispose of it at all? He should not dispose

of his. He had made an arrangement with Jonas Popkins as overseer and third shareholder, and was satisfied that the capital invested would pay him ten-fold what it would in England. Why not hold estates here as well as in the West Indies?

“A capital idea!” said Sir Thomas, “but where will you find us another Jonas Popkins?”

“Not a Popkins,” said Mr. Martin, “but a Randall; a man in a thousand, and who deserves the very best which fortune can bestow on him.”

The idea was seized and acted upon. Mr. Randall agreed to quit his desert, leaving Crouchy on it till it could be disposed of. For some months, therefore, the Fitzpatrick family lingered on at Tallangetta, making the best use of their stay by enjoying the society of their friends. They spent days and weeks amongst them, or had them about them at Tallangetta. They made a visit, when at Bongubine, to Lahni mill, and found the Popkinses there enjoying all the quiet happiness of that beautiful scenery. Abijah was as sturdy as old Time himself. A regular sober, rusty, dusty miller, admiring his little active wife, who had now a round rosy face, and a clear blue eye reflecting not merely the colour of the sky, but the joy of the heaven above it. The Fitzpatricks took wonderfully to the old people and the young ones

too. Mrs. Patty was an especial favourite with Sir Thomas and Lady Fitzpatrick. Mr. Martin treated her quite as a daughter. Aunt Judith got up quite a flirtation with Jonas. She was continually in laughter at his odd ideas so gravely and innocently expressed.

She went out one day with him to collect some early mushrooms, which he assured her were a species of carnations, because they were said to contain some of the properties of flesh, and carnations were called after flesh. He said that, if he could afford it, he would put a Thames Tunnel under the Campaspe, to go through in floods. "But it would not be a Thames Tunnel," said Aunt Judith, "it would be a Campaspe Tunnel." "No," said Jonas, "that can't be, because there is no Campaspe Tunnel, it is under the Thames, and therefore is a Thames Tunnel." Out of that Aunt Judith could not drive him. But what amused her still more was that he told her he meant to marry when he was twenty. And when she asked him who was his intended,<sup>6</sup> he said, "Oh! she was in England, they had made it up as they sat by a well when they were only ten years old." "But," said Aunt Judith, "if she was ten then, she is seventeen now, and may have fallen in love with some one else." "Oh, no!" said Jonas,

“for I have written and asked her, and she says she has always been true to me, and can very well wait for three more years.”

This tickled the fancy of Aunt Judith immensely, that this faithful couple could afford to wait a few years at the great ages of seventeen.

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But time has passed on. The Fitzpatricks at length bade a regretful adieu to Tallangetta, and sailed for England. They found their old house and estates all ready for them. Great events have taken place. Charles, with the full approbation of all parties, has married Sara Martin, and prides himself more every day on her beauty and her sense. Georgina is become Lady Dunallen, for Flavel came over with them in time to add comfort to the last days of his father; and it is a curious psychological fact, that since he has become more attached to a wife he has had less intercourse with the spirit of his sister. The growing environments of the visible life here, as it were, draws a veil over the invisible; but never was the young Lord Dunallen more contented with his lot.

Both he and Charles talk of making a visit, one of

these days, to their old haunts and friends at the antipodes, for they remember their abode there as a beautiful and novel portion of their existence, and retain the fondest affection for the Squatter's Home, whether it were in the Desert of Bullarook, or on the lovely heights of Tallangetta.

One rather singular circumstance took place on the removal of the Fitzpatrick's to England ; Peggy Wilks would go with them. Abner, on the contrary, would not move. He liked the climate, liked the people about him, liked to grow grapes, melons, and peaches without hot-houses or walls. More than that, he was getting rich. "By all means, let Peggy go," said he, "if she likes to accompany my lady. I shall contrive to do till she comes back."

"Comes back!" cried Peggy, "do n't thee expect that, Abner. I know what's what, and I prefer the fine, fresh, healthy climate of England, my native air, to this fly-blown, sweltering country, with the year turned wrong end-ways."

Peggy went: but arriving in her native air in February, and having a full dose of the damp and the east wind for the next five months, she declared the climate of England had been ruined whilst she was away, and was done for for ever. Having had

influenza upon influenza, and bronchitis in all its force, as soon as she could regain a little of her strength, she bundled up, and set sail back again.

“What!” said Abner, when he saw her come riding up to the huts in a wool-dray, which had been down to Melbourne, “come back again, Peggy, to this poor, fly-blown country?”

“Yes, come am I,” said Peggy, “forced to it, thou may be sure, or I never should. But the climate of England is done for. It is all over with it since we left. Steam and railroads must have done it, for I can think of nothing else, but it’s acchully unbearable. Oh! what have n’t I gone through, with colds and coughings, and stuffings and sneezings, and sore throats, and pains in my chest, and pains in my limbs, and shooting pains all over me, and qualms and water-tawms in my stomach, surely nobody ever seed what a climate it is become. They’ve got new diseases since we left, called infernelzer, and brown-katies, that fairly pull the soul out of you. And so I’m forced to put up with this poor colondy, or I’d never a come sixteen thousand miles of water-carriage to it again.”

Peggy opened her boxes, put her clothes into her drawers, spread out a smart new suit of clothes for Abner, including a cotton-velvet jacket, and a

dozen new shirts, made by a patent, she said, in London, and warranted to fit anybody without measuring. And with that, having effectually stopped Abner's mouth, she has been observed to keep her own pretty close about the climate of Australia, but opens it very wide about the ruination of the English weather. That is her bulwark against the occasional sly jokes of her neighbours, and especially of Banks and Purdy, who often come in of an evening, and hold a chat in the garden house of Tallangetta.

THE END.

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