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THE BRIGHT TO-MORROW.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

WALLACE J. HARDING,

BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

VOL. II.

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THE BRIGHT TO-MORROW.

CHAPTER I.

THE SQUATTER'S HOME.

THE Station at which Godfrey Beechworth had obtained employment was near Winchelsea, about twenty-three miles from Geelong. There were a good many head of cattle upon it, but it was principally stocked with sheep. It was called Ferntree Station, and was a very large one, being about twenty miles in length by eight or nine in breadth. The homestead was built within thirty or forty

yards of the Barwon River, there rather a wide rapid stream. Beechworth's journey to Mr. Forrester's station was agreeable enough, taking two days to perform. The weather was fine, but the ruts in the road, little better a great part of the distance, than a rude cattle track, formed an immense impediment to the progress of heavy vehicles. Every here and there a stoppage also occurred in consequence of some fallen tree, or huge log lying across the path, which had to be moved out of the way before the dray could proceed. The bullocks, a team of four, toiled slowly along, while their driver, Mr. Thomas Lumley, walked by the side of them, shouting, and using his long whip energetically on their hides.

Godfrey kept him company on foot, for he did not care to sit, as he was pressed to do by the farmer, upon the dray, the jolting of which over the primitive road was enough almost to shake anyone to pieces.

This was the young man's first journey

"up-country," as it is called, and it seemed to him full of life and interest.

It was the early part of September, and the Australian Bush at that time of year is very beautiful. Indeed, the trees stretching away in wild avenues all around him, as far as his gaze could reach, together with the bright grass-covered land, that had a lawn-like appearance, made the youth almost imagine himself at times in the midst of some glorious old English park. At intervals during the journey, tall kangaroos bounded across the track, and by a succession of tremendous leaps fled out of view.

Beechworth could not help feeling a little astonished at the farmer's strength of lungs, for Mr. Lumley scarcely ever stopped swearing at the bullocks during the whole way. He incessantly hurled the most blasphemous, pitiless oaths at the animals, and, as if cursing had become a necessary stimulant to them, whenever he ceased to swear they slackened their pace. Godfrey observing this, ventured

to indulge in a jocular remark upon the circumstance, whereupon Mr. Lumley said—

"Why, you see, bullocks don't understand civil language. They're like sailors, who won't work unless they're properly sworn at; and if oxen could talk, I've no manner of doubt their speech would be chiefly made up of curses. You can't manage the brutes without a good stock of oaths, and it isn't every sort of them, either, that they care for, as you'll soon find out."

Whereupon, the farmer again lashed away at the bullocks, and showered a fresh heap of curses upon them.

"One day, in Little Collins Street, Melbourne," he narrated, by way of illustrating his theory about the instinctive appreciation of swearing by oxen, "a team of bullocks lying in the road, stubbornly refused to rise. The dray they were yoked to was heavily laden, and I suppose the beasts thought they had strained at it enough; whereupon the driver commenced a terrific

volley of oaths at them, cursing the brutes alternately by name. After continuing to swear at them, like a devil, for nearly ten minutes, they at last got up, and again pulled away at the dray. A parson going by at the time, upbraided the driver for his blasphemy, exclaiming,

"'My good man, I'm sure you could get your bullocks to work without all those oaths. Give me your whip a moment, and let me try kind words, to show how you ought to manage them.'

"The man at once agreed to let him take a turn at driving the team; whereupon the parson, smacking the whip, began to address the bullocks in a loud but gentle tone.

"'Come up, Strawberry,' cried he to the foremost animal, boasting that favorite name.

"Flourishing his whip, he then with soothing shouts made a similar appeal to all the team in turn. The result was, that gradually slackening their pace, they quickly, one after

another, lay down in the road, and not all the peaceful exhortations of the parson could get them to rise again. Thereupon the driver, out of patience, snatching the whip from his Reverence, recommenced cursing in a style that made the street re-echo with a horrible cannonading of oaths, and the bullocks were speedily on their way once more.

"'Well!' exclaimed the parson, 'upon my word, after all, oxen don't understand any other language than that of swearing.'

"Losing his temper for a moment, he shouted out to the animals as he went away, 'You are a damnation set of queer brutes!'

"Hereupon the bullocks pricked up their ears, and at once quickened their pace, which brought home to the parson his temporary indulgence in unclerical language."

With a variety of other anecdotes of colonial life Beechworth was entertained. When they arrived within about two miles of the homestead of Ferntree Station, the farmer, after

pointing out a foot-track that led to Mr. Forrester's house, wished the young man "good bye."

The last five miles of their road had been across a large plain, at one end of which appeared Mount Gellibrand, and up to the foot of it the Run of Godfrey's employer extended. When he parted from Mr. Lumley, the youth could make out in the distance the house of Mr. Forrester, surrounded by groups of gum-trees, that appeared to have been expressly planted to shelter the homestead as much as possible from the winds. The farmer admonished him not to get off the path, as otherwise he might find himself stopped by water-gullies. Godfrey, after leaving him, walked leisurely along the scarcely discernible track leading to the homestead of his employer.

It was sunset, and the glowing varied tints of sky and earth as the orb of day gradually disappeared beneath the apparently boundless plain, made up a scene of peculiar impressiveness. Indulging in sundry re-

flections, respecting the new career he was about to enter upon, he passed the outer-fence surrounding the homestead, traversed a large yard, along one side of which were stables with out-houses, and walking through a well-kept garden, reached the house.

His knock at the door was at once answered by a maid-servant; and Mr. Forrester, who had returned from Melbourne a few days before, came into the hall to welcome him.

The young man was immediately introduced to the squatter's wife, a stout matron, who bade him take a seat in the parlour, and make himself at home.

Nothing could be more cheerful than the interior of the house, which, without being luxuriously furnished, wanted nothing in the way of comfort. It was a large stone building, and in every respect worthy of being the residence of a wealthy squatter like Mr. Philip Forrester.

Godfrey soon sat down to a sumptuous evening meal in a back-parlor, the windows

of which looked out upon the Barwon River. At the table with him were Mr. Forrester, his wife, and daughter. The latter, who was addressed by the others as Beatrice, was about sixteen. Beechworth's first impression was that he had never looked upon such a beautiful being in his life, except in his dreams.

She was tall for her age, had a wealth of beautiful jet black hair, with almost pure Grecian features, while her complexion was of dazzling fairness and purity. Her voice was lusciously sweet, and she chatted laughingly away in a natural manner, wholly unconscious of her own beauty. There was a total absence about her of the cramped manners common to English girls; although she might lack polished refinement, in the opinion of some. Her education had evidently not been neglected, as was clear to any one listening to her conversation. Nevertheless, she appeared, what she was, a simple child of nature, who, having been brought up wholly in the Bush, was as innocent of the conven-

tional proprieties of society, as of its affectations.

She talked away to Godfrey during the evening as though she had known him for years; and the young man was delighted to reply to her questions about England. He could not tire of listening to her musical voice, and when he went to bed that night it still seemed to haunt him.

On the following morning Mr. Forrester began to initiate Godfrey in the duties of his new position. The young man accompanied him on horseback over the station, and was made acquainted with the number of sheep and cattle on it, as well as introduced to the various shepherds and others in the squatter's employ.

Godfrey in no long period after his arrival, became a useful assistant-overseer to Mr. Forrester, who frequently expressed great satisfaction with him.

In the meanwhile, the young man was very happy, for he was treated with much

kindness by his employer and his wife. There was a head overseer upon the station, who lived at a cottage some distance from the homestead, and with him it had been the intention of Mr. Forrester that Beechworth should reside. This purposed arrangement, however, was not carried out, in consequence of opposition to it on the part of the squatter's wife. After her first day's acquaintance with the young man, she persuaded her husband that it would be better for Godfrey to reside at the homestead.

He found himself, therefore, destined to live under the same roof as Beatrice Forrester, a small cosy bedroom being assigned to him, in which he spent many quiet hours, writing and reading, after all the others in the house had gone to bed.

He quickly learnt all the duties of sheep-station overseer; and also became a skilful rider, as well as an excellent shot with the rifle. Mr. Forrester had given him one for the purpose of shooting the wild dogs, or "dingoes,"

as they are called, that sometimes attacked the flocks. After a time he bought a double-barrelled gun, and occasionally found capital sport in the bush. Wild turkeys and emus often frequented outlying portions of Fern-tree Station, and kangaroos were also plentiful a few miles from the homestead.

One evening, about ten days after Godfrey's arrival at Mr. Forrester's, he was returning home, having taken a letter for his employer to a squatter living some two leagues off, when he saw, half a mile or so from him, a large blazing tree, in a red-hot glow. He perceived near it, an encampment of aborigines. They had evidently lighted the tree as the simplest means of making a fire, because there was no loose timber lying about.

The young man turned his horse towards them, for Mr. Forrester had given him orders not to allow the natives to burn the live trees on the station. On getting up to them, he made signs to them to go elsewhere and encamp on some spot where

there might be loose timber. They pretended not to understand him, and being armed with long spears, tomahawks, and boomarangs, they made threatening gestures at him. Godfrey, however, was not to be easily frightened, and drawing a revolver, which the head overseer had lent him, he rode into the midst of the aborigines, some fifteen in number, and insisted upon their making off at once. They thoroughly understood the nature of the weapon, and prepared to obey.

One of them, however—while Beechworth was reconnoitering a fast approaching horseman—hurled a spear that would certainly have pierced the young man's arm, had he not avoided it by a quick movement. Godfrey, by practice on board ship at the sea fowl with his revolver, which he sold to the steward on quitting the "Lancy" had become an adept with that formidable weapon; and in the present instance, he might easily have shot the native who thus attacked him. He,

however, simply fired over the head of the savage who instantly, thereupon, took to flight with the other aborigines.

The horseman whom the young man had noticed approaching, came up at the moment.

Beechworth, to his immense astonishment, discovered that he was no other than Frederick Hill, his ship-companion spoken of, as having come on board the "Lancy," at Swan River Settlement, with the object of joining his uncle, a squatter, in Victoria.

When mutual surprise at this unexpected rencounter had given way to questions and explanations, Godfrey found out that Frederick Hill was the nephew of Mr. Forrester. The young Australian was at present superintending for his uncle a "Run" that the latter possessed, about thirty miles from Winchlesea. Not having recently been to Ferntree Station, or seen Mr. Forrester since his return from Melbourne, he had heard nothing about his uncle's engagement of Godfrey.

Beatrice had often spoken of her cousin Frederick in Beechworth's presence; but as the latter never yet heard him mentioned at the homestead by his surname, he had not suspected that the subject of conversation was his Australian ship-companion.

The two young men rode back together to Mr. Forrester's house, chatting merrily on the way. Frederick was welcomed by the squatter and his wife with many warm greetings, and Beatrice submitted to several kisses from her cousin.

He stayed at the homestead the whole of the following day, and then his uncle, the head overseer, and Godfrey, accompanied him back to the Station in the Colac district that he was superintending, in order that they might assist at a cattle-muster.

A great deal of rain had lately fallen, and during several days it poured in torrents. Beechworth never enjoyed anything more in his life, than his break-neck ride while mustering the cattle. The creeks and

gullies were swollen to torrents, and a great part of the country besides was flooded. Those joining in the muster had frequently to swim their horses across foaming streams, strewn with floating timber and other obstacles; sometimes to fly at full gallop through the forest, where there was imminent danger of the horsemen being dashed against the trees, crowding thick and close together; or to descend dangerous ravines at a mad pace. Beechworth, who had learnt to use the "stock-whip" skilfully, played his part that day to the gratification of his employer, and won the unbounded admiration of Mr. Donovan, the head overseer.

Mr. Forrester and Godfrey returned, after an absence of three days, to Ferntree Station. Before parting Frederick Hill was pressed to pay a visit every week, if possible, to his uncle's house; and as he was in love with Beatrice, he was not likely to neglect the invitation.

There was no engagement between them,

but their betrothal was contemplated by her parents. Hill's father was a wealthy man, and he was an only child, so that Mr. Forrester looked forward with pleasure to their marriage. He knew that the young man had formed a warm attachment to his daughter. She, however, was not in love with her cousin, and often told him so frankly. He and his uncle, nevertheless, fully anticipated that she would, if pressed, embrace the contemplated match.

In the meanwhile, Beatrice Forrester had fallen deeply in love with Godfrey Beechworth.

Her parents had not noticed this attachment, but she could not hide from the jealous eyes of her Australian lover, her preference for the young Englishman.

In personal attractions, Godfrey, indeed, far outshone his rival.

Frederick Hill had almost a plain appearance, with mind below the average.

On the other hand, Beechworth was hand-

some as well as intellectual, and possessed many of those attractions which fascinate the imagination of young girls.

Beatrice's cousin was usually good natured and amiable; but from violent jealousy he became morose and petulant. He ended by cherishing an intense hatred of Beechworth, who, on his part, continued, however, to cultivate kindly feelings towards the Australian. When the Squatter was away from home for a day or two, as occasionally happened, Godfrey accompanied Beatrice on horseback in her morning rides; for Mr. Forrester did not like to trust his daughter to take such exercise alone, and nevertheless, was very particular that she should not omit it in fine weather. The young man could not be blind to her attachment towards him, and before long from being thrown constantly in her society, he experienced a kind of fascination that resulted in a passion for the young girl.

The image of Ellen Castlemaine would, nevertheless, sometimes arise in his mind to

reprove him. If she indeed had been near him, no doubt her influence would quickly have prevailed over the charms of Beatrice Forrester. Godfrey, however, argued with himself that his romantic love for Ellen Castlemaine was not only fruitless, but hopeless. What little probability there was, he thought, of his ever seeing her again, and even if they did meet hereafter, what earthly chance had he of winning her for his wife? With such reasonings, Godfrey nursed his passion for Beatrice, and almost for a time forgot the solicitor's daughter.

In fact, he at last so far gave way to the influence of the charms of the Squatter's daughter, that when one day she asked him, in the most guileless tone in the world, if he loved her, he passionately replied, by asking how he could help adoring such an angel. A most endearing charm about the Squatter's daughter was her perfect innocence. She had not the art to conceal her feelings, and had

more than once told Godfrey, in the guilelessness of her affection, that she loved him.

Had he not also been entranced by a headlong passion for her he might have acted differently; but as it was, he felt too happy in her acknowledgments of attachment towards him to escape from entangling himself with the beautiful girl. She was such a perfect child of nature, and was altogether so charming, innocent, and fascinating, that he might well be forgiven in regard to her for allowing his feelings to run away with his reason. Again, she possessed bright abilities, and was fond of books, having read a great deal for her age, so that she and Godfrey had often delightfully intellectual conversations. Passionately fond of poetry, she occasionally got him to write verses for her album, since he could compose very clever ones.

At times she herself would pen poetical effusions. Not unfrequently they displayed considerable native genius.

Godfrey had read most of the English

poets, and was, for his years, very well versed in the classical literature of his country. Moreover, he possessed great natural taste and judgment, together with a fine fancy and warm imagination.

Thus, the admiration of the squatter's daughter was attracted almost as much by his intellect and acquirements, as by his handsome face and figure.

He never missed an opportunity of adding to his stock of knowledge, and his leisure was always spent in profiting by such books as came within his reach. The squatter had a pretty good number of volumes that he had purchased for ornament, and amongst them were several standard works.

In spite of Beechworth's passion for Beatrice Forrester, he devoted himself to his duties as assistant-overseer with the utmost indefatigability, winning the esteem and praise of his employer.

He was a general favourite indeed, in the neighbourhood for miles around, and but for

the bitter hatred on the part of Frederick Hill towards him, he might have been very happy.

One day, Mr. Forrester being away in Geelong, Beechworth accompanied Beatrice on horseback to the station of a Captain Bolt, on a visit. It was Christmas time, and the weather was intensely hot.

On their way back home, they dismounted from their horses, in order that the young girl might enjoy shelter for a time from the burning sun, in the shade of the luxuriant trees that grow at the foot of Mount Gellibrand. Both also, enjoyed the pleasure of revelling in the beautiful views which enchant the eye from that spot. They were not expected home till eight o'clock, and it was as yet only half-past three. It was ten miles, nearly, from where they were to the homestead of Mr. Forrester; but Beatrice would be able to quickly gallop that distance a little later in the afternoon, when the air should be cooler. They sat near each other, and chatted together.

The scene around was well calculated to fan the passion of lovers in such a situation. Nature in one of the most charming aspects, presented herself in the landscape before them; while birds of every gorgeous hue flitted around, and the blue sky was without a cloud.

"How lovely the Bush appears at this Christmas time!" exclaimed Godfrey.

"It is more enchanting still in spring, for the sun parches up the country in summer; although the recent rain has freshened the verdure," rejoined Beatrice.

"What a contrast, between Christmas here and in England!" he remarked.

"I could not endure to live in your cold, foggy climate," she exclaimed, "where hail and snow keep people within doors during the winter. Surely, you cannot prefer your gloomy skies to our sunny ones. Would you not be perfectly contented to dwell in this beautiful country all your life?"

"I love England so much," he answered,

"that her climate to me seems pleasant enough. The marked contrast in the seasons there, appears to me preferable, in spite of the fogs, snow and ice, to the monotony of sunny skies all the year round. I should not like to be obliged to live in Australia all my life. My hope is, some day to return to England."

"You're always praising the mother-country, Godfrey," she said, "and I wish you would transfer a portion of your love for her to Australia, so that you might be contented to remain here."

"It may possibly be," he remarked, "that if I stay some years, I shall, like so many others, at last regard the Colony as a dearer home than ever England."

"Godfrey," she went on, throwing, in the innocence of her heart, one arm round his neck, and looking him winningly in the face, "you must remain with us till you can yourself rent a station. Perhaps, my father, when you've been with him three or four years,

will let you have one of his, for you know he has several. You say you love me, so for my sake, you must resolve to make the Colony your home for life. My father cannot object to our marriage, when he knows how my happiness depends on his consent. You're only seventeen and I'm but sixteen, so we can afford to wait patiently for some years. Cease to talk, therefore, about going back to England and learn to love Australia."

Godfrey imprinted some ardent kisses upon the blushing cheeks of Beatrice; and they embraced one another, in all the innocence and warmth of their two young hearts. The enchanting scene around seemed to smile upon their love.

"Dear Godfrey, would that we might live together, in some far out-of-the-way spot in the Bush, where none could interfere with our happiness!" she exclaimed, as the thought of Frederick Hill passed feverishly through her mind.

"We must wait and trust, as you've often yourself said, sweet Beatrice!" rejoined the youth.

How happy they were alone in each other's society, amidst solitary Nature in the wild bush! Little did they know in how short a time fate would sever them for ever.

"You remember, dear Godfrey," remarked Beatrice, "that I told you I had set myself to write a song the day before yesterday, comparing Australia with the mother-country. Of course, it gives the superiority to my own loved land, and I haven't, therefore, yet repeated it to you, knowing how near to perfection you believe Old England. Besides, I'm afraid the verses will not bear criticism. You've composed such beautiful lines yourself for my album, that I almost think, Godfrey, you were really born to be a poet."

"My ambition," rejoined Beechworth, "has been to become some day a member of the English bar, and fight my way to reputation, and a name as an advocate. Such

a lot, however, is never likely to be mine; but I think, under favourable circumstances, I should succeed much better as a lawyer than as a poet, dear Beatrice."

"What happier after all than a squatter's life, which I trust you're destined to lead, Godfrey!" she exclaimed, as they once more fondly embraced each other.

"You must repeat to me, now you've raised my curiosity," he urged, in a persuasive tone, "the verses you've written about Australia. You know, dear Beatrice, how I liked the song about the Aborigines, which you wrote a few weeks back, so you needn't fear my criticism."

Was ever any one, indeed, a hard critic of the poetical effusions of his lover!

"I'll repeat the song as you press me, Godfrey," consented the maiden.

"You may as well use your beautiful voice to sing it," said the youth, "for none but myself and the birds will hear you in this solitary spot, and you needn't, therefore, be afraid of your auditory, Beatrice."

"I would just as soon do so as merely repeat the lines to you, Godfrey; but then, you mustn't mind, if I break down in the song," she observed.

"To hear your sweet voice carol but a single verse, will be pleasure enough!" he ardently exclaimed.

Without any more hesitation, the squatter's daughter complied. Her lovely voice echoed around, and the very birds, as they crowded the neighbouring trees, seemed entranced by its beautiful music. The charming descriptive air she chose suited the verses as admirably as the scene around was in harmony with them; while the words ran thus of

THE SONG OF THE AUSTRALIAN MAIDEN.

I've heard thee praise the Queenly Isle,
  That crowns the northern sea,
But list to me a moment, while
  I sing my land to thee.

In England far beyond the seas,
  The other side of earth,
In winter, leafless are the trees,
  And snow surrounds the mirth.

But here the trees are evergreen,
  And though 'tis Christmas now,
The sun shines down, the leaves between,
  To glad the Bushman's brow.

Though Britain's hills and dales be sweet,
  And glowing mem'ries wake,
The marring trace of man, you meet,
  At every step you take.

But nature here, sublime and grand,
  As far as eye can roam,
All fresh from the Creator's hand,
  Surrounds the squatter's home;

The gloomy sky, that half the year,
  O'erspreads your stormy coasts,
May make the hearths and homes more dear,
  Of which old England boasts.

But Heav'n to us is doubly kind,
  A joyous clime is ours,
That soothes and cheers the weary mind,
  As lightsome pass the hours.

Renown, no other land has known,
  As thine has proudly won,
A thousand years and more have flown,
  Since first her fame begun;

Yet, though Australia can enchain
  The heart by no bright past,
No sighing throng here strive in vain,
  And die of want at last.

In Albion's crowded cities, where
  To breathe there's scarcely room,
How many thousand beings share
  A kind of living tomb!

But here there's full reward for toil—
  Man's lot since Adam's fall,
Around extends a virgin soil,
  And more than room for all.

Altho' I love the Mother Land,
  The day-star of the earth—
And venerate her hallow'd strand,
  That gave my Fathers birth,

Yet I'd not quit the boundless plain,
  And this bush life so free,
For England's shores across the main,
  Whate'er their charms may be.

As Beatrice finished her song, she blushed deeply, and Godfrey hurried away by the impetuosity of his sentiments, threw his arms round her, and pressed her to his heart. In that fond embrace he kissed her ardently, little dreaming that there was a concealed spectator of and listener to all that passed between them, but such was the case.

Beatrice's cousin, then on a visit of a few days at a neighbouring station, was a witness of the scene. He had wandered on foot in search of his horse, which not being properly hobbled, had strayed away a considerable distance. Concealing himself a little distance from the lovers, behind some bushes, he heard all that passed between them.

"The words of your song, Beatrice, are

charming," said Beechworth, "and you must give me a copy of them for a keepsake."

"I'll do so," she rejoined, "and I'm delighted, Godfrey, that you think the verses pretty."

After chatting for some time longer, he observed—

"It will soon be sunset, dear Beatrice, and as it is cooler now I think we had better proceed on our way home."

"It is only six," she remarked, looking at her watch, "so we shall be in good time, for my mother will not expect me till eight o'clock."

Godfrey assisted Beatrice on her horse, and mounting his own, they cantered off towards her father's homestead.

After they had started, Frederick Hill, getting up from behind the bushes where he had been a spectator of the scene between the lovers, also went on his way.

Beatrice and Godfrey galloped speedily

home, and both went to bed that night more enchanted and infatuated than ever with each other.

The next afternoon, as the young man was walking through the bush to the hut of a shepherd, bearing some orders from the head overseer, he suddenly noticed Frederick Hill coming towards him on horseback.

The young Australian had been expected at Ferntree Station that morning to see his uncle, just returned home, and Godfrey therefore was not surprised at thus meeting him.

Frederick Hill, who had a stock-whip in his hand, dismounted, upon coming up to him, and began addressing him with passionate vituperation.

Beechworth at first did not know what to make of it; but it was, however, soon clear to him that the Australian had been a concealed witness of the love scene between himself and the squatter's daughter the previous evening.

"What right—the devil take you!—has a penniless fellow like yourself to make love to my cousin?" shouted Hill.

"I should advise you to mind your own business, and go quietly on your way," retorted Godfrey, losing his temper at the offensive manner of the Australian.

"You're an infernal beast!" roared Hill.

"It would be better if you were a little more careful in your language!" exclaimed Beechworth, scarcely able to restrain his passion.

"I'd lay this whip across your shoulders for two pins!" was the fierce rejoinder.

"You'd better do so!" said the youth, between his clenched teeth.

Excited beyond himself by this retort, the Australian made a lash at Beechworth, who thereupon immediately sprang at him and hurled him violently to the ground. He quickly wrenched the whip from Hill, who, rising to his feet again, made another furious onslaught upon him. He, however, in spite

of being much the elder, and also nearly six feet in height, was no match for the young Englishman, who knocked him down with his fist three times successively. Godfrey was, in fact, strong beyond his age, and unusually muscular.

Leaving Hill sprawling on the ground, he walked away on his errand to the shepherd.

The Australian, hurling curses at the youth, quickly mounted his horse, riding off at a mad gallop toward the homestead.

Arrived there, he rushed straight to his uncle, and relating the love scene of which he had been a spectator, overwhelmed his rival with abuse.

That very day Godfrey received notice to quit Ferntree Station at once. He was there and then paid the small amount of salary due to him. Proceeding to the homestead, with a heavy heart, he packed up his things, and took them to the cottage of the head-overseer. Putting sufficient clothes for temporary use in a carpet bag, he left the

remainder of his baggage with Mr. Donovan, who promised to forward it to him whenever he wished. Beatrice being confined by Mr. Forrester to her room, the young man had no chance of wishing her good-bye; but passing her door, as he was going down stairs, after packing up his things, he overheard her passionately sobbing, and his heart almost broke.

She knew the cause of his dismissal, and vowed to her father that she would rather kill herself than marry her cousin.

After taking leave of the head-overseer, Godfrey paid a visit to the Reverend Hampden Thorn, of Winchlesea, the district clergyman, with whom the youth was a great favourite. Beechworth frankly related to him the cause of his dismissal. He was at once cheered by the sympathy of Mr. Thorn, of whom the young man had made a confidant of his love for Beatrice.

"I've not the least doubt," exclaimed the clergyman "that Mr. Forrester will before long repent your hasty dismissal, and, in the

meanwhile, if you send me your address, I'll write and let you know how things go on at Ferntree Station."

The clergyman, a young man about thirty, of jovial habits, saw no harm whatever in Godfrey's love for the Squatter's daughter.

Mr. Forrester was rich, argued Mr. Thorn, to himself, but Beechworth was in every way a noble youth, quite worthy of Beatrice, and would make an infinitely better husband for her than her gawky cousin.

In fact, the clergyman, in his admiration and fondness for Godfrey, was dreadfully enraged against Frederick Hill. Inspiring Beechworth with hope and courage, he bade him patiently wait, declaring that all would probably be right in the end. The youth wrote a note to Beatrice Forrester, which the clergyman promised to put into her hands, and to forward any letter she should write in return. Then Godfrey wished him good-bye, and shouldering his carpet bag, took the road for Geelong.

Ere losing sight of the homestead of Fern-

tree Station, he could not help ever and anon looking back upon it with a fascinated gaze.

He made up his mind to proceed to Geelong, and thence direct to Melbourne, without calling on Mr. Peterson, whom he feared might be vexed on account of his losing the situation he had obtained for him with Mr. Forrester.

When he had achieved for himself a good position, he would then, and not before, pay a visit to Radstock House.

At the same time, Godfrey cherished a lingering hope that the father of Beatrice in the meanwhile might relent, and receive him back as overseer.

It was near sunset when the young man left Ferntree Station behind him; but he determined, as the nights were then bright and clear, to push on, in order to reach Geelong early the following morning.

Had the youth been of a less sensitively proud temperament than he was, he might have humbled himself to Mr. Forrester with a view of keeping his appointment.

Such a course, however, was not in the nature of Godfrey Beechworth.

As he jogged along the road, now once again on his own resources, his chief misery was that he had been the involuntary cause of placing the beautiful Beatrice in a trying position.

Trusting, however, that events would right themselves; certain that Providence would never permit such an innocent and lovely being to remain long unhappy; and confident in his youth, strength, and perseverance to over come the gulf that at present separated him from her, he gallantly marched on his way.

The night proved, as it had promised, a glorious one.

In the clear sky, fretted with stars, the moon shone brightly, lighting up the bush with her splendour, as he trudged onwards.

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD MAID.

GODFREY BEECHWORTH, after quitting Fern-tree Station, rested for some hours upon reaching Geelong at the Kangaroo Hotel, Moorabool Street.

Having taken a hearty breakfast, he walked for a time about the town.

About half-past eleven o'clock, returning to the boarding-house, he got his carpet-bag, and then wended his way to the steamer, fixed

to start daily at noon, from the Geelong pier, for Melbourne.

The weather continued fine, and he felt invigorated as walking up and down the deck during the passage, he enjoyed the fresh breeze blowing.

It was about the middle of the afternoon that the steamer commenced ascending the River Yarra-Yarra, on the bank of which, some few miles from its mouth, the capital is built. The stream is of itself no great width, and only navigable as far as the city for craft of comparatively light burden. The river banks between which the steamer glided, were, Beechworth remarked, flat and uninteresting; but the gloom, perhaps, of his thoughts intensified their want of attractiveness to him. Arrived alongside the quay at Melbourne, Godfrey hastened ashore, and walked slowly along the wide thoroughfare bordering the Yarra-Yarra.

On the side of the road were tall, spacious warehouses and other evidences that he was

now in a busy, commercial city. Melbourne, was already at that time of great size, considering the comparatively brief period of its existence.

Godfrey walked on, until he reached a broad thoroughfare to his left, which he found to be Elizabeth Street.

He had been advised that morning, by a breakfast companion at the Kangaroo Hotel, Geelong, to take up his quarters at Pritchardson's boarding-house, North Melbourne. From what he had heard about it he thought he could not do better than follow the recommendation. Remembering, from the direction he had received, that Elizabeth Street led to North Melbourne, he turned up that thoroughfare, and found himself quickly amidst all the whirl and bustle of a great city.

The pavements were overflowing with passengers, while the roadway was crowded with drays, carriages, and cars. The houses were large and lofty, a wealth of merchandise

was exhibited in the shop windows, so that a person might almost have fancied himself in one of the busy, chief thoroughfares of London. Dog-carts, however, plying for hire in the streets, long teams of bullocks yoked to primitive drays, diggers riding at a mad pace through the city, and other scenes characteristic of the Victorian capital, quickly brought home to a stranger the fact of being at the Antipodes.

Godfrey passed by the Post Office—at the corner of Elizabeth and Bourke Streets—a plain, ricketty, wooden building, since replaced by a handsome edifice.

Wonderful indeed are the improvements which two or three years bring about in go-ahead cities like Melbourne!

Near the Post Office he had his boots cleaned by a street shoe-black.

While the lad was brushing away at them, Beechworth was beset by a crowd of urchins, shouting out, "Argus!" "Herald!" "Age!" being the names of the three principal Mel-

bourne newspapers, so he purchased a copy of the first-mentioned journal.

After enquiring of the shoeblack the way to Pritchardson's boarding-house, he walked quickly on his road.

He passed by the unfinished Public Library, which promised to be a noble building, and before long found himself at North Melbourne.

Somewhat tired with carrying his rather heavy carpet-bag, he hastened his steps, to reach his destination as soon as possible.

He had no difficulty in finding out Pritchardson's boarding-house, which could be seen a considerable distance off, and was an immense oblong wooden building, something like a huge Noah's Ark.

Entering the establishment, he was struck with the appearance of the interior, which formed an enormous primitive saloon, having a gallery running round it, about ten feet from the floor. Two ranges of little chambers like ship-cabins, one above the other, constituted the

inside lining, as it were, of the building. It had been constructed in England, and was turned to profitable account by the present proprietor, who enjoyed the reputation of having made no end of money since carrying on the boarding-house.

Godfrey at once introduced himself to the landlord, Mr. Pritchardson, a tall, portly, grey-headed man, with jovial face, who had been brought up to the watch-making trade.

"Can I have board and lodging here?" asked Beechworth.

"Yes; I've plenty of spare rooms," replied the proprietor, and he ushered the young man, without further to-do, into one of the cabin-like chambers, saying,

"There are your quarters, if you choose to take up your lodgings here."

Having learned the landlord's terms, the youth agreed to stay there.

While talking to Mr. Pritchardson, who should come up and accost him with a tap on

the shoulder, but Douglas Baird, the young Scotchman with whom he had been so intimate on board the "Lancy."

"How d'ye do, Godfrey; I'm delighted to see you, old fellow!" he exclaimed.

"Halloa! is it you, Baird?" cried Beechworth, taken by surprise.

"What brought you here?" enquired the Scotchman.

"I've just arrived from Geelong, and was recommended to this place by a person with whom I breakfasted this morning there," the young man said.

"I'm awfully glad to see your phiz," rejoined Baird, "and so we must have a nobbler of wine together, on the strength of our joyful meeting."

Baird, as it was soon evident to Beechworth, had become a proficient in colonial slang.

The two friends sat a long time and chatted together, with all the gaiety that generally springs from such an unexpected *rencontre*.

Three "nobblers" of wine, were drunk in succession, by each of them, for which Godfrey paid.

"How, Baird, did you ever come to live at this boarding-house?" asked Beechworth.

"Well, to tell the truth," his friend answered, "I quickly got tired of sticking at a desk, in the Bank of Australasia, in Collins Street; and became a deuced lazy clerk, so one day, the manager dispensed with my services, or in other words, 'gave me the sack.' I couldn't stand the stupid hum-drum life of a quill-driver. It's a pity, perhaps, I've lost the berth, for I received a good salary, but I'm not cut out for a clerk. I'm now seeking a situation of a more active description, but see no chance yet of finding one. However, I'm in daily expectation that something will turn up; although I'm nearly stumped as regards cash, for I've only at present about seven or eight shillings in the world."

"With such a little money you won't be able to stay and pay your way here, for more

than a day or so longer, I suppose," remarked Beechworth.

"Old Pritchardson isn't a bad fellow, and I daresay he'll give me credit for a few weeks," rejoined the Scotchman.

"If so, you may in the meanwhile obtain a good situation, when you'll be quickly able to repay him," his friend observed.

"I've told you, Godfrey, that I'm 'hard up;' so I think the best thing to do is to ask you to let me have the loan of a 'skiv,'" continued Baird.

This last speech was uttered calmly, with an air of confident assurance.

Upon understanding that a "skiv" meant a sovereign, Beechworth immediately handed him one.

There was certainly a striking difference in the young Englishman's conduct in this instance, and that of Baird when the latter was asked by him for a trifling loan, on board the "Lancy," which was practically refused.

Beechworth remained for nearly six weeks

at Pritchardson's boarding-house, where there were about ninety lodgers, without succeeding in obtaining any situation.

He perused daily the advertisements in the papers, and tried in every possible manner for employment, but in vain.

Just at that period things were very bad in the colony. There were thousands in Melbourne without employment, and half the fellow-lodgers of Godfrey were in quest of situations, for the most part finding the search utterly fruitless.

At Pritchardson's boarding-house there was truly as heterogeneous an assemblage of characters, as ever, perhaps, met together beneath one roof.

Godfrey made the intimate acquaintance of about half-a-dozen individuals from amongst them. Of these, the majority had experienced a host of adventures in the colony, and one or two of their number had gone through striking vicissitudes in the mother-country.

Vincent Paget, nearly forty years of age,

tall, handsome, and aristocratic-looking, was, perhaps, as interesting as any of the coterie. He was brother to an English baronet, and at one time had been gentleman-at-arms to the Queen. As a young man, he had run through a pretty large fortune, but was now in daily hopes of obtaining the appointment of beadle, or something of that kind, in connection with Melbourne vegetable market, at a salary of thirty shillings a week.

Ralph Cooper, another of Godfrey's new acquaintances, was about twenty-four, and the son of a deceased Indian civil servant, of good family.

He was an only child, and his mother allowed him regularly fifty pounds a year, which he received quarterly, and generally spent the money within a week or so after it reached him. At present he was very low in funds, and was applying for a shepherd's situation up the Bush, which he thought he had a good chance of obtaining.

A young man, some twenty-six years of

age, who went by the name of Emilio Huberto, whom most people would have taken for an Englishman, became also one of Beechworth's companions. He delighted to don a gorgeous Spanish costume, dangling with little bells.

In spite of this eccentricity, he was, "a man of the world," and had a good stock of general information.

He spoke Spanish with tolerable fluency, and, at present, earned a few shillings weekly by giving two or three lessons in that language to a lady in one of the Melbourne suburbs, but, in the meanwhile, he was eagerly looking out for some more lucrative occupation.

The most eccentric of Godfrey's new acquaintances was Jack Candy, almost a dwarf, with a thick shock of long, red hair.

He was a school-master by calling, and was, at this period, expecting a post as teacher in a national school up country.

At that time in the colony, a young man thrown like Beechworth on his resources,

found himself frequently in the midst of very odd company, and had not any refined choice offered him in the selection of acquaintances.

It is, possible, however, to mix in questionable society without being contaminated by it; and although Godfrey, in the course of his career in Australia, was often thrown in very equivocal coteries, his superior strength of mind and high principle ever preserved his character unstained.

He never for a moment swerved from the lofty instincts of his noble nature.

The young man, indeed, was one of those, who, when forced to mingle with the vicious, feel themselves only the more resolved in their own virtuous standard of conduct, by experience of the ways of the reckless and unprincipled.

Beechworth, having now but enough money left to pay for about another fortnight's board and lodging, was sitting one morning, after breakfast in company with the coterie, of

which a description has been given, when Vincent Paget began reading aloud, from the "Argus" newspaper, an advertisement that immediately caused considerable interest amongst the group.

"Let me have a look at it?" cried Huberto, at the same time seizing hold of the journal.

He then himself read out to the company the following advertisement :—

"A number of persons wanted immediately, for a gentlemanly employment. Remuneration high, but only those of good education and address required.—Apply at eleven o'clock this morning, at 216, Lygon Street, North Melbourne."

"That's just the ticket for me," cried Cooper.

"I expect it will suit most of our guns," exclaimed Paget.

Godfrey felt carried away by the current of joy, that the advertisement seemed to infuse into those around him, and began to think that

there was really at last a chance of his obtaining respectable and profitable employment.

It was determined at once that they should all make application for the gentlemanly occupation thus advertised.

It was then but nine o'clock, so there was yet ample time before them, ere they need present themselves at 216, Lygon Street; and they continued therefore, in the meanwhile chatting together in the saloon of the boarding-house.

"I applied only the other day to the Mayor of Melbourne," observed the aristocratic Paget, interrupting Cooper, who was detailing his recent hardships in the Colony, "for permission to keep a night coffee-stall at the corner of Bourke and Elizabeth Streets, opposite the Post Office; but he refused me a license, although I had already obtained the consent of the shopkeeper before whose house I purposed carrying on the business."

"That fellow who sells small pies outside the Theatre Royal is making a mint of money,"

exclaimed Huberto, "and I think of embarking in the same trade, when I've raised, by teaching Spanish, a little capital."

"The man whom you speak of, Emilio," said Cooper, "is a Member of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, and a deuced clever chap."

"A fortnight since I got a few days' work," remarked Jack Candy, the little schoolmaster, "breaking stones, at five shillings a yard, on the road between Melbourne and Kilmore. By Jove! that's the work to tickle a gentleman up, and no mistake. My hands became swollen almost to the dimensions of a fair-sized pumpkin. I soon gave the genteel occupation up, because I could scarcely earn salt at it; and now I'm thinking, if I don't speedily get a berth as teacher, of hawking cat's-meat about the town. There's very little competition yet in that line, and I was offered a hand-barrow very cheap the other day, that would suit the purpose."

Here the speaker passed his hand through

his shock of red hair, and assumed a meditative aspect.

"I'm afraid, Candy, you won't have much chance, for one of the appointments we're going after this morning," remarked Baird, "because, you see, one of the things required in the applicants is 'a good address.'"

This observation created a little diversion amongst the company.

"You're no better off than I in that matter, as, good gracious! don't we both hang out at the same quarters?" retorted the little schoolmaster.

"Come, it's time to be trotting, for it's a quarter past ten o'clock," Paget at last exclaimed, pointing to a large timepiece over the door.

Thereupon, the acquaintances quitted the boarding-house, and wended their way towards Lygon Street.

They arrived there in good time, but found that a crowd of applicants, numbering at least, seventy or eighty, were already waiting outside

the house they were in search of; and Godfrey was amused with the motley nature of these aspirants for gentlemanly employment, all considering themselves of 'good education and address.'

Amongst them, were sea-captains, ship-surgeons, merchants' clerks, shopmen, mechanics, methodist parsons, Church of England clergymen, solicitors, and others of equally diverse professions, trades, and occupations.

It was agreed by the coterie to which Godfrey belonged, to toss up as to the order in which they should enter the house, to make application for the envied gentlemanlike employment.

This was no sooner said than done, and it fell to Beechworth's lot to take the lead. He had been, as it were, compelled to play a part in the "tossing-up;" but upon obtaining such trifling piece of luck, he gave up his right of priority in entering the house to Jack Candy.

A long time was anxiously passed in waiting, before the little schoolmaster's turn came

to go in; as all those who had arrived previous to this coterie claimed, of course, to enter before them. Great was the excitement when Candy came out of the house, and informed his companions that he had been a successful candidate for the coveted occupation. Not waiting for the particulars of this good fortune, Beechworth took his turn and entered the house. He was ushered into a sort of office, where stood the advertiser, who professed to have at his disposal so much remunerative employment.

He was a stout, flabby, Jewish-looking individual, with big, dark beard and whiskers, rather dirty in person, and shabbily dressed.

"You see," said he, after answering some preliminary enquiries of Godfrey, "I want a number of agents, to sell on commission, a half-crown map of Melbourne, that I've just published."

On receiving this information Beechworth's bright hopes were somewhat dimmed.

Being shown the map, for the sale of which so

many agents were demanded, the young man was still more crest-fallen. It appeared to him in his disappointment, little better than a wretched daub.

"You'll have a commission of sixpence on each map you sell," went on the fellow to Godfrey; "so you perceive, that if you dispose of only forty a day, leaving out Sundays, you'll earn six pounds a week."

According to the young man's notion he might not sell three in a twelvemonth, even at eighteen pence a piece, were he to perambulate the whole country, and push the sale of them ever so much.

He was, in fact, considerably disgusted with the result of the interview.

"You'd better," continued the man, "take with you some of the maps at once, for which you'll have to leave a deposit with me, of twenty-four shillings per dozen."

Godfrey was not going to risk his money in such a speculation; and, therefore, politely wished the fellow "good-bye."

As the youth left the house, Vincent Paget entered.

A large crowd still remained outside, and Beechworth, on rejoining his acquaintances, perceived that Jack Candy had under his arm a packet, made up—as the little schoolmaster explained—of two dozen maps of Melbourne, in which he had just invested nearly all the money he had in the world.

When Godfrey's companions, each in turn, had enjoyed a similar interview to the one described, they quitted Lygon Street, leaving some fifty persons still before the house they had just quitted. The schoolmaster was the only one of Beechworth's acquaintances, who had made an investment in the half-crown maps; for which prudence of theirs they afterwards had reason to thank their stars.

Jack Candy never in fact, succeeded in selling even one of those he had purchased. On going to Lygon Street, to return them, and demand back the money he had deposited,

he found that the Jewish-looking personage from whom he obtained them, had vanished.

Godfrey having spent nearly all his money, and still failing to obtain employment, resolved as a last resource, to call upon Mr. William Pigott, to whose brother in Geelong he had received the never forgotten "letter of introduction."

He communicated this determination to Douglas Baird, who strongly urged him to carry it at once into execution.

Mr. William Pigott lived at Richmond, a suburb about two miles from Melbourne; and so one morning, the young man strolled there, with the intention of paying him a visit.

Godfrey did not anticipate any very brilliant reception, since he had heard a miserly character attributed to him.

Beechworth had not the least notion of asking him for any pecuniary assistance, but he thought perhaps Mr. Pigott might be of service in the matter of obtaining employment.

The residence of Godfrey's relations at Richmond, was a newly-built, large, handsome stone mansion, with about seven acres of enclosed pleasure grounds in front.

The youth's knock at the door was answered at once, and he was ushered into a spacious, and most sumptuously-furnished sitting-room.

There he found Mr. William Pigott, and his sister,—the old maid about whom the young man had heard Mr. Peterson so often joke.

She was a thin, scraggy personage, with features small and plain—almost to ugliness—while she was dressed in the most expensive and showy manner.

Mr. Pigott was a gentleman-like-looking man of fifty, and, formed, altogether, an infinite contrast, in personal appearance, to his brother of the Barabool hills.

"Take a seat," he said, in a polite tone, upon the young man entering the room.

"Your name is Godfrey Beechworth, I believe?" remarked Miss Pigott to the youth,

who had been duly announced to her by the domestic.

"Yes," he rejoined; "I arrived in the colony last June."

"Are you in any situation?" demanded his male relative.

"I've no appointment," he answered, "and am anxious to obtain one."

"You're residing in Melbourne, I suppose?" enquired the old maid.

Upon his replying in the affirmative, Mr. Pigott said—

"Won't you come and stay with us a short time?"

The young man, accepting the invitation, it was agreed that he should fetch his carpet-bag, and return that evening to Kilmore House, as Mr. William Pigott's residence was christened.

"Good-bye then for the present," said his relative, putting the short clay pipe he had been smoking down on the mantel-piece, and shaking hands with the youth.

"We hope to see you again this evening," observed the old maid, stiffly, as she took leave of Godfrey.

He had not been offered wine, nor any kind of refreshment during his short visit, which, as the young man remarked to himself, was contrary to the usual hospitable habits amongst the well-to-do in the colony.

However, as he walked away from Kilmore House he still indulged in hopes that Mr. William Pigott would assist him to an appointment, as his relative possessed much influence in Melbourne.

Buoyed up by such expectations he felt in good spirits, and went along his road with a light-hearted step. He was passing through Stephen Street, Melbourne, elated with the vision of the good situation he dreamed of obtaining through Mr. William Pigott, when he was casually attracted by a placard, in the window of a small oyster shop, announcing that "fine English draught ale" was sold within.

Thereupon he resolved, as he was somewhat thirsty, to indulge in a glass of that refreshing beverage.

Entering the shop he perceived a man in a white apron energetically opening oysters, and quickly recognised him as no other than Richard Rudd, the wine merchant's clerk, whose acquaintance he had made at the Kangaroo Hotel, Geelong.

They immediately shook hands with one another in the most cordial manner.

"By Jupiter! you startled me as though you had been a ghost!" exclaimed Rudd.

"I'm very pleased indeed, to meet you again," rejoined Beechworth.

"We must have a bottle of ale together, on the spot," exclaimed his acquaintance, and at once opened one, which they quickly emptied.

"You're in rather a queer situation at present," observed Godfrey.

Rudd thereupon burst out laughing, saying,

"It is, indeed, a deuced rum business for a fellow like me to take to; but I hope to get some more dignified employment before long. In the meanwhile, opening oysters at a salary of twenty-five shillings a week is, to my taste, better than doing the 'Government Stroke.'"

"What's that?" asked Beechworth."

"The Melbourne authorities," replied his acquaintance, "give work to a certain number of the unemployed fellows, knocking about here in thousands just now, at breaking stones, and pay them by the day. As you may imagine, the chaps don't crack away at them over hard. Their art of exerting their muscles as little as possible at the task, is called doing 'the government stroke.'"

Chatting away and drinking ale, for Godfrey insisted upon paying for a second bottle, the moments quickly flew.

At last, lifting his eyes to the shop clock, he became warned that it was time to be off, so he wished Rudd good-bye for the present.

Upon reaching Pritchardson's boarding-house he settled his account with the landlord, packed up his carpet-bag, and ere long was on his return to Kilmore House.

"Trust, my boy, to the 'chapter of accidents,' and keep up 'the charter!'" was Vincent Paget's parting adieu, as he shook hands with the youth.

Godfrey reached Mr. William Pigott's in time for dinner, and was welcomed with great politeness by his host, and also by the old maid. He passed the evening in a quiet manner with his two relatives.

Mr. Pigott was, at present, a candidate for the Legislative Council, and the young man had to listen, consequently, to a great deal about colonial politics.

In the course of conversation, he learned that his relative had a large sheep station near the Devil's River, about two hundred miles from the capital, and another one not far from Melbourne.

Godfrey went to sleep that night in a

sumptuously furnished room, building castles in the air, with respect to his future prospects.

On the following morning, going downstairs, he unhappily mistook the door of Miss Pigott's sleeping chamber for that of the parlour adjoining it, and surprised the old maid in a state of undress before the toilet-table, her two little dogs, named "Joe" and "Fanny," reposing snugly on her bed.

"Oh! good gracious!" she ejaculated, adding other exclamations of pretended horror and outraged delicacy.

"Pardon me! it was indeed quite an accident," pleaded the youth, disappearing from her presence as quickly as possible.

She, however, persisted in believing that he had premeditatedly entered her bed-room, and made this a malicious excuse to herself, for venting her spleen upon the handsome young man, who, had not perhaps, flattered her sufficiently.

As a rule, there are no persons in the world, with more vanity than old maids, and by

pampering it, one may easily make sworn friends of them, in a conventional sense.

Had Godfrey made love to Miss Pigott, as Mr. Peterson recommended him to do, he might have gained an influence over her crabbed nature; but, as it was, he entirely failed to win her good graces.

She depreciated him to her brother, and the consequence was that before his visit had lasted a fortnight, the disagreeable airs the old maid put on determined him to cut his stay short. Therefore, one morning after breakfast, finding his host alone in the drawing-room, he said to him,

"I've come to wish you good-bye, Mr. Pigott."

Upon this his relation, who was puffing away at a short black clay pipe, remarked,

"I hope you've enjoyed your visit to us, Beechworth. If you like, I'll give you a note to the overseer of my station, about twenty odd miles from Melbourne, who may be able to find you some employment. At

all events I'll tell him that you can live with him until you obtain a situation. As your board and lodging there will cost you nothing, you'll be able, at any rate, to rest on your oars for a time."

Godfrey accepted the letter of introduction thus proffered, thinking it would be better to avail himself of it, than run the risk of being left penniless in Melbourne.

"Good-bye, Beechworth," said Miss Pigott, as the young man finally shook hands with her, "and you know that we shall be happy to see you, whenever you like."

The squeaking, treacherous tone in which this speech was uttered, would have determined the young man, if he had not already made up his mind to that effect, to keep out of the way of the old maid in future.

Carrying his carpet-bag in his hand, he walked away from Kilmore House, reflecting upon what was to be his next step in the uphill game of colonial life.

He had acquired a certain respect for Mr.

William Piggott, as a result of his fortnight's acquaintance with him; and, in fact, that gentleman was, in a worldly sense, an honourable enough individual. His cardinal fault was niggardliness; and besides since becoming very wealthy, he had fallen into lethargic habits. This, combined with his naturally selfish temperament, rendered him indisposed to make the slightest exertion on behalf of anyone, although his own interests could always spur him into activity.

He was completely, moreover, under the morose influence of his maiden sister, whom Godfrey could scarcely conceive capable of having cherished a disinterested sentiment in her life.

The young man, after thus quitting his relative, returned to Pritchardson's Boarding House.

He had but two pounds ten shillings left in the world, out of which sum he lent a sovereign, on the following day, to Jack Candy, [illegible] had lately made such an unfortunate

speculation in the half-a-crown maps at Lygon Street.

The poor fellow was absolutely without a penny when Beechworth offered him the loan; but still it was with great difficulty that he could get the little schoolmaster to accept the assistance.

Two days subsequently, Godfrey, having but a pound remaining in his pocket, resolved to tramp to Wattlebark Station, to the overseer of which Mr. William Pigott had given him a letter of introduction.

It was nearly twenty-five miles from Melbourne, on the road to Sydney.

He made a bundle, or "swag," as it is called in the colony, of the few things he intended to take with him, leaving his carpet-bag and the rest of his clothes to the care of Mr. Pritchardson.

It was about eight o'clock, on a clear moonlight evening, that Godfrey started from Melbourne, on foot, for Wattlebark Station.

As he left the busy capital behind him, he

recalled how a fortune-telling gipsy in England had once told him, that his early life would be as one continuous "cloudy day."

He remembered, however, also "The Bright To-morrow," she had prophesied for him subsequently; and as the first part of her prediction seemed likely to be realized, perhaps, he thought, the second might also be. Godfrey was not naturally superstitious, but he had a firm faith in his "destiny," that buoyed him up amidst the most adverse circumstances.

Besides, there are moments when the mind is more prone than at other times, to fall back into that peculiar kind of belief which Napoleon Bonaparte cherished in what he called "his star."

The solitary mood of the youth trudging along the Sydney road, alone, on that beautiful night, was favourable to such fancies.

When he got some miles from Melbourne, he began, for the sake of diverting his thoughts, to sing aloud to himself as he

walked along, the "Song of the Australian Maiden," written by sweet Beatrice Forrester,

He walked sturdily on, till he was about nine miles from the capital; and then entered a road-side inn, where he put up for the night.

CHAPTER III.

THE HUT BY THE CREEK.

The accommodation was wretched enough at the "Magpie Hotel," as Godfrey Beechworth's first place of lodging, after leaving Melbourne for Wattlebark Station, was called. He had to share a bedroom with five other travellers; but, nevertheless, he slept so soundly that he did not awake next morning till nearly nine o'clock.

The sun shone brightly through the windows, and it promised to be a very warm day.

The fellow bedroom-companions of God-

frey had got up several hours before, and long since left the house.

The young man began hastily putting on his clothes, anxious to get on his road as quickly as possible.

What was his astonishment, on discovering that his pockets had been rifled during the night; and that he had been robbed of all the little money he possessed, as well as of his meerschaum pipe and tobacco.

Luckily he had paid the landlord in advance for his bed.

With a heavy heart, he left the inn, starting on his road without breakfast.

He had not spoken of his loss to the landlord, as he thought it would be useless; and besides that personage possessed such a villanous looking countenance, that the young man was not encouraged to make any complaints to him on the subject.

Godfrey, once outside the inn walked on as quickly as possible, hoping to reach Wattlebark Station before night.

It was scorching weather, and he began towards the middle of the afternoon to feel fatigued, from not having eaten anything all day.

As he was trudging wearily along, he came up to a dray that had overturned in the road, and which the driver was slowly reloading with its freight of sacks of flour.

"Mate!" cried the man, as Godfrey approached him, "will you lend me a helping hand?"

"With all my heart!" exclaimed the youth, setting to work immediately with such a good will, that in a very short time the dray was on its way again.

Beechworth kept up with it, till they got near a solitary public-house on the right hand side of the highway, when learning that it was necessary, in order to reach Wattlebark Station, to quit the road there, and strike across country to the left, he said to the driver,

"I'll say good-bye to you here, wishing you better luck the rest of your journey."

"You're not going to leave a fellow like that," exclaimed the man, "for I guess you'll have something to drink with me, at this public-house, before we part."

Godfrey yielded to the invitation, and they entered the parlor of the inn, and the driver ordered two quart pots of ale to be brought, with some bread and cheese.

"You must be hungry," he then said to the youth, "after your work, at reloading my dray."

Never had bread and cheese seemed a greater luxury to Beechworth, for his appetite was sharpened by long abstinence from food.

"Good-bye! Luck to you, mate!" said the driver, shaking him by the hand, as they parted, each on his own road.

It was then within an hour or so of sundown, and Godfrey's route lay across a plain, bounded by a range of thickly wooded hills, a little distance on the other side of which, Wattlebark Station was situate.

He walked on swiftly, invigorated by the

evening air, and the hearty meal of bread and cheese he had just made.

When he reached the hills it was quickly becoming dark, and he got puzzled as to which of the numerous tracks before him he ought to take. Espying a log-hut amidst the trees to his left, he made towards it, in order to ask his way. Upon reaching it, he saw a rough-looking man at work outside, to whom he said,

"Can you direct me to Wattlebark Station?"

"It's only about three miles from here," was the reply, "but the road to it is round-about, as well as difficult to find, and I've a notion that if you go on, you'll not get there to-night."

"Will you give me a drink of water?" asked Godfrey, before putting any further questions as to his route.

"You can have some milk, mate, if you like," was the reply.

The youth accepted the kind offer, with many thanks.

After quenching his thirst, with a draught of delicious fresh milk, he continued his enquiries as to the track to Wattlebark Station.

"The best thing you can do," said the man in a hearty manner, "is not to attempt to reach it now, but stay where you are till to-morrow. I can give you a 'shake-down' for the night, and in the morning, I'll see you safely on your road."

Godfrey embraced the hospitality thus proffered, and they entered the hut together.

The man was the humble cultivator of a few acres of land, or, what is termed in the colony, a "Cockatoo Farmer."

His family consisted of his wife, two grown-up daughters, and a tall, strapping son.

Beechworth was invited to share a substantial supper, and was made to feel quite at home by his host.

In the course of the evening, a stock-rider looked in from a neighbouring station, and the company made merry over some rum.

The family was Irish, and seemed very well-to-do and happy.

The hut consisted of only one apartment, a portion of which was screened off as the female sleeping quarters by means of the gowns of the wife and daughters. Such formed, it is true, a very imperfect partition; but it seemed quite to satisfy the family.

Perhaps in their own country they had been accustomed to dispense with anything of the kind altogether; and to glory also in the society of a pig.

As Beechworth did not take off much of his clothes that night, his delicacy was not greatly offended by the fact that one of the daughters, from the insufficiency of the screen between them, was able to see him undressing.

Stretching himself on the floor of the hut, and rolling around him the large opossum rug, which his kind host lent him, he slept soundly enough, in spite of the loud chorus of snoring that enlivened the domicile throughout the night.

In the morning he shared a good breakfast with the family, and then helped the farmer and his daughters to milk the cows, a task in which he had become expert during his stay with Mr. Peterson.

Giving his aid to this and other work, he ingratiated himself excessively with his host, who about two o'clock in the afternoon, set out towards Wattlebark station, driving some bullocks before him.

He accompanied Godfrey till they reached a rather wide creek, within about a mile of the youth's destination.

Then he wished Beechworth good-bye.

"You've only to follow the stream, crossing the ford a little way down to the right, when you'll come to the hut, where Mr. Harry Rockdale, the overseer of Wattlebark station, lives," was the farmer's direction.

"Give me a look up whenever you've nothing better to do," he shouted after Beechworth, as he walked away.

Godfrey soon came in sight of the log

hut of the overseer, which was built some twenty paces from the edge of the creek.

As he entered the door of it, he was confronted by a handsome-looking young man, about twenty six years of age, whom he found to be Mr. Harry Rockdale.

He was evidently half-drunk, but in very good humour; and after reading the letter of introduction, that Beechworth had brought him from Mr. Pigott, was at once hail fellow well met with the youth.

A pannikin of rum, of which spirit a small, half-empty barrel stood on the rough table of the hut, was immediately pressed upon Godfrey.

"How's Bill Pigott?" Mr. Harry Rockdale enquired.

Upon receiving a reply the overseer remarked,

"Oh! the old beggar is still alive and kicking, then. Why the devil doesn't he kick the bucket, leaving me in his will Wattlebark station. Hang him, and may Satan drag his old carcass to hell as quickly as possible."

With similar strong expressions he accompanied every allusion to his employer, who it wanted no great discernment to perceive, was not much venerated by any of the occupants of the hut.

Mr. Thomas Rockdale, the overseer's brother, was also drunk.

The hut-keeper, named Bob Sharman, stood stark naked near the door, drinking away at a pannikin of rum.

Altogether, it was a bacchanalian scene that took Godfrey by surprise.

He had not been in the hut many minutes before the overseer and his brother, fetching water in buckets from the creek close at hand, amused themselves by dashing it over Bob Sharman, who was dancing about naked.

When tired of this sport, they found diversion in other equally eccentric freaks.

An hour or so after sun-down, it came suddenly into the head of the overseer to propose a trip to Dick O'Leary's public-house, about five miles off.

Four horses were thereupon got from the adjoining paddock, and quickly saddled.

The hut-keeper, having nothing but a horse-cloth wrapped round him, was immediately mounted on one of them.

When the overseer, his brother, and Godfrey, who, so to speak, found himself forced to accompany them, were all on horse-back, the party started off at a canter.

For a time the youth managed to keep up with his companions; but at last they urged their animals to such a mad gallop, that the young man saw them flying before him through the Bush, like so many devils.

Beechworth pressed on his own horse to its best speed, in order not to lose sight of them. His animal, however, was old; and in spite of most willing efforts, its pace was comparatively slow. The horses, on the contrary, flying away in front of the youth, were high-spirited young ones.

Godfrey had not a chance, therefore, in the wild race.

During a brief pause he could hear the overseer holloing out to him to make haste; and shouts of "cooey!" a bush call that can be heard a great way off, reached his ears from time to time.

It was in vain, however, that the young man urged on his horse, and he soon entirely lost his companions. He kept, nevertheless, following on in their wake, as he fancied; but after cantering two hours from the time of losing sight of them, he came to the conclusion that he must have strayed off the track.

As this conviction grew upon him, he felt somewhat uneasy, and in his turn shouted out "cooey!" in the hope that he might be heard by some wayfarer, but in vain.

Bush-horses in the colony are not taught to trot, their ordinary pace being a canter; and as Godfrey saw no use in needlessly fatiguing his animal, he allowed it to walk at its own pace.

After a time, thick clouds gathered in the sky the moon became obscured; so that the

benighted young man had only the light of a star here and there to cheer him.

Even in the day time in a uniformly, undulating country of thickly-timbered Bush, the traveller who gets off the beaten-track, runs the risk of losing himself, perhaps, for weeks, ere finding it again.

In fact, the skeletons of bushmen who have so strayed, are sometimes come upon by stock-riders and others.

Godfrey finally gave his horse the reins, in the hope that the animal would make straight to its own paddock, or to some human habitation.

In this expectation, however, he was deceived.

Horses, in the colony, being generally accustomed to run loose all the year round in the open country, except when required for use by their owners, feel themselves quite at home in the wild Bush.

The young man, as hour after hour passed by, the night air being very chill, began

to feel the influence of his depressing position. He, however, made an effort to keep up his spirits, still walking his horse at a slow pace amidst the trees. How great was his delight when the animal stopped suddenly at what proved to be a wooden-rail fence.

The youth immediately concluded that he was now, at all events, near some human habitation, and he was not mistaken.

Following the fence, he soon arrived at a shepherd's hut.

Godfrey holloed out in order to awake any one who might be inside; and before long a man in nothing but his shirt, bearing a light in his hand, half-opened the door, and asked the young man what he wanted.

"I've lost my way, and have been wandering about for hours, trying to find O'Leary's public-house," replied the youth.

"You're eight or nine miles from it, and you must follow the track running to your left, along this fence, which will take you

straight to it, mate," rejoined the shepherd, in rather a surly tone.

"The night is so dark now," said the young man, "that it's impossible to see one's road. I shall be much obliged, if you will give me a 'lie-down' in your hut, till morning, and I can tie my horse up to the fence."

At that time, travellers took up their quarters, gratuitously, for the night, from stage to stage, on their journeys through the bush, at such humble dwellings as they came to, and were, as a rule, most heartily welcomed.

The request of Godfrey, therefore was a most natural one; and, by the code of hospitality predominant in the colony, it ought to have been instantly granted, or rather anticipated, by an offer of shelter.

In this instance, however, the fellow replied to the young man's courteous demand by a half-suppressed curse, at the same time shutting the door, and then rolling himself up again in his blankets.

Godfrey, disgusted with the shepherd's behaviour, walked his horse slowly along the fence, away from the hut.

The youth was cold, as well as weary, but having no matches, he could not light a fire in the bush, by which he might have cheered himself, till morning.

Completely tired out, he at last tied his horse to a tree, and taking off the saddle he made a pillow of it, and lying down on the bare ground, courted sleep.

The increasing wind whistled through the bush, and it likewise rained a little at intervals.

In spite of all, however, he managed to sleep for an hour or two, and awaking with stiffened limbs, he with pleasure hailed the first signs of dawn.

Remounting his horse, he then had no great difficulty in following the track, which the shepherd had stated would lead him direct to Dick O'Leary's public-house. He at last arrived there, and found that it was a bush

inn, of the humblest kind. Some of the inmates of it were already up, and he accosted a man busy chopping wood near the door.

"Is Mr. Rockdale still in the public-house?" the youth asked.

"He and his brother, with Bob Sharman, left here some hours ago; and are, I reckon, now snug at home," was the reply.

"Will you kindly, mate, put me on the road to Wattlebark Station?" then said Godfrey.

The man at once took a great deal of trouble to explain carefully to the youth his route, and Beechworth thanking him warmly, rode on his way.

At about eight o'clock, he arrived at the hut, from which he had set out the previous evening, on such a wild goose chase. The overseer, his brother, and Bob Sharman had not, he found, been to bed at all.

They were not yet sober, and were singing bacchanalian songs in the hut.

"Hallo! mate," cried Mr. Harry Rock-

dale to Beechworth, "where the devil did you get to last night, and at what quarters did you hang out?"

"My horse could'nt keep up with yours," said Godfrey, "so I lost my way, and had to sleep in the bush. I asked at a shepherd's hut for a 'shake-down,' but the fellow refused it me."

This information gave rise to various oaths from Mr. Harry Rockdale, and he finally shouted,

"By the lord Harry! I know the chap well, who wouldn't give you shelter, and by Jove! if I don't pay the beggar out, may my carcass be shrivelled into a tom-tit!"

"The cursed fellow ought to be burnt alive!" exclaimed the overseer's brother.

"I'll kick the brute, by my Mary Ann! if I don't;" added Bob Sharman.

"You must be ready for some grub, mate," then observed Mr. Harry Rockdale.

A pannikin of tea, and cold mutton with "damper," a sort of unleavened bread baked

in the ashes, were then placed before Beechworth, who made a good breakfast.

When the overseer, his brother, and Bob Sharman were sober, Godfrey found them agreeable fellows in the main. He passed the first week or so pleasantly enough at the hut, riding about with Mr. Harry Rockdale, and visiting neighbouring stations.

Bob Sharman was the son of a large brewer in the north of England, but having had a quarrel with his father, left the paternal house six years ago for Australia.

He was tolerably educated, and numerous indeed had been his adventures in the colony. He was a tall, strongly built man, with red hair.

After a few weeks, one of the two shepherds employed on Wattlebark Station leaving, Sharman advised Beechworth to ask the overseer for his situation.

As the young man did not like the idea of idling about unprofitably he fell in with the proposition, and was, a day or two afterwards,

appointed to the vacant post, at a salary of forty pounds a year, with rations. He had a flock of about three thousand sheep assigned to him to look after, and, with the exception of losing them on one occasion for a few hours, he got on pretty well in his new appointment as shepherd.

Certainly he found the occupation dull and lonely enough, but by the aid of a few books, which he had with him, he endeavoured to render the life as tolerable as possible. He learned to manufacture opossum-rugs; but never, however, made more than one, which he kept for his own use.

A shepherd's life in the bush, so often described in books on Australia, is not a very exciting one. Godfrey's temperament was certainly not well adapted to it, but he persevered in it for a time.

He soon tired, indeed, of catching opossums. It requires so many hides to make a good sized rug, that what with killing the animals, tanning their skins, and sewing them

together, its manufacture is altogether a long, tedious task.

His principal diversion was reading, but occasionally he amused himself by shooting parrots and cockatoos, with a gun that the overseer lent him. These birds, with a little seasoning, make a tolerably savoury stew.

His fellow shepherd, Charley Green, a little, thin, old Welshman, with long white hair, was a ticket-of-leave man. He loved to detail the various and numerous crimes, which had in his estimation glorified his career.

"I was an awfully lucky card as a youngster," he expatiated one day to Beechworth, as they were walking together in the bush, "and never got caught by the 'bobbies' till I was twenty-two years of age. Many is the good haul I've made in gentlemen's houses in Wales. The way I got 'lagged' was by an infernal piece of ill-luck. A mate of mine, Mike Barrett, and I were nabbed while carrying off a lot of jewellery from a goldsmith's shop, which we had

broken into after midnight. We were tried at the assizes. My 'pal' and I agreed that the one whose trial came on first, should say everything to get the other off. By Heaven! the traitor, Mike, turned 'king's evidence,' and did for me. May he be cursed to everlasting!"

With such anecdotes, was Beechworth constantly disgusted, and was astonished at the cold, hardened depravity of the old shepherd, just tottering on the grave.

At that time in Australia, the traveller would sometimes put up for the night at a hut crowded with those who had been transported, or "lagged," as it is termed in the colony, and be obliged to listen to boasting recitals of the most villanous crimes.

The old convicts, employed as shepherds, hut-keepers, and in other occupations throughout the country, delighted in the narration of their criminal exploits; and he was the greatest hero, in their opinion, on those occasions, whose career had been the most fruitful in such infamous adventures.

To attempt to moralise with an old "lag" was, in general, to call down upon one's head the most awful imprecations and blasphemous curses. Godfrey, for this reason, always refrained from comment when compelled to hear the tales of old convicts; but involuntarily, nevertheless, showed by his countenance, the horror and disgust with which they inspired him.

Unfortunately the repelling effect that such relations produced upon the young man, and others like him, did not cause the narrators to indulge in them with any the less zest.

Two or three of the occasional companions of Beechworth, while at Wattlebark Station, were curious characters. There was, for instance, a neighbouring shepherd, Jem Pinson, an old soldier, whose wife had deserted him, and who now himself dressed, washed, and tended, as carefully as a mother, his infant daughter, a little thing, only a year and a half of age. He understood bootmaking, by which, together with the manu-

facture of opossum rugs, he earned a little extra money. Occasionally, he borrowed a horse and dray of Mr. Harry Rockdale, to take potatoes, which he cultivated, to Melbourne.

He always took his child with him; and he would bring back the overseer a small keg of rum, in return for his loan. The advent of this present, was ever the beginning of a fresh scene of drunkenness at the hut.

Again, another shepherd, a neighbour of Godfrey, was a Scotchman, Arthur Shand, twenty-eight years of age, who had been a clerk at the Post-office in Edinburgh. So attached had he grown to the lonely life he now led in the bush, that there seemed every likelihood of his following it till death. He was a thin young man, with angular features rather below the middle height.

"You've been in your present situation as shepherd, you've told me, more than five years," remarked Beechworth, one day to him, "and how you've endured the life all

that time, I can't conceive. Twelve months of such an existence would be almost enough to kill me."

"Well, you see," observed the Scotchman, smoking away at his short, black clay pipe. and preparing to light a fire in the bush, "one gets quickly accustomed to anything after a period, and especially to laziness. Besides, I earn more as a shepherd here, than I did as a clerk in Edinburgh; and I'm now putting by a little money. Mine is rather a lonely life, to be sure; but I'm used to it; and it's more agreeable, according to my notion, than sticking at a desk nine or ten hours a day."

While commenting on his lot in this manner, he warmed some cold tea by the fire he had lighted, and commenced making a contented meal off damper and mutton.

"Have you heard," he said, "that Jem Pinson found a large snake in his boot, the other morning, as he was going to put it on?"

"No," replied Beechworth, "but if so he ran a very fearful risk, since nearly all such reptiles, in this country, are poisonous."

"It's said that the aborigines know of certain herbs which are an antidote to their venom; but I hardly believe it, however," remarked Shand, who was well-educated, and had, for a wonder, refrained from acquiring the colonial habit of swearing.

"Jem Pinson," observed the Scotchman, "is a hard-working fellow, for a shepherd. We've got the reputation, as a class, of being the laziest dogs under the sun. Have you heard, Beechworth, the well-known anecdote, illustrative of the philosophical idleness of colonial shepherds?"

"No," was the reply.

"Well," said Shand, "I'll tell it you, then. A gold-digger, tramping through the Bush, losing his road, came upon a shepherd lying on the ground. 'Halloa! mate,' cried the traveller, 'can you show me the way to Wangaratta?' The shepherd, lifting up his foot,

pointed out lazily with it the route, without troubling to speak a word. 'Here's a bob, for a glass of grog,' thereupon said the gold-digger, holding out a shilling. 'Put it in here,' was the drawling rejoinder of the shepherd, still lying down, and pointing with his hand to his pocket."

"Was he an Englishman, or a Scotchman?" enquired Godfrey, laughing.

Without answering this query, Arthur Shand was going on to narrate other anecdotes of Colonial shepherd life; but as it was time for Godfrey to lead home his flock, then nearly half a mile off him, he wished the Scotchman good-bye for the present.

Amongst the few pleasures, varying the monotony of Beechworth's existence at Wattlebark Station, was that of perusing the Melbourne "Argus." The overseer had that journal forwarded to him regularly, and after reading it himself, lent it to the youth.

One day, as Godfrey was conning the newspaper, while watching his flock, he was almost

stupefied and driven out of his senses, by the perusal of the following paragraph:

"On the 12th inst., at Ferntree Station, the property of Mr. Philip Forrester, a very melancholy incident occurred. The daughter of that gentleman, a young lady in her seventeenth year, to the consternation of her family, was found drowned in the Barwon River. Amongst other conjectures, it is supposed that she had attempted to cross the stream, about half a mile from the homestead, by a very narrow plank bridge unprotected by railing, and rudely constructed for the use of the shepherds and other men employed on the Station, and that she missed her footing, and so fell into the water.

"The Barwon River has been lately swollen by rain, and the unfortunate young lady was probably carried away by the current; and there was, unhappily, not anyone near at the time to overhear her cries for help.

"Miss Forrester was accustomed to stroll

alone about the Home Station, and her deplorable fate was not known till her parents, rendered anxious by her long absence, instituted a search, which ended in the discovery of her body, jammed between some floating logs. This grievous calamity has caused a most painful sensation throughout the whole district."

For a time after reading this dreadful news Beechworth was overcome by a faintness and sickness of heart that produced a sense of utter prostration.

When at last he so far recovered from the first shock as to be able to fully realise the awful misfortune, he did not attempt to repress the hot tears that ran down his manly cheeks, while he gave unchecked way to his feelings.

He had the reverse of a womanly disposition; but there are times, when even men may indulge in weeping without shame.

As he now sat on a fallen tree, in the solitary bush, with the newspaper lying at his feet, intensely agitated and wretched, his flock strayed away from him.

He was called partially to his senses by missing the sheep, and started off with a heavy heart in search of them.

By following the track of their dung he was not long before finding them.

Several weeks passed away after this ere the youth recovered any portion of his natural cheerfulness.

It may be confessed, however, that his passion for Beatrice Forrester had not been able to prevent at times, since his departure from Ferntree Station, the image of Ellen Castlemaine from obtruding itself upon his heart.

The remembrance of this early love often oppressed him, and he frequently tried earnestly to banish the solicitor's daughter from his memory, but in vain.

As time went on he involuntarily became conscious that his passion for Beatrice was not of so immutable a character as the ardent sentiments with which Ellen Castlemaine had inspired him.

In fact, though for a very long time he still

continued to indulge in poignant grief for Miss Forrester's melancholy fate, the solicitor's daughter ultimately became again as much as ever the absorbing idol of the young man's heart.

About a month after Godfrey had learned the painful news of Beatrice's death he determined upon quitting Wattlebark Station.

The solitary life of a shepherd had become insupportable to him any longer; and he resolved, now that a few pounds of wages were due to him, to return to Melbourne, and seek for more active and suitable employment.

The overseer one day had gone to the town of Kilmore, ten miles off, to attend the funeral of a man named John Barrett, who had been killed by an accident in the bush. The poor fellow had been travelling about the district with a thrashing machine, by which he earnt a good deal of money. He, with Mr. Harry Rockdale, and his brother were together on horseback one afternoon, riding towards Wattlebark Station, after a visit to Dick

O'Leary's public-house, when they commenced to race.

The timber was very thick in the part of the bush where they were.

Barrett's horse in tearing at full gallop between two gum trees, suddenly swerved, and dashed its rider's head against a projecting branch. His death, which deprived a wife and five children of their only support, was almost instantaneous.

Upon the evening of the return of Mr. Harry Rockdale from attending the poor fellow's funeral, Godfrey communicated to him his determination to quit his present employment, and once more try his fortune in Melbourne.

Five or six days afterwards, a new shepherd having been hired, Beechworth received from the overseer the few pounds of salary due to him, and bade farewell to Wattlebark Station.

Often in England in future years, when

rich and famous, his mind would temporarily dwell upon the strange reminiscences of the days he had spent in "The hut by the Creek."

CHAPTER IV.

HARD UP.

GODFREY BEECHWORTH, when he reached Melbourne on foot, after leaving Wattlebark Station, had certainly no great reason to feel very purse-proud.

He took up his lodging at a quiet place, which went by the name of the Brecknock Hotel. It was near the market at the top of Bourke Street, and the accommodation was tolerably comfortable.

He set himself at once, to obtain a situation,

answering with that end all the advertisements in the Melbourne newspapers, which seemed to offer any prospect of respectable employment.

In the meanwhile, he wrote for his box, which he had left in charge of the head overseer at Ferntree Station, and on receiving it, found the good clothes in it very useful.

One evening, about eight o'clock, he was strolling down Bourke Street, when he saw a tall, gentlemanly person hitting out in true boxing style, at a big hulk of a sailor, who reeled into the middle of the road, at almost each blow that he received.

"You're a man!" cried the fellow, plainly feeling himself at the mercy of his aristocratic antagonist.

This exclamation was an appeal for quarter, which was immediately granted.

"What's the matter?" asked someone near Beechworth, of the bystanders.

This question elicited an explanation of the row.

It appeared that the sailor had, without

the slightest provocation, hustled and given a brutal kick to a casual passer-by, a lame, paralytic tailor, whose accidental champion Godfrey speedily recognised as Vincent Paget, his former acquaintance at Pritchardson's Boarding House.

"How do you do?" cried the youth to him, as he grasped his hand in enthusiastic admiration of such disinterested courage.

Paget returned warmly the salute of the young man, and the two walked away from the cheering crowd in company.

"I'm awfully glad to meet you, my boy!" said Vincent to Godfrey, as they proceeded slowly up Bourke Street, towards the youth's lodgings, where the two indulged in a friendly glass together.

"What the deuce have you been doing since I saw you last?" asked Paget, when they were cozily seated in the young man's room.

Beechworth, thereupon, related his recent adventures, and Paget in return detailed his

own. Although there was so great a difference in the age of the two, Godfrey being more than twenty years the junior of his acquaintance, they assimilated as companions very well together.

Vincent Paget found the youth so very much beyond his years in intellect and knowledge, that he felt an admiring deference for him. Beechworth, indeed, was such a handsome, manly, and generous young fellow, that anyone could be excused a little ardent enthusiasm in his behalf.

"How are you getting on, dear Paget?" enquired Godfrey, who on his part, was attracted by the dashing character of Vincent.

"Well, to tell the truth, Beechworth, I haven't been prodigiously successful lately. I've got a few pounds by me, however, and think of starting for Port Curtis, to which place there's a tremendous rush at present, on account of the accidental discovery of a gold field there."

"I've half a mind to accompany you, if you'll accept me as your companion," cried Godfrey, whose young blood was fired at the prospect of adventure.

"I shall be delighted to have you for a mate, my boy," rejoined Paget.

The two then arranged that they should engage berths in one of the numerous vessels advertised to sail, without delay, from Melbourne for the new gold district.

Never had a more exciting rush been known in the colony.

A crowd hourly besieged the office, in Collins Street, of the "Argus," the principal Melbourne newspaper; and the unemployed, who then crowded the streets, might be seen eagerly perusing, with hungry eyes, the large printed placards posted throughout the town, notifying the departure of vessels for Port Curtis.

The new rush had become a perfect mania, and hundreds were daily throwing up good

situations to join it; for the lust of speedy wealth is common nearly to all mankind.

Port Curtis, situate to the North of Sydney, in nearly a tropical region, did not offer very enticing conditions for manual labour to the natives of cold European climates; but the love of gold is a wonderful talisman for overcoming the fear of hardships.

Dozens of ships were weekly starting for the new mining district, and many of those on board had spent nearly all their worldly means in paying for their passage.

Thus, on arrival at their destination, numbers found themselves exposed to the most dreadful privations.

The effect of a gold rush in Australia at that time seemed to be simply to take away the senses of half the population.

Beechworth and his friend, two days subsequent to their meeting just described, went together to a shipping office temporarily opened in Elizabeth Street, and each paid his money

for a passage to Port Curtis, obtaining a receipt from the agent.

A few mornings afterwards, Vincent Paget called upon Godfrey before breakfast, and with a dejected face, read from a newspaper the particulars of a police case, which startled the youth. The fellow to whom they had paid their fares to the new gold district, figured therein as a prisoner, charged with swindling persons out of passage money to Port Curtis.

The two friends proceeded at once to the delinquent's office in Elizabeth Street, and found it closed. A number of desponding-looking individuals were standing in front of it, who had been cheated by the swindler.

"We've been nicely done out of our money, and I've now only about a couple of pounds left in the world," said Godfrey, to his companion.

"I'm worse off than you, Beechworth, for I've less than thirty shillings remaining in my exchequer," rejoined Vincent.

"What's to be done?" exclaimed the youth.

"The only thing we can do, my boy, is 'to keep up the charter,' and 'trust to the chapter of accidents,'" was the response.

These were Paget's favourite expressions, which he invariably indulged in when the clouds of life seemed to him more thick and gloomy than usual.

They never, as may be supposed, got back a penny of the money which they had paid for a passage to Port Curtis.

However, as they walked away from the swindler's office, they chatted, in spite of everything, merrily together; for Paget had a happy knack of looking misfortunes in the face, and the infection of his philosophically good spirits was irresistible.

He lodged for the present at Pritchardson's Boarding House, North Melbourne, and Beechworth left him there, promising to meet him on the morrow.

The following morning, Godfrey strolled

to the General Post-office, at the corner of Elizabeth Street, and to his excessive gratification found a letter lying there for him. It was from England; and before opening it, he tried to guess from whom it could be, but in vain. How his heart beat as he broke the seal!

The feeling experienced upon receiving a letter from home under such circumstances, is one not easy to be described. In a distant country, a few kind lines from a friend or relative in the mother-land, are truly welcome.

The letter Godfrey received was from a favourite female cousin, ten years older than himself, for whom he had a warm attachment. He read it over and over again, and making his way to Richmond Park, on the outskirts of Melbourne, sat down on a seat there, and repeatedly conned every word of it with affectionate interest.

The kind letter brought tears to his eyes, and he remained sitting where he was for more than an hour and a half, dreaming of England and friends at home.

He returned to the Brecknock Hotel at two o'clock in the afternoon, and found Vincent Paget waiting there for him. After dining, the two friends retired to Godfrey's room, and talked over their prospects.

"When I once get my feet under 'Government mahogany,'" remarked Paget, "I'll take good care to keep them there."

"I trust sincerely, something or other will turn up for us both, before long," said Godfrey, who did not feel in very good spirits.

Vincent declared himself in hopes of soon obtaining an appointment as clerk in one of the public offices, which he called 'getting his feet under Government mahogany;' but it did not seem very clear at present, how his expectations were to be realized.

About five o'clock, they walked together to Pritchardson's Boarding House.

In the course of the evening, who should enter to engage lodgings there, but two of their old acquaintances, Ralph Cooper and Emilio Huberto.

Instead of being dressed like gentlemen, as they were when Godfrey last saw them, they now wore thick hob-nailed boots, corduroy trousers, and roughblouses, with dirty cabbage-tree hats. They were covered with dust, and both walked as though lame.

Beechworth and Paget shook hands with them heartily, and afterwards retiring to Vincent's room, a recital of each one's adventures passed the time for a couple of hours.

"Cooper and I," related Huberto, "have just walked here from Ballarat, and our feet are covered with blisters. Sleeping on the bare ground, in the open air, every night has also given us rheumatism. On the road we got work for a day or two at a lime-kiln; but we have actually had to beg our way the latter part of the journey.

Cooper, however, will receive his quarter's allowance from his mother to-morrow, and he's going to lend me enough out of it to pay for a fortnight's board and lodging. In

the interim, we may, perhaps, get something to do in Melbourne."

"There are numbers of fellows knocking about the street here 'hard-up,' just now," said Paget, "and when any of us will get employment, God only knows. However, my boys, we must 'keep up the charter,' and 'trust to the chapter of accidents.'"

Godfrey took leave of his friends about nine o'clock, and returned to his lodgings.

Day after day passed, and still he found himself apparently as far off as ever from getting a situation. Luckily, he had paid for a month's board and lodging in advance; but he felt that if he did not soon obtain employment, he would be in a disagreeable predicament. He kept up his spirits, however, as well as possible, and indulged in sanguine hopes that things would speedily take a turn in his favour.

In the meanwhile, neither Paget, Cooper, nor Huberto succeeded in obtaining any employment; and having ere long, spent all

their money, they were forced to leave Pritchardson's boarding-house. They became so "hard up," that now for the most part they slept in Richmond Paddock, just outside the town, either under a tree, or in the hollow trunk of one.

Godfrey had for a time contrived to let Vincent share his bed, by giving him entrance through the window, after the others in the house had retired to rest. This, however, being found out by the youth's landlord, could no longer be managed.

In Stephen Street, one evening about half-past eight o'clock, Beechworth met Paget sauntering along with a short clay pipe in his mouth, apparently enjoying a pleasant promenade.

"Where are you going Vincent?" enquired Godfrey, after shaking hands.

"I'm off to Richmond Paddock, to take up my quarters there for the night; for I've been walking about all day, and am completely tired out," was the reply.

"Where do you lodge now?" asked the youth, for Vincent had concealed, hitherto, from him his desperately pauper condition.

"You can come and see where I hang out at present, if you've the time, Beechworth," was the rejoinder.

"I've nothing particular to do, so I don't mind going to your lodgings, to pass an hour," the youth replied.

They walked on together, through the town, and proceeded to Richmond Paddock, a kind of park frequented during the day by nursemaids and children. It was by this time past sundown, and the shades of night were quickly thickening.

Godfrey was chatting on discursive topics, when the aristocratic ex-gentleman-at-Arms to the Queen stopped beneath a big gum-tree, whose large, hollow trunk attested its venerable age. Long before the white man had trodden the shores of Australia, it had doubtless witnessed many a wild *corroborees* of aborigines under its ancient branches.

"That is my present lodging!" exclaimed Paget to Godfrey, pointing to a large hollow, scooped out by Time, in the gnarled trunk of the magnificent tree.

The youth began to laugh, thinking that his friend was joking. Beechworth was, however, quickly undeceived; for Vincent declared in an unmistakably sincere manner, that he had for the last ten days slept every night inside the hollow trunk of the tree before them. Godfrey was astonished at the cool philosophy of his acquaintance, who, filling his pipe anew with tobacco, buttoned up his somewhat thin thread-bare coat, and crawled apparently as contented as a king, into these curious quarters.

"Come inside, my boy, and let's have a chat together, before you go home," he then said to the youth, who thereupon made his way, also, into the hollow trunk.

The moon had risen by this time, but the sky was rather cloudy, and the wind blew a little keenly. Consequently, Godfrey but-

toned up his coat, while he kept company for a short time, with Paget.

"You've found strange bed-quarters," remarked Beechworth.

"It doesn't much matter what sort of a bedroom one sleeps in, so long as the inner man is filled in the day time!" rejoined Vincent.

"I suppose your exchequer is not very flourishing," observed the youth.

"Threepence half-penny is all I have in the world, at this moment; but I generally, somehow or other, manage to get a meal or two, every day," was the response.

Beechworth had then almost an empty purse, and was not able, therefore, to offer his acquaintance much pecuniary assistance; for he had several days since, shared nearly all that remained in his exchequer, between Cooper and Huberto.

"This is a wretched kind of life to lead," remarked Godfrey, in a somewhat mournful voice.

"I'm used to being 'hard up,' and don't

altogether dislike it, my boy," said Vincent, in a happy philosophic tone.

Godfrey could not help thinking, as he gazed upon the aristocratic form and features of Paget, that his present rude sleeping-quarters could scarcely be so acceptable to him as his style of speaking about them would lead one to suppose. The night, indeed, promised to be so cold, that the youth felt wretched at the thought of leaving his friend to pass it in such a place.

"You'd better come home with me, and share my bed," urged Godfrey.

"Your landlord may eject you from your lodgings, if I do that, my good fellow," rejoined Vincent, "and there's no use in getting yourself turned out of house and home, on my account."

Beechworth offered to keep his friend company all night, where they were; but Paget would not listen to such a proposal.

"The Lord knows how soon you may have to sleep in a similar place to this, yourself,"

he remarked, "and so you'd better make the most of your present comfortable lodgings, in the meanwhile."

"I hope you may soon get your feet under 'government mahogany,' as you call it, Vincent," said Godfrey, "for I can't bear seeing you lead the wretched life you're doing, at present."

"Don't bother yourself, my dear fellow, about me," rejoined Paget, "for to tell the truth, if I obtained a good appointment, I expect I couldn't keep it long. I'm not cut out to endure a monotonous clerk's life, and I almost prefer the precarious existence I'm now leading to any stupid settled employment."

Here Vincent smoked away furiously at his pipe, and assumed a contented air.

As it was getting late he insisted upon Godfrey going back to his own lodgings; and the youth, finally, feeling he could do no good by remaining all night with his acquaintance, proceeded, in a somewhat melancholy mood, on his way home.

As he got near Collins Street, the principal Melbourne thoroughfare, an elegantly dressed and handsome female passed him; and the glance at her face which he obtained, by the light of a lamp, startled him.

In her features, in truth, he recognized those of the young woman on whose behalf he had appeared, for the first time in his life, in a Police-Court, just before leaving England, and who had left in his hand the topaz ring, with the initials "H. S."

She turned the corner of the street before the youth could get a sufficient look at her, to be thoroughly convinced he was not deceived. He lost several moments in hesitation, and then walked quickly after her, determined to address her; for he felt an intense interest in her that was perfectly natural.

However, he had evidently mistaken the direction she had gone, for he endeavoured to overtake her in vain.

As he turned back to proceed to his lodging, he vividly recalled the scene in the Police

Court, in which he had played so memorable a part.

He was almost sure he had just seen the young woman, whose champion he had been on that occasion; and he indulged in hopes that in the course of his strolls about Melbourne, he might meet her again.

There was now only about a week remaining, ere the period for which he had paid his board and lodging in advance, would expire.

With almost an empty purse, and the prospect of shortly becoming houseless, he felt keenly what a bitter struggle with the world was before him.

Still, youth and strength constitute no mean capital in themselves; and his fits of dispiritedness were few and far between. At his age there is a faith in Providence, that buoys one up, which is frequently lost in after years.

Days passed on, and, in spite of the most persevering exertions, he failed to obtain any employment.

Godfrey asked his landlord to give him

credit for board and lodging, for a week or two, explaining his ill-luck, and promising to pay him as soon as circumstances should put it in his power. This request not being acceded to, Beechworth found himself, one night about nine o'clock, wandering with only ninepence half-penny in his pocket, houseless, about the streets of Melbourne.

Strolling gloomily through the thoroughfares of the dark city, he encountered Ralph Cooper, who turned out to be in the very same predicament as the youth.

The two found some frail consolation in each other's company; but the night proved so cold and wretched, that both felt sufficiently miserable.

They walked objectless about, till near half-past ten o'clock, when Cooper said to Godfrey,

"Let's go to Richmond Paddock, and try to get to sleep on one of the seats there; for I'm almost worn out, having been wandering about the streets for nine or ten consecutive hours."

"Very well," rejoined Beechworth, in as cheerful a tone as he could master.

"Have you got any tobacco about you, Godfrey?" asked Ralph.

"Yes, luckily," was the welcome answer.

They then filled their pipes, and made their way to Richmond Paddock, where, buttoning up their coats, they stretched themselves on a bench, essaying to sleep.

The wind blew so keen, however, that neither of them was able to obtain any slumber.

"We had better walk about, than be frozen to death lying here," exclaimed Cooper in a shivering voice.

"I think so too, Ralph," acquiesced Godfrey.

They then strolled up and down the park for a time, when Beechworth remarked,

"Let's go into Melbourne again, and walk about the streets, where we shall, at least, have the light of the lamps to cheer us a little. I can't bear the gloomy, cold solitude here."

Thereupon, the friends wended their way back to town. When they arrived there, Godfrey observed,

"I feel, at all events, amongst human beings here; and that in itself is a kind of pleasure."

How strange is the transition, sometimes, from depressing mental gloom, to high spirits!

As Ralph Cooper and Beechworth now wandered through street after street, they lost for a period all sensation of wretchedness; and chatted away cheerily and merrily, as though they had been the possessors of every kind of good fortune, instead of being homeless and nearly penniless, as they were.

About two hours or so after midnight, they found themselves in Collins Street, and sat down on the door-step of the Shakespeare Hotel, to rest for a time.

While sitting there, a policeman approached; and they thought between themselves, that he might be regarding them as suspicious characters, and treat them as vagrants.

"Good night!" said the constable, as he came up to them.

This kindly salute led to a chat in which the policeman, who appeared a man of education and of superior bearing, relieved them from all uneasiness on his account, by his jovial, good-humoured conversation.

It was often the case at this time, that Melbourne policemen were gentlemen by birth, who had formerly held a good position in the mother country.

"Will you take a cup of coffee, mates?" asked the constable.

Cooper accepted, on behalf of himself and Godfrey, the kind proposal.

There was a night coffee-stall in Bourke Street, and thither the three repaired to indulge in the welcome beverage. After this, the constable left them, proceeding on his beat; while Cooper and Godfrey again seated themselves on the step of a door-way, and awaited the daylight.

Ralph had not even a penny left; so

Beechworth spent the remaining trifle of money he had in his pocket, in paying for a humble breakfast for himself and his friend. Cooper remained in the Coffee House, where they took this modest meal, in order to while away for a few hours the wretchedness of his position, in reading the newspapers.

Godfrey, as it turned out a cheerful, sunny morning, the weather being more variable than a woman in Australia, set out for a desultory stroll, promising to meet his friend again, at a rendezvous fixed upon.

The youth sauntered slowly along, and at about eleven o'clock found himself at a beautiful spot, a favorite resort of the populace of Melbourne, on the left bank of the Yarra-Yarra, about two miles from the town.

It was Sunday morning, and crowds of people were strolling about.

He was soon attracted by a crowd of persons, who were listening to a man dressed in shabby-genteel clerical costume, grasping a

Bible in his hand, and energetically preaching to those around him.

The youth immediately recognised him as a draper's assistant, whom he had often spoken to in a shop in Moorabool Street, Geelong. The apparently fervent preacher quickly gave a nod of old acquaintanceship to him, and, after sending round his hat for pecuniary contributions from his open-air congregation, went up and shook him by the hand.

Beechworth was introduced by him to a good looking young man, with whom he became very familiar, after walking and chatting an hour or two in his company.

The name of this new acquaintance was Felix Grant. He was the son of a clergyman in the South of England; but at present held the situation of groom to a gentleman in a suburb of Melbourne.

He insisted upon treating Godfrey to a dinner, and finding that he was "hard-up" and without lodgings, offered him a share of

the hay-loft he occupied as sleeping quarters, over the stables of his employer. Beechworth, urged by the necessity of his position, finally embraced the proffered hospitality.

Upon returning to where he had left Cooper he found that the latter had, in his absence, got a letter at the post-office, enclosing a small remittance from his mother. He insisted upon lending Godfrey two sovereigns, who, after considerable reluctance, accepted the loan.

For three weeks he shared every night the hay-loft with Felix Grant, eking out the money lent him by Cooper, to procure meals in the day time.

At the end of that period he obtained, by good fortune, a situation as assistant to a contractor and slater, in Little Bourke Street, at a salary of two pounds a week.

He remained in it more than two months, when his employer, having a lack of business, dispensed with his services. Godfrey, while in this situation, managed to live very economically, and was able to return to Cooper

the two sovereigns he had lent him. When Beechworth thus once more found himself without any employment his worldly wealth amounted to a little more than five pounds.

Emilio Huberto and Vincent Paget had latterly met with a little luck. The former was now clerk to an auctioneer in Collin's Street, with three pounds a week; and the latter had obtained a temporary situation as overseer of some workmen engaged in pulling down a house at Emerald Hill, to make room for a new building.

Cooper, also, succeeded in getting an appointment as assistant to a travelling photographic company.

Ere long Beechworth obtained, in answer to an advertisement in the *Argus*, a situation as tutor to the three children of a clergyman in Gipps Land, two hundred and odd miles north-east of Melbourne.

His employer was the Reverend Robert Jenkins, educated for the church at St. Bees College, and who had been ordained at the

mature age of forty. He purposed himself returning home in the steamer, by way of Port Albert, and lent his horse, which he had ridden to Melbourne, to Godfrey, to find his road overland to Gipps Land.

The young man received from him an advance of five pounds of salary, and one beautiful evening about six o'clock started on his long journey.

His temperament was not very well adapted for teaching, and he was not particularly delighted at the prospect of a tutor's life; but board and lodging, with a hundred pounds a year,—the salary of his new appointment—were no inconsiderable temptation to him under the circumstances.

He was tolerably well provided with good clothes, and he sent his luggage on beforehand to Gipps Land, by the steamer.

As he passed out of Melbourne on his long overland journey, he felt very little regret at leaving for a time the city where he had experienced such frowns from fortune.

He put his horse into a sharp canter, with the intention, if possible, of reaching Dandenong, about twenty miles from the capital, that night. His youthful spirits brightening up as he rode on through the beautiful bush, soon banished from his mind every gloomy thought.

The brave horse bore him merrily along on the road to his new home, where his career will be traced in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

THE BUSH PARSON.

GODFREY BEECHWORTH, on his overland journey to Gipps Land, put up for the first night, after leaving Melbourne, at an inn at Dandenong, some twenty miles from the capital.

He rose early next morning, and again started on his road, cantering cheerily along the track through the bush.

Following the directions he had received, he essayed a short cut to the "Lady of the

Lake" public house, situate seven miles from Dandenong.

The weather was glorious, and every now and then kangaroos darted across his path. Myriads of parrots, cockatoos, and other magnificent birds enlivened the otherwise grand solitude of the scene.

The young man, when about three miles from Dandenong Inn, began to fear he had mistaken his way ; and, overtaking a rough-looking fellow trudging along on foot, questioned him as to his route.

"Am I on the right track for the 'Lady of the Lake' public house?" asked Godfrey.

"Yes," replied the man, proceeding to give Beechworth directions as to the road.

The youth offered him a nobbler of brandy from a flask he carried in his pocket, when the fellow said—

"If you'll give me, instead, something to buy a little 'grub,' I shall be much obliged to you, mate."

Thinking the man was really "hard up,"

Beechworth threw him a half-crown from his purse, and cantered on.

After a ride of some distance, what was his chagrin, as well as astonishment, to find himself back at the inn from which he had started that morning. His surprise increased soon after his arrival, when he saw the fellow who had given him the directions which had thus misled him, also approaching the public house.

Godfrey remained there an hour ere again starting.

The man to whom he owed his vexatious loss of time had made off through the bush as soon as he caught sight of him again. Beechworth now got careful directions as to his route from the landlord, to whom he related how he had been deceived.

"If you meet the fellow again," said the innkeeper, "put your horse to a gallop, and leave him behind you as fast as possible. He lodged here last night, and I've since found out that he's an old convict lately discharged from Pentridge."

The young man did not feel very agreeably enlightened by this information.

Pentridge prison, near Melbourne, was filled with the worst felons, amongst whom were some whose crimes had been diabolical, beyond conception.

Godfrey once more started on his road about an hour before noon. The warm sunshine, lending a radiance to the glories of the bush, gave it an enchanting aspect.

About two miles from Dandenong he again fell in with the man who had misled him as to his route, and he urged his horse to a gallop in order to pass the fellow with all possible speed.

"Mate!" holloaed out the ex-convict, as the youth flew by; but Beechworth galloped on, without heeding the shouts behind him. The young man kept his horse at full speed, till he reached the "Lady of the Lake" public-house. Without delaying to take any refreshment there, he pursued his road, but at a more tranquil pace.

There was a long journey before him, ere

he would reach the next inn, and it was necessary to husband the strength of his horse. The path was simply a cattle track, which at times was difficult to distinguish.

As afternoon advanced, he became uncertain whether he was on his right road; and finally determined to give the reins to his horse, thinking that since it had been the same route before, the animal would, perhaps, find the way more easily than himself.

At the same time, Godfrey could tell by the sun, that he was travelling in the right direction.

He reached the public-house he was making for, about seven o'clock in the evening. It was little better than a humble log-hut; but never did the youth more enjoy a rest than in that rude Bush inn.

He went to bed, after a modest supper, and slumbered on till eight o'clock in the morning.

The prices at such places were exorbitant at this period; and he had to pay thirty shil-

lings for his horse for the night, and nearly as much more for himself.

After a simple breakfast, he again proceeded on his journey.

To reach the next inn he had more than fifty miles before him.

Nothing can be more magnificent and beautiful than what are called The Fern-Tree Gullies, through which a part of his road lay. Their semi-tropical vegetation is strikingly romantic. Ferns of a gigantic size, unknown elsewhere, border the track; and lofty, splendid trees, form a lovely leafy arch over the road, with their umbrageous branches. The dense underwood makes it dangerous, for fear of losing oneself, to get, even for a moment, off the track, since the sun with difficulty penetrates the thick foliage, and the traveller who strays, may give up almost all hope of ever finding his way again.

Occasionally, a large snake glides across the path; and the bright-hued birds of the Bush dazzle the eye.

As Godfrey urged his horse onward, and gazed dreamingly around, he almost fancied himself in fairy land. Once or twice during the day he came across small groups of naked aborigines, but he galloped hastily past them; for he had no arms with him, and did not care to court their too near acquaintance.

The following afternoon, as he was pursuing his journey, he got puzzled as to his route, from suddenly coming upon a wooden fence which impeded the way.

He was pondering as to whether or not he had lost his track, when he saw a horseman approaching him. The stranger proved to be a Bush doctor, who was staying at a neighbouring station, and the youth made inquiries of him as to his road.

Falling in with any one during a long, solitary overland journey, is always a pleasure.

"You'd better come along with me, and have something to eat and drink," said the doctor, after answering the youth's enquiries.

He accepted the invitation with hearty thanks; and in about half-an-hour they were seated in the large, well-furnished dining-room of a handsome house, the residence of a rich squatter.

Godfrey made a splendid meal off cold fowl, ham, and other luxuries, washing them down with capital sherry; and was afterwards accompanied some distance on his road by the Doctor.

In four days, from the time of leaving Melbourne, Beechworth reached the house of the Reverend Robert Jenkins, which was situate about fifty miles inland from Port Albert.

The dwelling, surrounded by an extensive paddock, was of good size, as well as comfortable. From its windows, there was a magnificent view of the Snowy Mountains. The prospect indeed everywhere around was most glorious. Never had Australian scenery struck Godfrey as more grand and beautiful, than now as, approaching the residence of Mr.

Jenkins, he gazed upon the almost boundless panorama of plain, forest, and mountain, stretching before him.

He was welcomed politely by the clergyman's wife; her husband not having yet returned home from Melbourne.

The young man's pupils, consisted of two boys, Samuel and Josiah, with their sister, Martha, and were wofully backward in their education.

Godfrey was soon on very good terms with them.

When Mr. Jenkins returned home, the young man discovered upon a short experience that the parson himself was sufficiently ignorant and conceited. He was almost entirely a self-educated man; but his mind was not naturally capable of much cultivation, and his views were as narrow as they were prejudiced.

Beechworth made very little progress in instructing his children; for Mr. Jenkins was constantly permitting his two sons—four-

teen and sixteen years of age respectively —to assist a neighbouring squatter in stock-riding, or some other bush-occupation.

One day, as Godfrey was riding over to Sale —a small town some few miles off—he overtook a little man, walking jauntily along, who attracted notice by his thick shock of red hair.

The pedestrian turned out to be no other than Jack Candy, the schoolmaster, one of Beechworth's acquaintances, at Pritchardson's Boarding-house, North Melbourne.

This unexpected rencounter led to mutual warm salutations.

"I never thought to see you again, in this world, at any rate," exclaimed Candy.

"What brought you to Gipp's Land?" enquired Godfrey.

"I'm the National Schoolmaster at Sale, which appointment I at last obtained after nearly dying of starvation in Melbourne," was the reply.

"How do you like the situation?" asked Beechworth.

"Well, not very much, to tell the truth," said Candy.

"What has occurred to make you discontented with the post?" enquired Godfrey.

"A little while ago," replied the Schoolmaster, "when the foundation-stone was laid of the new church, adjoining the school of which I'm the teacher, the Reverend Robert Jenkins, who preached the sermon on the occasion, got up a 'treat' for my scholars. Each of them was given a glass of wine and some biscuits. Mr. Joseph Sharman, a squatter near here, and a great friend of the parson, publicly presented me on the eventful occasion, with a large cake, made by his wife, and delivered himself of a grand speech upon handing it to me. I, however, told him he could keep it himself, as I wasn't in need of it, and I thus made an eternal enemy of him. For my part, I don't see the fun of being patronised in such a manner."

Godfrey accompanied the little school-

master to his modest dwelling, and spent an hour or two in chatting with him.

Candy introduced to him, by the name of Gerard Martin, a bushy-bearded man, of rough, but intelligent appearance. He was one of the candidates at the forthcoming election of members for the Colonial Legislative Assembly.

Beechworth was rather struck with this aspirant for political honours. He was an Englishman, of French extraction, about thirty-eight years of age.

The youth was forthwith invited to a tent, where Martin lived, not far from the house of the little schoolmaster. There the young man was entertained with guitar music, in which his host had some skill.

The aspiring candidate for legislative honours cooking some beefsteak, by a fire outside his tent, and boiling a few potatoes, shared with the youth a hospitable meal.

Before leaving, Godfrey was warmly in-

vited to hear a speech purposed to be delivered by Gerard Martin, at noon on Thursday in the following week, to a body of electors at the town of Sale.

Beechworth, promising to be present on the important occasion, took leave of his host; and Jack Candy accompanied him a part of his way on the road home.

Godfrey was glad, whenever possible, to escape from the society of the Reverend Robert Jenkins and his family; for the parson and his wife were eternally quarrelling, and led a cat and dog sort of life.

The husband was a vulgar fellow, who had no consideration for any one; and Godfrey's life was sufficiently miserable in consequence. Mr. Jenkins thought nothing of swearing at his better half, and abusing her like a pick-pocket; and she returned his vituperation with interest.

As Godfrey approached the parson's house, after his visit to the tent of Gerard Martin, he was almost blinded by the glare of a bush fire, which was burning away furiously

amidst the thick timber in the rear. The huge trunks of thousands of lofty gum trees were in a red-hot glow, and their branches crackled in the flames.

Sky and bush were lit up with the lurid glare, and it seemed to Beechworth that the house of Mr. Jenkins was in imminent risk of being destroyed.

On getting nearer, he found, however, that the conflagration was not so close to the residence as he had imagined; and moreover a wide creek served to protect the grounds and dwelling from its ravages.

Sometimes in the far bush, such fires travel with fearful swiftness over a hundred miles or more of country, sweeping everything before them. Their terrific grandeur, then, is indescribable. The wild animals and birds perish in their fury, while whole herds of cattle and flocks of sheep are destroyed.

Godfrey, as he had promised, rode over to Sale upon the day when Gerard Martin was to deliver his speech there to the electors.

The existence of universal suffrage in the colony, and the absence of any property qualification for members of the legislative assembly, were the means of sending into the Colonial Parliament some very odd specimens of politicians.

Gerard Martin was a house-decorator by trade, but had acquired, as far as was possible for an uneducated man, without any regular art instruction, some skill in landscape and portrait painting He was ready to turn his hand to almost any employment; and lived in his tent, just outside the little town of Sale, a life of alternate hard work and dissipation. He was a somewhat sensual-looking man, but with good-looking, though coarse, features, while his straight, dark hair, reaching nearly to his shoulders, and his long, black beard gave him a striking appearance.

In his tent with him lived four or five large dogs, and a tall, tame emu was always to be seen strutting up and down before its entrance.

His wife came up from Melbourne to Gipps

Land expressly to help him in canvassing for election votes. She was a masculine, gaunt, tall personage, who professed to be a literary genius; and carried about with her a packet of copies of a little book she had written, to push the sale wherever she went.

Beechworth upon arriving at Sale, early in the afternoon, when Gerard Martin was to address the electors, found him already mounted on a waggon, and about to commence a speech to the medley crowd of bullock drivers, stock-riders, and farmers.

The portion of the oration that Godfrey could catch—the speech eliciting almost every moment loud applause—ran as follows:—

"FRIENDS AND ELECTORS,—

"I meet you here to ask for your support in the coming election of a member of the Legislative Assembly for this district. Those around me are of the class that form the blood and sinew of the country, namely, working men! I ask you, then, for your votes

for the best possible reason. What is it? Because I am a working man.

"The opposing candidate, Mr. Joseph Sharman, simply demands your votes, gentlemen, because he is a rich, bloated squatter; and not like myself, on the ground of being a Friend of the People, which, if he says he is, he tells a lie. Your choice lies between him and myself; but I, as you know, am one of your own class. Why am I, therefore, a better candidate than he, to represent your interests in the Legislative Assembly? Because, gentlemen, I am a working man.

"You shall now hear my views upon the principal public questions of the day. Why are my liberal ideas opposed to the selfish politics of Mr. Sharman, the bloated squatter? Because I am a working man!

"With regard to the question of education, I'm for every child being properly taught at the public expense. Why do I support this honest principle? Because I am a working man!

"In respect to the land question, I'll give

you my long-considered opinion. Of course it's opposed to that held by Mr. Sharman; because he's not a friend of the poor man, as I am. I contend that land ought to be sold to the people in fair-sized allotments, at ten shillings an acre; and that the buyers shouldn't be obliged to pay for it till they find it convenient. Why do I hold this view? Because I am a working man!

"I'm for the abolition of the government license for gold-digging, which my bloated opponent wishes to maintain. Why do I differ in this subject from him? Because I am a working man!

"I'm for paying members of the legislative Assembly, because those who go there without receiving any remuneration for their political toil, indemnify themselves by looking after their own interests, and neglecting those of the people. Why is Mr. Sharman opposed to me on this point? Because he fears—like the other bloated squatters—that if members were paid, you would be able to send a battalion

of working men into parliament, who would look after the interests of the people.

"Friends and electors! I'm the chap to send into the Legislative Assembly, to see that the poor man is treated properly. Why do I say this? Because I am a working man!

"Why is my opponent not fit to represent your interests there? Because he is a confounded, bloated squatter, who, like all his class, welters in the slough of selfishness, and hatred of the poor man."

Here the speaker almost broke down, from excess of oratorical vehemence.

At the same time, an immense shout of applause rent the air from the listening crowd, during which the orator took a "nobbler" of rum, and then continued, in a burst of noisy invective, to pour forth a tremendous torrent of clap-trap.

The cheering became so great, as he proceeded, that Godfrey could only catch a few words, here and there, of the rest of his speech.

At the end of the oration the crowd, together with the parliamentary candidate, made towards the public-house close at hand, and drunkenness, with noisy riot, became quickly the order of the day.

After looking on for a time at this scene, Godfrey became a witness to a dreadful tragedy.

A drunken stock-rider was bantering some aborigines, who had been attracted to Sale by the hope of getting brandy. Suddenly one of the natives, half mad with the combined effects of drink and rage, hurling his long spear at the white man, pierced him right through the body. The unfortunate fellow died almost immediately, and the murderer was instantly captured. He was taken in charge by the police, but what was his ultimate fate Godfrey never heard.

As Beechworth rode home that evening he could not help thinking that however good a fellow Gerard Martin might be in his way, he was scarcely the kind of man of which

genuine statesmen are made. He nevertheless, was returned at the ensuing election, by a considerable majority, as a member of the Legislative Assembly; but Godfrey left the Colony before the ambitious house-painter had signalised himself, if he ever did, as a political genius.

The effects of universal suffrage in Australia appeared to Beechworth not particularly encouraging; for a very small number, comparatively, of those entitled to a vote, ever availed themselves of their privilege; and the constituencies were apparently always subject to the influence of any unscrupulous demagogue who possessed the "gift of the gab."

Godfrey, while with the Reverend Robert Jenkins, was casually called upon to assist as a witness at the wedding of an Irish lass, the parson's cook, with a Chinaman, a small farmer in the neighbourhood. Such mixed marriages were not uncommon, at that period, in the Colony. In Gipps Land District, particularly, Englishwomen were constantly

wedding with Chinamen; but Beechworth could not help thinking that the taste of his fair compatriots must have been considerably perverted ere falling in love with these yellow-faced, pig-tailed Asiatics. The chance of a well-to-do husband is, apparently, a temptation that women in no clime can resist; and this may probably explain why so many in Victoria took to themselves comparatively rich Chinaman, as better-halves.

After Godfrey had been about four months with the Rev. Robert Jenkins, he seriously told him that unless his children were kept regularly at their studies it would be next to impossible for them to make any progress in them.

The result was that the clergyman, who had no great appreciation of literary accomplishments, determined to allow the education of his family to be subordinate to other interests.

His two sons were respectively delegated to the care of Mr. Joseph Sharman, and another neighbouring squatter; while the par-

son's daughter was sent off to a school at Port Albert.

Beechworth's services as tutor, therefore, came to an end; and after receiving the amount of salary due to him, he prepared to depart from Gipps Land.

He was considerably disgusted with his experience of a teacher's life, and resolved to try some different career.

Jack Candy had already given up his appointment as national schoolmaster at Sale, and had returned to Melbourne.

It was a lovely morning when Godfrey took leave of the Rev. Robert Jenkins' family, and started off, mounted on a bush hack, which the parson had lent him, for Port Albert.

The young man intended taking the steamer there for Melbourne.

As Beechworth cantered along through the bush, he did not indulge in a moment's regret for the situation he had just relinquished.

Dreams of better and happier days in store

buoyed up his spirits; and the consciousness of talents worthy of a more agreeable lot than that of a tutor, made him feel indifferent to temporary vicissitudes.

There was something in the breast of the youth which made him feel certain that the future would not be altogether a blank for him; and such kind of presentiment is no mean support to the soul in the hey-day of life.

The beautiful thick forest, the flights of brilliant birds, the blue sky, the bright pure atmosphere around him, were more than enough to encourage the castles-in-the-air which the youth built, as he rode on towards Port Albert.

Many, indeed, were the vicissitudes that Godfrey was still to undergo; but what are hardships and struggles to a youth if a background of bright prospects loom in the future!

The young man took the steamer at Port Albert for Melbourne—where he was destined to meet with further adventures.

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNEXPECTED RENCOUNTER.

GODFREY BEECHWORTH'S sojourn in Gipps Land, though it had not been all happiness, was nevertheless not without its pleasant reminiscences.

The grand scenery of that part of Australia had expanded his soul, and excited him to feelings of increased love for the wonderful Creator of the beautiful universe. Amidst the primeval glories of nature, the

educated mind feels more forcibly than elsewhere, the presence of an Omnipotent Deity.

Upon reaching Melbourne he took up his quarters at Pritchardson's boarding-house, where he found that Emilio Huberto, his old acquaintance, was now lodging.

Godfrey was walking in Collins Street one afternoon, when he fell in with Jack Candy. After an interchange of warm salutations, Beechworth remarked,

"I suppose, Jack, you're looking out for a new situation in the teaching line."

"By Jingo! I've made up my mind, if I can help it, never to take to schoolmastering again," exclaimed Candy.

"What occupation do you think, then, of following for the future?" asked Beechworth.

"I don't exactly know," was the reply.

"I've half made up my mind myself to try my fortune at the Gold-Diggings," remarked Godfrey.

"I'm so 'hard-up' myself that I scarcely know what to do," observed Jack.

"If that's the case, Candy," was the rejoinder, "you'd better let me lend you two or three pounds; for I'm richer than I was when we last met in Melbourne."

"You always pretend to be better off than you really are, when you stumble against any acquaintance 'hard up'—in order to persuade him to accept something from you, Godfrey," said the schoolmaster.

"Don't talk nonsense, Jack!" retorted Beechworth, adding, "What do you say to accompany me to the Gold-diggings? I've got a little money by me at present, and I think seriously of going there."

The conversation proceeded, but Godfrey was unable to get Candy to fall in with his proposal.

Several weeks passed after this, and Beechworth, not having in the meanwhile obtained any situation, resolved to try his fortune with the little money he had remaining, at the Ovens Gold Diggings.

He at length persuaded Jack Candy, who,

after spending almost his last farthing, was in wretched straits, to accompany him.

It was cold weather, and the sky was cloudy, when the two left Melbourne on foot, one evening about six o'clock.

From having lent money to several hard-up acquaintances, Godfrey started on his road with very little in his purse.

He had bought the necessary gold-digging implements, and sent them on before him to Beechworth, a thriving town that had sprung up in the centre of the Ovens Gold Diggings.

Cheerful with the hopeful enterprise of youth, he left Melbourne full of good spirits and glad to have so merry a companion as Jack Candy.

Godfrey carried with him a double-barrelled gun.

The first night the two walked on till about half way between Melbourne and Kilmore. They then lay down under a gum-tree, a little distance off the road; and, having first

smoked a pipe, rolled themselves up in their blankets, and tried to sleep.

Not more than three quarters of an hour had they thus lain on the ground, when Candy exclaimed,

"It's so cold to-night that I propose, Beechworth, we don't stay here any longer; but jog on and put up at the first inn we come to on the road."

"I feel the wind very keen, and am ready to fall in with your proposition," was Godfrey's rejoinder.

Thereupon, strapping their blankets on their swags, they jogged on once more.

Soon they came to a road-side public-house, where they put up for the night.

The next evening they reached Kilmore, and Beechworth's feet being sore, from his boots not fitting him well, they again slept at an inn. It had, besides, rained in torrents all day, and they were wet through.

After leaving Kilmore, they had about eight days' journey, on foot, before them, ere

reaching the town of Beechworth ; and they now resolved to camp out every night in the Bush, as the expense of putting up at public-houses would drain their exchequer too much.

About forty miles from Kilmore, towards dusk, one beautiful evening, they met a large van, drawn by two horses, which turned out to be a travelling photographic establishment.

Godfrey, to his astonishment, recognised the driver as Frank Hamilton, the surgeon's son, and the lover of his cousin Annie, of Rainbury, Somersetshire.

The mutual pleasure at this unexpected rencounter was intense.

Frank took his van a little off the road, and Beechworth with Candy passed two or three hours in his company. The three supped together off beefsteaks, cooked by a bush fire. Hamilton was compelled to proceed on his road to Melbourne that night; and great was his regret at being obliged to part so soon from Godfrey.

"Frank," Beechworth remarked, "it seems you're getting on in the world, by your managing to buy a handsome van and horses."

"My father," rejoined Hamilton, "after commencing practice as a surgeon in Ballarat, soon began to make money quickly. He had remained only a month or two in Western Australia, not liking the climate there. My van and horses he purchased in order to set me up as a travelling photographer.

"I manage to get a tolerable living, and also to put by a little money.

"However, I wish Godfrey, that instead of listening to my own history in the Colony, you would give me an account of your adventures here."

Beechworth therefore gave Hamilton a sketch of his career, since arriving in Australia.

Having finished his narrative, Godfrey made enquiries of Frank about Annie Beechworth.

"She wrote to my sister," said Hamilton, "some months ago, and described herself as

wretchedly unhappy, her parents wishing her to marry Mr. George Brocker, of Breckington Farm."

"My cousin Annie will never, I'm sure, consent to such a match," exclaimed Godfrey, "for I'm persuaded she really loves you, Frank."

Hamilton, upon hearing this earnest asseveration, could scarcely refrain from bursting into tears; for his affectionate nature was wholly bound up in his attachment for Beechworth's charming cousin.

"I love Annie with all my soul," cried Frank, "and if I thought she would ever forget me, and marry George Brocker, it would break my heart."

"Don't fear anything of the kind," said Beechworth, "for I know my dear little cousin well, and am sure she will never be false."

"Possibly, before long, I shall have made enough money to return and live comfortably in England," rejoined Hamilton, "and if so

the height of my ambition would be to settle down in Somersetshire, and have Annie for my wife."

"My cousin," remarked Godfrey, "is of too noble and loving a nature ever to forget you, Frank."

In this way Beechworth kindly strove to cheer Hamilton.

When separated by half the world from one's idol, the affections gather intensity from consciousness of the contingencies that beset lovers so far parted.

Godfrey and Frank Hamilton, after a long chat on England and their colonial adventures, bid adieu to each other about ten o'clock, when the moon was shining brightly over hill and plain.

They promised to correspond with one another; andwith oft repeated hopes of meeting again shortly, Godfrey heartily wished Frank prosperity and good-fortune in his Colonial career.

"Good-bye! Beechworth," cried Hamilton,

as they finally parted, "and may we some day meet happy and rich, in the old country."

"Luck to you, Frank," responded Godfrey, "keep up your spirits, and trust in Annie."

Hamilton was in many respects a fine character, and Beechworth accordingly felt attracted towards him.

He had walked with Frank a short distance on his road, and he now returned to Jack Candy, who was drinking tea, and smoking a clay pipe, by the side of the bush fire, which he replenished from time to time, with the dry timber lying scattered around.

It was a moonlight night, but rather cold, and the wind whistled shrilly through the lofty gum-trees.

Jack Candy and Godfrey sat for some time together smoking, the thoughts of the latter wandering far away to dear England, and his mind dwelling on the sweet image of Ellen Castlemaine.

As he looked up at the bright stars, he wondered when he should behold once more the northern constellation of the Great Bear, instead of that of the Southern Cross, which he now gazed upon.

What glowing visions passed through his brain, as he sat that night by the lonely bush fire!

At length feeling somewhat chilly, he observed to Candy,

"I think we'd better contrive some little shelter out of yonder bushes, as the wind promises to blow disagreeably strong during the night."

"It certainly appears likely to be stormy," said Jack.

Godfrey accordingly tied with a string he had in his pocket, the tops of some bushes together, and in this way made a kind of beehive shaped screen from the wind.

Beneath this hastily-extemporized shelter the young men crawled, and, wrapping themselves in their blankets, courted sleep.

They had not been lying thus more than half-an-hour, when Candy suddenly shrieked out, in dreadful alarm,

"Good God!"

At the very same instant, Godfrey felt a large snake, seven or eight feet long, gliding slimily over his face. The two young men rushed headlong from their shelter, and resolved to sleep for the remainder of the night by the side of the still brightly burning fire.

"I daren't fetch my blanket from beneath the bushes," exclaimed Candy, in a shuddering tone.

"Stay where you are, and I'll go and get it for you, Jack," said Godfrey.

Thereupon Beechworth approached the bushes, and, seizing hold of Candy's blanket, bore it off in triumph.

They slept soundly beneath the bare sky until dawn, when, after partaking of some tea and a little cold meat, with damper, they proceeded on their route.

During the two following days, they walked about fifty miles.

Godfrey's boots being in a most dilapidated state, he at last became painfully foot-sore.

One evening they had camped for the night near a water gully, when Jack took the gun which Beechworth had brought with him, and amused himself by shooting opossums. Unhappily he went astray in the bush, and his friend lost him for nearly three hours. Jack at length overheard the shouts of his chum, who saw the ex-schoolmaster approaching him, carrying three dead opossums

These they forthwith cooked, and, although, the gummy taste of them might not have been enticing to an epicure, the young men were so hungry that they devoured the animals like the greatest dainties.

The next day, as they were passing through a small township, Godfrey remarked,

"My boots are so thoroughly done up, that I must buy another pair. I propose we sell the gun, for I'm tired of carrying it, Jack. Our swags weigh each about forty pounds, and that's quite enough baggage. Besides,

if we go off the road every now and then into the bush in order to shoot, we shall double our journey's length, and fruitlessly delay arrival at Beechworth."

"I entirely agree," rejoined Candy, "that carrying the gun is a useless bore."

They accordingly entered a store, where articles of every kind, from butter to coats, were sold. Offering the gun for sale, they obtained a very inadequate sum for it; but they, nevertheless, parted with it gladly.

Godfrey having bought a new pair of boots, they again trudged on their road.

Five days subsequently they reached the Ovens Gold Diggings, foot-sore and travel-worn.

The first night of their arrival there they took up their quarters at an inn. On the following morning, they obtained possession of their tent and gold digging implements, which had arrived at Beechworth before them.

The weather was fine, and gave them an opportunity of looking about them. Towards

evening, they pitched their tent on the bank of the large creek that winds round the town; and prepared with energy to enter upon their new career as gold diggers.

The first night of their thus camping out proved windy and tempestuous; but they nevertheless slept pretty soundly.

On the morrow the occupants of a neighbouring tent gave them some friendly information, as to a spot suitable for commencing their digging operations. They, accordingly proceeded there with their implements, and set to work with a good-will.

For ten days they toiled with cradle, spade, and pickaxe, from morning till night, but without success. At the end of that period they hit upon ground, from which they managed to wash out about fifteen shillings worth of gold a day.

This little run of encouraging luck lasted a week, after which they toiled fruitlessly for the precious metal.

Weeks passed on, and still continuing

unsuccessful, they found themselves at last almost without a penny in their pockets.

"We must certainly look out for situations, of some kind or another; for gold-digging doesn't seem likely to prove very profitable," observed Candy one night, when he and Godfrey were lying in their tent.

"I expect it's rather difficult to get any respectable employment here," was the rejoinder.

Wearied, however, with their want of success at gold-digging, they earnestly set themselves to seek for situations.

After a time Candy succeeded in getting employment, at hawking about the town of Beechworth one of the daily newspapers published there.

Godfrey, also, through the influence of one or two friends he had made, finally obtained the appointment of librarian and secretary to the local Literary Institution.

Candy soon left his employment of hawking newspapers, to become the driver of an itinerant fruit cart.

The voice of the little schoolmaster might often be heard in the streets of Beechworth, shouting out,

"Melons! ripe plums! fine peaches!"

Jack, indeed, got on very well in his new occupation.

Godfrey before very long lost his situation as librarian of the Literary Institute, in consequence of accidentally giving offence to one of its trustees, a draper. The young man had neglected paying sufficient obeisance to that personage, and thus made an enemy of him. "Jacks in office" are not generally inclined to dispense with any of their supposed claims to importance; and in fine Godfrey became a victim of the linen-draper's puffed-up conceit.

Beechworth then took to gold-digging again.

This time his chum was a young Englishman, twenty-eight years of age, who had formerly held a commission in the Forty-sixth Regiment. The Ovens Diggings presented at

this period a curious scene. A large Chinese Theatre was a noteworthy feature amongst the buildings there.

The diggings themselves had the aspect, at first sight, of a vast grave-yard. Almost every step one took around the town of Beechworth was arrested by a deep hole, where some miner had being toiling for the precious metal. Chinamen and Europeans worked side by side; but the latter were constantly becoming embroiled with the former.

After a time Godfrey and his mate met with tolerable luck. They became ultimately the fortunate possessors of a sum which, when divided, gave them a hundred and seventy-two pounds a-piece.

Thus comparatively well-off, Beechworth, in consequence of his companion being unwilling to continue digging any longer, determined to start for Melbourne.

He made up his mind to proceed to Castlemaine, to which place there was just then an important gold-rush.

He accordingly left the Ovens Diggings, on a horse which he had bought for twenty-two pounds.

As he cantered along the road to Melbourne, his thoughts wandered from the life of vicissitude that beset him in the Colony, to dear Old England.

He yearned to enter upon some settled career, and hoped ere long to be able to earn enough money to put his wishes into execution.

There is hardly anything more inspiriting than horse-exercise; and as he rode onwards, leaving the town of Beechworth behind him, he built all sorts of bright castles in the air.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BUSHRANGERS.

THE day after quitting the Ovens Gold Diggings, Godfrey was cantering gently along through the Bush—cogitating over plans for the future—when he suddenly perceived three horsemen galloping towards him.

On coming up to him, the foremost one presented a revolver-pistol at his breast; and ordered him, with dreadful curses, to dismount, and deliver up all the money he had about him.

"Be quick, and empty your pockets; or I'll blow your cursed brains out!" shouted the fellow.

The only answer that Godfrey gave to this summons, was to knock the pistol aside as quick as lightning, and level the wretch to the ground, by a blow on the head from the but-end of his heavy riding-whip.

Then the young man galloped furiously off, in the hope of escape.

He was hotly pursued by the Bushrangers, and speedily several pistol-balls whistled round him.

All hope of escape he felt, was vain; for two of the villains pressed close behind him, and their steeds were much swifter than his own.

Presently, a bullet, aimed at the young man, struck the head of his horse; and the animal rolled over with its rider, on the ground.

Godfrey was immediately seized by the bushrangers, bound hand and foot, and

dragged away off the track to a solitary spot, where the timber was so thick, that but for the leaves of the Australian trees being perpendicular instead of horizontal to the ground, as in other countries, it would have been almost as sombre there as midnight.

The day was warm, but the sun's rays penetrated with difficulty the dense overhanging foliage. Beechworth was stripped and tied to a tree, while the Bushrangers searched his clothes, and took from his pockets upwards of a hundred and sixty pounds, comprising all the young man's hardly-earned wealth.

The fellow, whom he had felled to the ground with his riding-whip was, by this time, recovered from the blow; and now amused himself with cursing and insulting the unfortunate victim.

To Beechworth's horror, he recognised one of the bushrangers as Peter Forrester, his fellow-passenger on board the "Lancy," who was put in irons, by the Captain, for stealing

wines from the cargo. The villain had been sentenced to three month's imprisonment on the ship's arrival in the Colony. After regaining his liberty, he had deliberately taken to bushranging.

As Godfrey recollected his desperate struggle with him, on board the "Lancy," and recalled the brute's dreadful menaces of revenge towards him, he felt that he had verily fallen into merciless hands.

The wretch speedily recognised him, and gloated over the misery of his victim.

"Curse your beastly carcase!" he exclaimed, at the same time uttering a volley of diabolical oaths, "I hope you like your luck. I told you I'd be revenged on you, and may I be roasted in hell flames, if I ever missed a chance of vengeance."

Godfrey replied not a word; but the contemptuous look he threw upon the villain, excited the brutal passions of the fellow

"Let's make a pistol-target of our game," he shouted to his fellow-bushrangers, "and

riddle his carcase with balls. Dead men tell no tales."

A shudder went through the frame of Godfrey, as, bound naked to the tree, he then listened to a discussion amongst the bush-rangers, as to whether or not they should shoot him.

In a hoarse ferocious voice, Forrester declared that the best plan was to kill him, and burn his body to ashes.

"We'd better," cried one of the bush-rangers, "send a bullet through the young beggar's brains, and have done with him without any more fuss."

"Just as well," another of the villains exclaimed, "to have a little pistol-practice at the youngster, for amusement."

"Let's toss up for first shot at him then, and waste no more time about the rascal," said Forrester, getting impatient, and hurling repeated imprecations and jeers at Godfrey.

The young man gave up all hope of life, as

he saw the bushrangers coolly preparing their revolvers, with the intention of making a pistol-target of his body.

They tossed up for first shot, which fell to Peter Forrester.

"What distance shall we fire from?" exclaimed one of the wretches.

"Twenty paces I propose," was the rejoinder of one of his companions.

In a very few minutes, Godfrey was convinced he would be in Eternity.

The villains having agreed upon firing at twenty paces, coolly measured out the distance, with as much indifference to the fate of their victim, as though it were an opossum at which they were about to shoot.

The eyes of Peter Forrester glared with fiendish satisfaction, as he shouted to Beechworth,

"Now, young fellow! I'm going to send daylight through your carcase. You shall have just five minutes and no longer, to prepare yourself for the operation."

Godfrey replied not to his taunts and imprecations; but with as much resignation as his youthful years and brave temperament could master, awaited his fate.

During the five minutes' respite awarded him, he felt all the bitterness of death; but endeavoured, as much as possible, to calm his soul into submission to the will of the Almighty.

Very hard, however, it is for one so young to submit to such a fearful fate.

As he gazed around at the gloriously-timbered, beautiful bush, his breast heaved at the thought of how soon the bright earth would only serve to bear his ashes, since the bushrangers had declared aloud their intention of burning his corpse.

In the last few moments of life allotted him by the ruffians, his mind wandered through a thousand cycles of thought, with the rapidity of lightning.

As his imagination called up Ellen Castlemaine, he could hear the loud throbbing of his

own heart. In such moments, the action of the mind is miraculously swift, and embraces an infinite range.

Finally lifting up his eyes to the blue heaven, of which he had a glimpse through the thick branches, he fixed his soul upon the world above, and offered up a fervent silent prayer to God.

He only refrained giving his pious mental ejaculations audible utterance, from his unwillingness to submit himself to the mockery of the ruffians looking on.

He had always cherished a deep sense of religion, and now, in this moment of fearful trial, he derived support and consolation from reposing his soul in pious faith on the infinite love of the Saviour of mankind.

"Your five minutes are up," at length exclaimed Forrester.

The villain then deliberately took his station at twenty paces from him, and levelled his revolver at the young man.

The sharp report of a pistol immedi-

ately echoed through the bush; but the aim of Forrester, whether from excess of fiendish glee or otherwise, was not so steady as he had hoped, and the ball merely grazed the victim's left arm, inflicting a slight wound.

Godfrey, as he saw another of the bushrangers preparing to fire at him, almost wished that a bullet through the heart might put an end to all his sufferings at once.

Before the fellow had taken aim, a horseman came fiercely galloping up, and was greeted by the bushrangers by the title of "Captain."

He was young as well as good-looking; and what was the intense astonishment of Beechworth, when he recognised in him Denny Burnham, an old school-fellow. Godfrey, likewise, from the descriptions he had often listened to, became convinced that the robber chief was identical with "Captain Lowe," as he was called, whose career as a bushranger was the talk of almost every fireside in the colony. Beechworth had heard about him the

first day of his arrival in Australia from the diggers, at the Kangaroo Hotel, Geelong; and the story of a "sticking-up" feat of the famous outlaw narrated by one of them, formed part of a chapter in this history.

"What are you up to?" cried Lowe—for it was really he—to the other bushrangers.

Upon receiving their account of the affair, he exclaimed,

"What the devil's the object of committing useless murder, mates?"

Immediately by a few words to the fellows, spoken in a mingled tone of sternness and conciliation, he put a stop to the sport they had promised themselves of riddling Godfrey's body with pistol balls.

It was evident that Lowe had a thorough command over the gang, and that they were accustomed to implicitly obey him.

He ordered his men at once to make off, saying, he would remain by the victim, with a loaded pistol for half an hour, to give them

time to get clear away, and that he would then free him.

This command being obeyed, though Peter Forrester scowled devilishly, like a tiger disappointed of his expected prey, the captain was quickly left alone with the young man.

Burnham, as the youth knew, had been transported for embezzlement of money in a banker's office in London, where he had been clerk.

He was the nephew of an opulent English peer, of avaricious disposition, who made no allowance whatever to his younger brother, Denny's father, and did nothing for his family.

The youth, upon finding himself alone with the captain of the bushrangers, exclaimed,

"Denny Burnham, don't you remember Godfrey Beechworth, your schoolfellow in Sussex?"

"Good Heavens! is it you?" cried Lowe, cutting the cords that bound the young man to the tree.

Godfrey at once put on his clothes that lay scattered about on the ground, while Burnham stood by pale with mental agitation.

Memories of his youth came over him, and of the years when he was as yet honourable, and innocent.

"Beechworth!" he at length exclaimed, in a tone of mingled bitterness and melancholy, "you see me now an outcast from society; and I will not offer to you my guilty hand; but you remember what I was!"

Burnham here remained silent for a moment, as if remorse had rendered him dumb.

Godfrey recollected Denny as a handsome youth, high-spirited and honourable, whom he could never have dreamt would one day be steeped in crime.

There, however, before him stood his schoolfellow, the nephew of an English peer, a guilty felon and an outlaw!

In this world of so much wretchedness and crime, how quickly do men sometimes become changed from useful members of society into

hardened criminals! The downward career of guilt is truly dreadfully swift.

"Burnham!" cried Godfrey, "for Heaven's sake, why not quit your present wretched life, and fly to some distant part of the earth, where you may yet repent and atone for your misdeeds! How did you ever come to sink to your present condition?"

"Beechworth," rejoined the bushranger in a voice tremulous in spite of himself, "you know the early part of my history, and can perhaps almost guess the sequel. My parent was, as you are aware, the younger brother of a rich earl, who treated my father and his family most shamefully. At eighteen years of age, I became a miserable clerk in a London banking house. I begged the earl to obtain me a commission in the army, or assist me to enter a congenial profession; but he took no notice of me, and refused in any way to help me.

"The life of a clerk drove me half mad, and, in a state of mental delirium, I em-

bezzled from my employers several hundred pounds, in the hope of escaping to America, and following a different career there. I was found out, and sentenced to seven years' transportation. The rest of my history is easily told. After two years passed in Australia, as a prisoner, I obtained a ticket-of-leave. My mind by that time, was thoroughly hardened, and I was perfectly indifferent as to what should become of me for the future. A deadly hatred towards society took possession of me, and I ultimately turned bushranger, that as I had endured misery myself I might in turn inflict it upon others. Whether I am finally, shot, hanged, or burnt alive, is perfectly immaterial to me; but in the meanwhile, as far as I can, I indemify myself on society for what I have suffered. Good-bye!"

Burnham was about to mount his horse and ride off, when he suddenly said,

"You've been robbed by my men of all your money. It would have been more than my life was worth to have made them return

any of it to you; but take these three sovereigns, which are all I have about me."

As he finished speaking the bushranger threw the gold coins towards Godfrey, and galloped away.

Beechworth was almost out of his senses with excitement, from the scene he had just gone through.

Perhaps he might have left the three sovereigns where they had been thrown by Burnham, but that he knew what a wretched thing it was to be left penniless. He, therefore, picked up the money from the ground, and put it in his pocket.

When Godfrey thus found himself entirely alone in the bush, his first impulse was to kneel down and fervently thank God for deliverance from the violent death that had threatened him. Then he walked on, endeavouring to find the track to Melbourne; and, after about two hours of wandering about, came upon it unexpectedly.

He trudged along on foot, both that day

and the next, when, becoming almost blind with the "sandy blight," as it is called in the colony, he bargained with a man to let him ride for thirty shillings on his wagon the rest of the way to the capital.

The driver turned out to be a perfect brute of a fellow, refusing even to lend one of his blankets at night to Godfrey, although the selfish wretch had plenty of them to spare, unless he received extra money.

Beechworth, not relishing the idea of reaching Melbourne without a shilling in his pocket, bravely put up with the wretchedness of sleeping in the wagon during several cold nights, without bed clothes.

He was obliged to spend about half-a-sovereign, in buying provisions on the journey; so that when he arrived in the capital, he had only nineteen shilings left in his pocket.

At the same time, he was still almost blind with the "sandy blight," and felt himself altogether in a miserable position.

As he walked through the busy streets after his arrival in Melbourne, seeking for a humble lodging, he felt utterly wretched, cheerless, and forlorn.

CHAPTER VIII.

A REVELATION.

To any one very miserable, the society of a boisterously happy person is not particularly agreeable. The saying, that "birds of a feather flock together," is especially true with regard to human beings. A kind of consolation is found by the unhappy in the company of those wretched like themselves. The poor sympathise with each other's sorrows, while the rich only share one another's pleasures.

To be wandering alone 'hard up' about

the streets of a great city, is the very essence of wretchedness.

This was felt indeed in all its force by Godfrey Beechworth, when, having taken up his quarters at a lodging-house of the humblest kind, he found himself the day after his arrival from the Ovens Gold Diggings, strolling cheerlessly up and down the thoroughfares of the busy capital.

There is no solitude, as has been frequently said, so oppressive as that experienced amidst the crowds of great cities, upon finding oneself totally unregarded in the din and whirl of the rushing, rolling tide of humanity there.

As Beechworth glanced on smiling faces amongst the street passengers, they seemed to mock at his own forlorn position; while every unhappy-looking being that went by, he regarded almost as a friend, and experienced an instinctive desire to speak to him.

What was his intense pleasure, when, as he strolled up Bourke Street—for, at least,

the fifth time within two hours—he ran up against Felix Grant, the young man with whom he had formerly, as narrated, shared a hay loft as sleeping quarters.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed his old friend, "what a bit of luck to meet you, Beechworth. I was almost thinking of cutting my throat, or 'burying my head in the sand, like the little cockly-oly bird,' from sheer loneliness. Where are you off to? What are you doing? Let's go and have a glass of ale together. Come along!"

They entered a public-house near at hand, and went into the parlour, where they passed an hour or so, in high spirits.

Grant was 'hard up,' as well as Godfrey, but had luckily just obtained a situation at the town of Bendigo, for which place he was to start, with his employer, in a few days. In the meanwhile, he was living at a small lodging-house, of even a more wretched description than that where Beechworth had taken up his abode.

They related their adventures to one another, since their last time of meeting; and with the sympathy of brothers in misfortune, cheered each other into laughing at the demon 'Hard up.'

"What have you been doing lately, Grant?" asked Godfrey.

"I recently," replied Felix, "had a situation as 'runner,' or 'touter' to a low boarding-house, in Little Bourke Street. My remuneration was in the shape of lodging, and a commission on every client I might bring to the establishment, and my duties were to go down to Sandridge every day, amongst the newly arrived shipping, and tout for boarders. I tried hard at the work for a week or ten days, but got on so badly at it that I was quickly turned out of my employment. Fellows like you and me, Godfrey, can't hope to succeed much at that sort of work. I've now got a situation as clerk in a store, at Bendigo, for which place I'm to start, with my employer, in the course of a few days, if he

doesn't change his mind in the meantime, which I hope he won't. What the deuce are you going to do yourself, Beechworth?"

"Something will turn up in a day or two, perhaps," was the reply, "but at present, I hardly know what to do, for I'm in most unpleasant straits."

"I'm going to try and get an advance of a few pounds of salary from my employer, before leaving Melbourne," observed Grant, "and if I succeed you must accept half the amount as a loan, my dear fellow."

"Don't think of anything of the kind!" exclaimed Godfrey, "for I certainly shan't avail myself of your generosity, although I thank you from my heart for it all the same."

"Beechworth, you're too infernally proud!" was the rejoinder.

"Have you lately heard anything," interrupted Beechworth, "of Huberto or Cooper, to whom I introduced you the last time I was at Melbourne?"

"I haven't seen either of them," replied

Grant, "for the last five weeks. What has become of them I don't know. About two months ago Huberto got Pritchardson to let him have the use of the saloon of his boarding house for an evening, and delivered a lecture there to the inhabitants of North Melbourne. Emilio's chief difficulty was in the matter of borrowing a dress-suit of clothes for the occasion; but he succeeded at last. I helped to post some large bills, advertising the lecture, about North Melbourne. We did it during the night, Huberto carrying the posters, and myself the paste-pot. He made a few pounds by his lecture, and with the proceeds went up country; but where, Heaven only knows. By-the-bye, Godfrey, why don't you pay a visit to your relation, Mr. William Pigott, at Richmond?"

"Did I never tell you how he quarrelled with me?" said Beechworth.

"No," was the rejoinder, "so let me hear about it, if you've no objection."

"When I was at Wattlebark Station, be-

longing to Mr. William Pigott," Beechworth related, "a hamper, rather illegibly addressed, arrived at the overseer's quarters, one afternoon, while I was absent at Kilmore. The hut-keeper thought it was for me, reading the name thereon at first sight, hastily, as 'Mr. Beechworth,' whereas it was in reality 'Mr. Bletchworth.' In consequence, the overseer and his fellow-occupants of the hut, being in the midst of one of their periodical carousals, opened the hamper, which was loaded with brandy, old-tom, whiskey, hams, and other good things, and made merry with the contents.

"As I was not able to pay the piper myself at the time, the store-keeper, from whom the things had been sent, upon hearing that I was a relative of Mr. William Pigott, forwarded him the bill for them, and demanded payment. Although I subsequently settled the amount myself, that did not mend matters. Mr. Pigott wrote me a letter calling me all sorts of names, and abusing me like a pickpocket. That was one reason, amongst others, why I

left Wattlebark Station so soon as I did. I never intend to go near him again; and, to tell the truth, prefer being dependent on myself, under any circumstances, to courting his good offices, or those of any other relative."

"I've myself had a sickener of relying upon others," rejoined Grant, "for out of several 'letters of introduction' which I brought with me to the colony not a single one proved of any value. Your reception by that wretch, Mr. John Pigott, of Geelong, was not much worse than some of my own experiences of the kind."

"Perhaps," remarked Godfrey, "as 'every dog has its day,' we may, ere long, see the end of our hardships, and hereafter enjoy the pleasures of prosperity all the more for our past experience of adversity."

"You are learning," Felix observed, "to take vicissitudes very philosophically; but for my part, I'm disgusted with life, and have [illegible]an once felt tempted lately to commit

"For Heaven's sake don't let us begin to look at the gloomy side of things," cried Godfrey, "or we shall only make matters worse."

"What do you say to another glass of something to drink?" said Grant.

"Two nobblers of sherry!" thereupon shouted Beechworth to the waiter, determining not to let his friend stand treat a second time.

"I've got to meet my employer this afternoon at Emerald Hill," observed Felix, "so I shall have to start there soon."

"Where shall I be able to see you to-morrow?" asked Godfrey.

"I'll meet you in Richmond Park at noon, opposite the Police Barracks, if you like," was the reply.

"Agreed upon," said Beechworth.

Thereupon the friends both left the public-house, and wished one another good-bye.

"Don't forget to be at Richmond Park at

twelve o'clock to-morrow morning," cried Grant, as he walked away.

"All right, I'll be there," was the response.

When Godfrey once more found himself alone, strolling about the streets, he again gave way to moody thoughts, but only for a short time.

The weather brightening up, for it had been previously cloudy and rainy, enlivened Beechworth's spirits, and he became hopeful and comparatively cheerful. He thought, however, more than once of the little prospect there, at present, seemed to be of ever realising the glorious dream of his boyhood, in regard to his youthful idol, Ellen Castlemaine.

In the case of the young, sometimes when the clouds of life are thick and lowering, bright dreams of the future, in spite of everything, crowd the sanguine brain. Like the mirage appearing to the toil-worn traveller in the desert, so castles-in-the-air ever and anon,

beset ardent youth, in the midst of the greatest hardships and adversity.

When Godfrey Beechworth got home to his humble lodging at eight o'clock in the evening, he went supperless to bed.

He had such a few shillings remaining that he only now took one meal a day, with the object of making his money last as long as possible. Perchance, he thought he might soon obtain some situation.

Kneeling by the side of his bed that night, he earnestly implored the protection of Providence. Sometimes such petitions are answered sooner than expected; and so it was destined to turn out in Godfrey's case.

The next day he met Felix Grant, as agreed, opposite the Police Barracks, in Richmond Park.

Strolling about for a time, chatting, the friends at length lay down under a wide-spreading gum-tree, near the high road leading from Melbourne to St. Kilda, a beautiful suburb of the capital. The weather was warm and

sunny, but a gentle breeze tempered the heat, rendering the day a most agreeable one.

"I'm getting rather tired of the Colony," Grant remarked, after they had conversed for a period about various subjects.

"Certainly," Godfrey observed, "those who like ourselves come out to this country without money, or trade, or profession of any kind, have not much chance of making a fortune."

"The accounts," rejoined Felix, "that have been spread in England about the wonderful certainty for those possessing industry with perseverance, and no other capital, of speedily becoming millionaires are wretchedly illusory."

"We are rather in an unfortunate position," returned Beechworth, "from having no regular trade or profession; and, therefore, must not in this matter 'measure other people's corn by our own bushel.'"

"I shall at any rate," said Felix, "quit the Colony the first opportunity that offers, for

I'm disgusted with the place. At present I'm inclined to agree with those who declare that 'this was the last country God created, and that He left it before finishing it;' but then you'll say I'm in a misanthropic humour just now, and that my opinion isn't therefore, worth much."

"I believe with those who think Australia has a splendid future before it," rejoined Godfrey; "and that it is some day destined to be one of the mightiest lands on the face of the globe. Its resources are magnificent, the climate glorious, and nature seems to have showered upon it almost unlimited advantages. Had Australia but a few more navigable rivers, there would be nothing wanting to make it a perfect paradise on earth. Perhaps, when the country is further explored, lakes may be found in the interior, which will enable future generations to utilise the vast land area around."

"You are very romantic in your speculations," retorted Grant; "but for my part, I repeat, I am disgusted with the colony."

"The fact is, we're here at a bad time," Godfrey rejoined; "for every one almost agrees that things are looking more gloomy just now than they have done for years. When the gold fever has a little abated, perhaps they will begin to look brighter."

"At all events," cried Grant, "nothing will alter my determination to get out of the country as soon as ever I can."

"Very few people would ever come here from England, I suppose," Beechworth remarked, "if they could do well at home. It seems to me that for one without money and friends, there are better prospects in Australia than in England."

"I should never have left the old country," said Felix, gloomily, "if my father hadn't been a brute."

"It appears," observed Beechworth, "you have a standing grievance, like everybody else one meets."

"By Jove! I can never forgive my father for all the misery he has caused me," Grant energetically exclaimed.

"I wasn't very happy in my own home in England," sympathetically ejaculated Beechworth, in a low tone.

Felix here went on to relate the particulars of his early life to Godfrey.

After narrating a variety of details of his history, Grant, warming in his subject, continued.

"I hope I don't bore you, Godfrey; but I'll relate, in conclusion, the incident that ultimately led to my leaving England for abroad. As I've told you, my father is now a rector in the South of England; but before I left the old country, he had a London living, and resided in the east-end of the metropolis. He was a tyrant to me from my earliest childhood upwards; and, though he preserved to the world an air of sanctity and benevolence, he was a veritable demon amongst his own family. His favourite punishment of myself and my brother was a curious one. It was to make us stand on chairs placed at opposite ends of the

sitting-room, while he walked up and down, flourishing a stick, with which he belaboured our naked bodies, till he was thoroughly tired. He also kept two horse whips over the mantelpiece, always in our sight—the bigger one, he would say, for myself, and the smaller for my younger brother. I never, that I can remember, spent a happy day at home in my life. My father bullied me so dreadfully, knocking me about for the least thing, that my existence became almost absolutely unbearable.

"As long as I was away from him, at a boarding-school, I enjoyed life tolerably; but always dreaded returning home for the holidays. My mother was not naturally a cruel woman, and had originally even been kind-hearted and gentle; but her nature was entirely changed by my father's treatment, and she ultimately joined with him in making her children's existence unbearable. She was always scolding or thumping me, so that my parents between them, absolutely tortured me [illegible]times into rebellion. I had the reputation

of being a high-mettled boy; and my father's ambition was to beat every bit of spirit out of me.

"Glad was I to escape by stealth from my parents' society, to that of the servants in the kitchen; and often did I envy their happy existence compared with my own.

"After I was fourteen years of age, I was kept at home, and sent to a day-school. Miserable, indeed, was my life during this period. Scarcely a day passed without my father beating me unmercifully, for the most venial offence. My mother also, urged on by her husband, took delight in making me wear clothes of such a ridiculous cut, and so unsuitable to my years, that I became the butt of my school-fellows. At last, every morning in summer or winter, on my road to school, I crept into an archway, took off my absurd garments, and donned others, less ridiculous, that were lent me by my father's servant boy. The necessity of re-changing my clothes, ere returning home in the evening, gave me constant anxiety.

My stratagem in the matter being at last discovered by my parents, I led a dog's life henceforward. The result was my existence became so perfectly wretched, that I determined to run away from home.

"My father was accustomed to keep all the tithe-money he received from his parishioners in a drawer in his study. From time to time I got hold by stealth of his keys, and purloined a small sum every now and then. At last I had abstracted a total amount of about seven pounds, and with this I resolved to run away from home. The money I had thus taken was not missed by my father, who never kept very regular accounts, although he was parsimonious enough in disposition. One morning, I left my parents' house, ostensibly for school; but, in reality, determined never to return home again. My plans as to what course to pursue after thus quitting the paternal residence for ever, as I thought at the time, were very confused and bewildered.

"I was of a disposition peculiarly impressible,

and my father's domestics had seemed so very happy in comparison to myself, that my first thought was to make my way to some provincial town, and seek a situation as a common servant-boy.

"This ridiculous idea I resolved to carry out, for I then appreciated so little the distinctions of the different grades of society, that I never for a moment thought of the social degradation that I should thereby incur.

"A placard on a wall, advertising cheap trains to Brighton attracting me, I thereupon proceeded straight to the London Bridge Railway Station, and took a second-class ticket to that watering-place. Before entering the train, I bought a novel at a book-stall, to while away the journey.

"I certainly knew as little about what would become of me at Brighton as can possibly be imagined. Seated in the railway-carriage while the train rushed on its way, I became for a time so absorbed in the novel I had purchased, as almost to forget that I was a runaway

from home. Soon, however, I got tired of reading, and put down the book on the seat beside me.

"Then I began to reflect, and I became sensible of a trembling all over, which gradually increased till it became sickening and painful. It was the result of mental reaction, and as I continued pondering feverishly on my wretchedness, my heart beat with almost audible pulsations.

"I grasped repeatedly in my pocket, the money I had stolen from my father, and it seemed, to my excited imagination, red-hot. At last, I became half out of my senses from acute mental torture.

"On arriving at Brighton, I bought a little refreshment at the Railway Station, and then walked to the Pier, where I strolled up and down, for about three-quarters of an hour. My faculties partially recovered themselves as a consequence of the fresh, bracing sea-air. I, thereupon, proceeded to carry out my plan of obtaining a situation as a servant boy.

"Passing by a Jew clothier's, I turned back and bought a suit of corduroy garments. Donning these, I tied up my own in a bundle, and set out on my intended enterprise.

"On reaching a part of the town, where the wide thoroughfares were studded with private villas, I proceeded to put my quixotic plan into execution. I knocked at the doors of several houses, and asked if a servant boy was wanted there; but met with nothing but rebuffs.

"The treatment I received from the servants, who answered my rings, soon brought me to my senses. Half mad with humiliation, I went into a retired spot, took off the clothes I had bought of the Jew, and put on my own again.

"Then I went back to the Railway Station, and obtained a ticket for London. Despair and misery overwhelmed me. As the train, dashing on to the metropolis, passed through a tunnel, I wildly threw all the money remaining of what I had stolen from my

father, out of the carriage window. This brought me, however, no peace of mind. After reaching London, I wandered, miserable, through street after street; and, finally, found myself despairingly strolling in St. James's Park, about eight o'clock in the evening.

"At last, hungry, utterly forlorn, and spiritless, I turned my steps towards my father's house, resolved to confess, whatever the consequences, respecting the money I had stolen from him. My whole frame trembled like an aspen-leaf, as I stood once more before my home, if such a name it ever deserved. I, however, collected my nerves, and boldly entering the house, rushed to my father, and confessed everything to him.

"The result was, that I was beaten almost to a mummy by him; and treated, henceforth, both by him and my mother, with downright cruelty.

"One morning, at breakfast time, without the slightest justifiable provocation, my father

struck me a violent blow with his fist. This brutal attack excited me beyond control; and, on the maddening impulse of the moment, I turned upon him like a young tiger. I seized him by the hair, and a struggle ensued between us, which was only ended by our being parted by the servants.

"After this, I knew it would be impossible for me to remain at home. I proposed to my father, that he should pay my passage to Australia, saying that if he refused, I would work my way to some foreign country, as a sailor boy.

"He, finally, in spite of his sordid disposition, parted with sufficient money to enable me to reach this country; and here I am. My hardships, Heaven knows have been enough in the Colony; but I've, at all events, been as happy as a king, compared to what I was in my father's house."

Felix Grant, after relating other incidents of his early history, asked Beechworth if he had any objection to narrate in his turn what

circumstances had caused himself to become an exile.

Godfrey was proceeding to satisfy this request, when his eye fell on the figure of a female whom he thought he recognised, in an open carriage, which was passing by on the St. Kilda Road, within a few paces of them.

She was, in fact, no other than the one of whom he had caught a hasty glance in Collins Street, when he was in Melbourne some months ago, and whom he had believed to be her, on whose behalf, just before leaving England, he had appeared, for the first time in his life, in a police court.

He still had in his possession the topaz ring, bearing the initials K.S., left in his hand by that unfortunate person.

"Good bye, Grant, for the present," exclaimed Godfrey, starting off, on the impulse of the moment, after the carriage that had just passed.

"Where are you going to, in such a deuce of a hurry?" cried Felix.

Beechworth, heeding not Grant's shouts after him, sped on, without looking behind.

The carriage he was pursuing rattled along the road so swiftly, that the young man was obliged to run very quickly to keep it in sight.

On he went, following the vehicle, but at such a distance from it as not to attract observation. The carriage made straight for St. Kilda, a large suburb beautifully situate on the shore of Hobson's Bay.

The villas scattered there along the beach, are some of the most enviable residences imaginable. A more lovely sea prospect than St. Kilda boasts of, can, perhaps, hardly be found throughout the whole globe. Stately ships of every nation add life to the beautiful, far-stretching waters of the bay, sufficiently vast to bear on its bosom all the navies of the world. The distant mountains, surrounded with the interminable bright Bush, and the other varied and impressive characteristics of Australian scenery, delight the gazer's eye.

Often had Godfrey strolled on the beach at St. Kilda, and watched the vessels homeward bound for England, envying those on board.

Now, however, as he ran after the carriage he was so eagerly following, his mind was absorbed to the exclusion of every other thought, in speculations relative to the female occupant of the vehicle.

He was beginning to get out of breath, when he saw it stop where a road, lined with handsome villas, met at right angles the thoroughfare skirting the beach. Here the female got out of the carriage, which quickly turned up a by-lane a little further on.

Godfrey slackened his pace on seeing the lady descend from the vehicle. The road up which she proceeded on foot was under repair, and temporarily impassable for carriages. She very likely lived, thought Beechworth, in one of the villas there. He, therefore, hastened forward, but when he arrived within a few paces of her, felt afraid of accosting her, for fear she might not be the person he

imagined. A strong impulse, nevertheless, urged him to satisfy his curiosity, and quickly overcame every scruple.

On the spur of the moment, he bowed politely on overtaking her, respectfully saying,

"Madam, excuse me, but I believe you are the lady from whom I received, in London, this ring. If so, you will pardon me for addressing you thus, I hope."

At the same time, Beechworth handed to her the ring, engraved with the initials K.S., which he had so long carefully guarded. She cast a glance at it, and immediately gave a start, exclaiming,

"Can it be, that you are the same who once so disinterestedly came forward as a witness on my behalf, in the police court in London?"

Godfrey's reply to this question led to an immediate mutual recognition.

The lady was, indeed, no other than the person on whose account he had appeared, for the first time in his life, before a magistrate.

After a few moments, passed in expressions of surprise and pleasure, she said to Godfrey,

"Will you, if you have the leisure, accompany me to my house, and allow me to introduce you to my husband? I have often spoken of you to him, and he will be delighted to make your acquaintance."

Beechworth not having spent over-much time on his toilet that morning, replied,

"I'm very much obliged to you for the invitation; but I wish to return to Melbourne at present. If you'll allow me, however, the happiness of calling upon you at some other time, I shall be excessively pleased."

It was finally agreed that Godfrey should pay her a visit the next evening, and be introduced to her husband.

The young man walked with her as far as her residence, where they parted for the present. It was a handsome villa, with a beautifully kept garden in front, and such a dwelling as only those very well to do in the world could afford to occupy.

The name of the lady, as Beechworth learned from the card she gave him on leaving her, was "Mrs. Hume."

He could not help remarking to himself how elegantly she had been attired. Her fine figure, set off by her dress to the greatest advantage, would have won any man's admiration.

Godfrey had grown so much taller since leaving England, and his form had developed itself into such manly proportions, that what with his sun-burnt face and slight, handsome moustache, it was not surprising that she had failed at first to recognise in him the youth who had been her witness before the London magistrate.

In the few minutes' conversation with her upon the road at St. Kilda, he had not learned anything relative to the sequel of the infamous police persecution of which she had been the victim.

As Beechworth made his way back to Melbourne, he looked anxiously forward to the

next day, when he should again see her and be able to satisfy his curiosity.

On reaching his lodgings he found Felix Grant awaiting him there. They took a walk together, and Godfrey narrated the curious story in relation to the topaz-ring.

Mrs. Hume had insisted that afternoon upon his retaining it, and he determined to guard it sacredly. There was a certain romance connected with it in his eyes that endowed it with an especial value.

Grant shortly turned the conversation once more to the subject of his bad treatment by his father, on which topic he was half a monomaniac.

"One ought to forget and forgive ill-usage by parents," observed Godfrey.

"I've remarked," went on Grant, persisting in the subject, "that fathers who tyrannise over their sons when children, are often subservient to them as they become men. There is a merited retribution in such a consequence. The father who bullies his sons when young,

is indeed generally afraid of them after they grow up. The amount of trouble parents sometimes seem to give themselves, to make their children hate them is a mystery to me."

"For Heaven's sake, let's change the subject!" cried Godfrey.

He too frequently involuntarily re-called his own harsh treatment by his father, to make the topic an agreeable one to him.

The friends parted about an hour after sundown; for Beechworth was tormented with a desire, which very seldom took possession of him, to be alone.

On the following evening, the young man, after making a careful toilet, set out for St. Kilda to call upon Mrs. Hume.

When he reached her villa, it was about six o'clock.

His knock at the door was answered by a neatly-dressed servant-maid, and he was immediately ushered into a handsome drawing-room, where he found Mrs. Hume.

"I'm very glad to see you," she said, rising

to welcome him, "but I am extremely vexed that I've just received a note, from the Melbourne Club, in which my husband says he will be detained in town, till eleven o'clock to-night. However, you will, I hope, stay and dine here, and spend the evening with me all the same; though I'm afraid you'll find me very poor company."

Godfrey gladly accepted the invitation. His hostess and he were soon seated at a luxurious dinner, which might have almost served for a prince. Silver plate and elegant flower vases, adorned the table; while the dishes and wines seemed to him of the most exquisite description.

During the meal, rain began to beat against the windows; and a thunderstorm was evidently brewing. The wretched weather outside, made the luxurious comfort of the apartment all the more enjoyable.

After dinner, the hostess and her guest retired to the drawing-room, where a bright wood fire was burning on the hearth.

"It is a strange thing that we should have met each other in the Colony, in such an unexpected manner," observed Mrs. Hume, musingly.

"I think I saw you once some months ago, in Collins Street, Melbourne," Godfrey remarked.

"Very likely?" she rejoined, adding, "What dreadful weather it is outside."

"It's only a passing thunderstorm, I imagine," said Beechworth.

"You're no doubt," Mrs. Hume then remarked, "curious to know more about me in connection with the memorable police-court incident. If you'll kindly ring the bell, I will order the servant to bring in some tea, when I'll relate to you all about the matter."

In a few minutes, Godfrey, seated near the fire, was listening eagerly, to Mrs. Hume; while she recounted to him everything connected with the incident, in which he had played the part of her champion.

"Before touching upon the unhappy police

court affair," she observed, "I will first give you an explanation of my being out in the streets at such a late hour of the night, on the occasion of your first seeing me. I have reason for faith in you, from my experience of your noble character; and feel no hesitation in speaking to you of myself freely."

"I cannot acknowledge that I have any particular claim upon your confidence," Beechworth rejoined, "but I am nevertheless very much obliged to you for your good opinion."

Mrs. Hume thereupon, ere touching upon the police court incident, commenced relating to Godfrey a portion of the history of her early life, by way of explanatory preface.

"My father," she began, "was a Major in Her Majesty's Ninety-Fifth Regiment. Katherine Sinclair was my maiden name, which will explain to you the initials on the ring which I left in your hand, at the London Police Court. My father died when I was fourteen years of age, and my mother then

settled at Weymouth. I was an only child. Since her husband had sold his commission to pay his heavy debts, my mother received no pension as an officer's widow.

"After his death, she lived on a small annuity which had been secured to her, by a Policy of Life Insurance.

"When I was seventeen years of age, my mother married again. Her second husband was a road surveyor, who lived near Weymouth. His name was Clement Bould, and at the time of his marriage with my mother, he was about sixty years of age, and very well off. He had up to that period, lived a bachelor's life; but had adopted a child, a distant relative of his, by name Eliza Bould.

"About three years after her second marriage, my mother died; and I continued to live with my step-father, who was tolerably kind to me. He was very much affected by her death, and ultimately took, in consequence, to hard drinking to drown this and other cares.

"Subsequently he plunged into mad busi-

ness speculations, and finally became a bankrupt. His death of heart disease, brought on by excessive spirit drinking, soon followed his pecuniary ruin.

"Eliza and myself thus became destitute orphans.

"A maiden sister of my father-in-law, however, received us into her home, near Dorchester, where we remained for about eighteen months; but her temper was so unbearable, that we both soon resolved to go out into the world and seek our own livelihood, rather than remain with her any longer.

"Subsequently, I grieve to think, Eliza Bould being left to herself, clandestinely became the mistress of a farmer, to whom she had been secretly attached for several years.

"I myself went to London and lived with an old maiden cousin, who, though poor, was very kind to me. That she might not have the burden of supporting me without payment, I sought for employment in dressmaking, in which I had some skill.

"Before long I was so successful as to earn enough to pay for my board and lodging, as well as to buy my own clothes. I was ultimately even able to put by a little money.

"On the occasion of your seeing me in London, at such a late hour of the night in the street, I was returning home from the house of Lady Highett, where I had been detained in finishing some needlework.

"I was always of a very excitable and nervous temperament, and the treatment I received from the brutal policeman, when you interfered in my behalf, temporarily drove me entirely out of my senses. In fact, I only really came to myself in the lobby of the magistrate's court, upon realising that I was about to be taken away to prison in the police-van. Then a hazy recollection of what had passed dawned on me, and I gradually awakened to my desperately wretched position.

"I remembered, through the mist of other things, that you had been my champion with

the policeman, as well as before the magistrate.

"Thus, not able to express to you in words my gratitude, I left in your hand the topaz-ring with the initials 'K.S.,' which I hope you will continue to keep, as a souvenir of me."

"I shall never part with it as long as I live, you may be assured," said Godfrey.

"I was," went on Mrs. Hume, "happily released from my dreadful position almost immediately, by the prompt exertions of Sir Montague Highett, the husband of the lady for whom I had been engaged in dressmaking, on the night of my brutal treatment by the police.

"As soon as I had thoroughly recovered my senses I at once made known to him my predicament. He was on intimate terms with the Home Secretary for the crown, and immediately had an interview with him on the case.

"After the minister had received an authen-

tic epitome of the false evidence given against me by the policemen, and heard the sworn statements of Sir Montague Highett, showing clearly how they had perjured themselves, I was at once set at liberty.

"I afterwards learned that the constable by whom I had been so scandalously pushed and knocked about, was tried for perjury in another case, and transported.

"Some months after the police-court affair, a gentleman, between whom and myself there had formerly been a warm attachment, came home on business from New South Wales. He had been fortunate in the Colony, and had purchased a sheep-station there. Having found me out, he made me an offer, and we were married.

"That gentleman is my husband, Mr. Stuart Hume.

"Not long since, he received the news of the death of his father, a barrister in London, who died intestate. My husband thus be-

came the heir to about fifteen thousand pounds.

"As I do not like Australia very much, he has, at my instance, sold his sheep-station, and we are only living here at St. Kilda till he has settled some business affairs in which he is mixed up in Melbourne.

"We expect in about a month, to start for England, where Mr. Hume purposes to get called to the bar, and to follow regularly the legal profession. He kept several terms at the Inner Temple, about ten years ago; but relinquished the law at that time, on account of pecuniary difficulties."

"I should myself very much like to be a barrister," remarked Godfrey, thoughtfully, feeling how little likely it was that he would ever have an opportunity of becoming one.

"It is, so my husband tells me," rejoined Mrs. Hume, "a very arduous and expensive profession."

"The law, however, is the chief road to fame and rank for obscure talent in England," Beechworth observed.

"Won't you take a glass of brandy and water?" asked his hostess, after a time.

Godfrey made no objection, and he was soon enjoying some delicious hot toddy.

The rain still pattered against the windows, and the young man and his hostess continued chatting cozily together.

"You mentioned just now, Mrs. Hume," observed Beechworth, "the name of 'Eliza Bould,' as that of the young lady who was adopted and brought up by your step-father. With what strange coincidence one sometimes meets. Mr. George Brocker, the gentleman who at present owns the farm of my late uncle William, near Yeovil, Somersetshire, has a housekeeper, who calls herself Mrs. Eliza Bould."

"She of whom I spoke, and the person you mention, must be one and the same," exclaimed Mrs. Hume; adding, "how strange!

I knew that Eliza was living with George Brocker, but always thought that they passed as man and wife."

Hereupon the conversation between the hostess and her guest, became more absorbing.

"By-the-bye, it's very stupid of me," presently remarked Mrs. Hume; "but I have already forgotten your name."

Upon the young man refreshing her memory, she exclaimed—

"Dear me! I've heard the name of 'Godfrey Beechworth' before in England, and under very odd circumstances."

She thereon proceeded to say, that Eliza Bould had once passed a week with her at her cousin's in London, and that they slept together in the same bed. What Mrs. Hume then went on to recount, made Godfrey tremble with feverish interest.

"Eliza Bould," she narrated, "had a habit of speaking in her sleep; and one night when we were in bed together, I was kept awake by

her continually talking during her slumber. She was ejaculating something about George Brocker having obtained his farm by forging a will with her aid; and muttered several times the name of 'Godfrey Beechworth.' She was evidently dreaming aloud. It is curious that such should have been the odd occasion when I first heard your name. As you just now observed, we do meet at times, with extraordinary coincidences. What nonsense people who talk in their sleep do utter! Only fancy poor Eliza, accusing herself of a dreadful crime in the midst of her slumber. I once, indeed, myself actually dreamed I was hanged. After all, in spite of what my poor mother used to say to the contrary, I don't believe there's any faith to be placed in dreams. They are generally the most ridiculous things imaginable."

While Mrs. Hume was thus speaking, a whirl of conflicting thoughts passed through the brain of Godfrey Beechworth. He even turned slightly pale for a moment, from the feverish nature of his reflections.

"You're not looking very well," observed his hostess, "and another glass of brandy and water will do you good."

Thereupon she mixed him some more hot toddy.

She then went on talking about Eliza Bould; and some particulars that Godfrey thus learned, almost took, as it subsequently proved, the form of a "revelation," which was hereafter to influence his destiny.

"Have I made your toddy to your taste?" asked Mrs. Hume, in the midst of the conversation which had become excitedly interesting to the young man.

"Yes, thank you," replied Beechworth.

He had hardly uttered these words, when the hostess and her guest were fearfully startled by the loud discharge of a pistol in the hall of the house. Mrs Hume, from sudden fright, instantly fell back in her chair as if fainting away, while the young man rushed headlong from the apartment to solve the mystery.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DISTRESS WARRANT.

THE pistol-shot which had so suddenly startled Mrs. Hume and Godfrey Beechworth at once explained itself when the latter got into the hall, in a manner that immediately dissipated the young man's forebodings.

The cause of the alarm was the housekeeper's young son, then staying temporarily at the villa. He had been out in the course of the evening opossum shooting in the neighbourhood, and on his return home somehow

or other inadvertently discharged his pistol in the hall.

Harmless, however, as the accident was in itself, the fright that it caused Mrs. Hume was attended with serious consequences. She remained a long time in a swoon, and had only just recovered consciousness when her husband returned home.

Godfrey explained the nature of his visit to Mr. Hume, and his hostess having been put to bed, for she still complained of feeling very ill, the young man left the house and returned to his lodgings.

On calling the next day to ask how she was, he was grieved to learn that she was worse, and that she was likely to be confined to her room for some time. The consequent agitated state of mind of her husband, prevented Beechworth from troubling him with any minute account of the origin of his acquaintance with Mrs. Hume.

For several days the young man repeated

his visits of enquiry after her health. He was always received kindly by Mr. Hume, whose wife had evidently often spoke to him of Godfrey. The husband's anxiety of mind, however, at present distracted his thoughts from everything else but the invalid, and Beechworth accordingly made his calls as short as possible. He had not told her of his temporary needy position; and refrained, under the circumstances, from intruding his own cares upon Mr. Hume.

About a week after Godfrey's first visit to her house, as he was walking down Collins Street, Melbourne, towards five o'clock in the evening, he encountered Mr. Rust, the contractor and slater, who had formerly employed him for a brief period.

This rencounter turned out useful to Beechworth.

"How are you? What are you doing? Will you have a 'nobbler' with me?" were amongst the volley of questions fired off by

Mr. Rust, upon shaking hands with the young man.

"I have no situation at present," was the reply, "and am anxiously looking out for one."

"As it happens, I am about to make a tender for the slating of a lot of new houses at the town of Castlemaine," rejoined Mr. Rust, "and I can offer you employment which will last about three or four weeks, if you choose to accept it at once. It is to take the measurements of the roofs of buildings, and as you have done this kind of work for me before, I shall be glad of your assistance."

"I am very happy to have met you, for your offer comes most welcome to me at present," said Godfrey, who was delighted with what at that moment was to him a piece of joyful good luck.

"Come into this public-house here, and have a glass of something," then exclaimed the slater.

The two entered the tavern opposite to which they had been conversing, and over a tankard of ale, it was settled that Beechworth should set out for Castlemaine the following day, in order to enter upon his occupation there as speedily as possible. Accordingly the next morning, he started for that town, where he remained nearly a month completing his engagement with Mr. Rust. On his return to the capital at the end of that time, he found himself in the possession of a few pounds that he had thus earned.

Mr. Rust was not able to offer him any further employment just then; so the young man was once again forced to look out for a new situation. On going the day subsequent to his return from Castlemaine, to St. Kilda, in order to enquire after Mrs. Hume, the door of the villa was answered by an old woman, who, to the young man's interrogatories, replied,

"She has gone away more than a week ago, sir. Mr. Hume and his wife started

in the ship 'Sea Lion,' the other day for England."

This news much disappointed Beechworth. He had cherished hopes of seeing Mrs. Hume after she recovered from her illness, and of talking further with her on the subject which had so intensely interested him when the accidental pistol shot brought about such a sudden interruption of their conversation.

"Was Mrs. Hume well when she left here?" enquired the young man of the old woman.

After receiving for reply that the lady, ere leaving St. Kilda, had fairly recovered, Godfrey walked slowly and meditatively away from the house towards Melbourne. On his road he reflected over and over again on the strange words which Mrs. Hume asserted that she had overheard Mrs. Bould utter in her sleep. Mentally putting one thing and another together, he came to the conclusion that the best plan was to dismiss the subject entirely from his mind. Such

resolutions, however, are with the young, more easily made than kept. Often then and subsequently he pondered upon the subject, and wondered whether there could be any shadow of truth in what the housekeeper at Brecknington Farm had so strangely stated aloud in her sleep.

When he went to bed at his humble lodging that night, his conversation with Mrs. Hume still recurred to his thoughts, and in the midst of his slumber the mysterious words of Mrs. Bould rang in his ears.

Godfrey now remained in Melbourne nearly a fortnight without meeting a single old acquaintance, and he felt accordingly rather solitary and dispirited.

He sought also in vain for employment, and the contents of his purse were daily dwindling away; but he preserved as light a heart as possible in the midst of all, and never lost confidence in himself.

What precious years are those of youth, when misfortunes, dark though they may be, throw

but a passing cloud over the spirits! How differently in after life, when the hopes of early ambition have been wrecked, do men regard the looming future!

One evening about half-past eight o'clock, as Godfrey was strolling somewhat listlessly up Bourke Street, the weather being rather chilly, and a drizzly rain falling, he turned into a confectioner's shop to indulge in a cup of hot coffee.

While drinking it, he was struck by the appearance of a young woman, who was buying some cakes at the counter.

She was about twenty years of age, and a more perfect figure was never modelled by a sculptor.

Slightly over the middle stature, with finely chiselled features, and the expression of them soft and attractive, she fixed the admiring gaze of Godfrey upon her immediately. She was dressed very plainly and neatly, and was altogether what may be described as irresistibly seductive.

In spite of her beauty, however, she was evidently of a humble class of life. This was apparent to Beechworth from her manner of speech and demeanor; although the tone of her voice was sweet, and there was not wanting about her a certain natural refinement.

She seemed to be well known to the woman behind the counter; for they spoke to each other familiarly.

Beechworth remained an unusually long time drinking his cup of coffee, admiring her beauty.

"How disagreeable the rain is to night," she remarked after chatting awhile.

"It is, indeed, very unpleasant," rejoined the shopwoman, "and you have to go a long distance all the way to Collingwood. I wish I had an umbrella to let you have, but I lent mine the other day and haven't yet got it back."

Upon hearing this, Godfrey's politeness was at once aroused, and he said he was going to Collingwood himself; so if the

young woman would take a share of his umbrella, he should be glad to be of the least service.

At the instigation of her friend behind the counter, she accepted the young man's offer; and the two quickly quitted the shop together.

Godfrey when he left his lodgings that evening intended paying a visit to his old friend Ralph Cooper, whom he had accidentally encountered in the morning, and who was at present living at Collingwood. He, like Beechworth, was out of employment, for his late engagement, as assistant to a travelling photographic company, had been broken off by the failure of the proprietors.

As Godfrey walked along by the side of the young woman, they chatted together at first about the weather and other common-place topics. This kind of conversation lasted for some time, when Beechworth, struck by a depressing sadness in the voice of his companion, ventured to ask her if she was ill. He put the question in such a feeling, sym-

pathetic tone, that she appeared taken aback, and looking up into the young man's face, where chivalry and generosity plainly shone, she seemed almost bursting into tears.

"You are either ill or very unhappy," murmured Godfrey, incited by her hesitation in answering him.

"Thank you, I am very well, but have got a good deal of trouble just now, and it makes me in bad spirits," she faintly ejaculated.

"I will not be rude enough to ask why you are unhappy," the young man gently said, "but it always pains me to see any one wretched."

"You speak so kindly," she half sobbed, "that it will ease my mind, and do no harm, to tell you my trouble."

Without waiting for any further remark from Beechworth, she at once explained to him the cause of her unhappiness.

"I rent a room, and the furniture in it is my own," she narrated, "but a tradeswoman, to whom I owe a little money, has got a dis-

tress-warrant issued against me. To-morrow all my things will be seized, for I can't at present pay the debt. I'm in wretched straits as to what to do, and am downright miserable."

Here she could not restrain her sobs, and Godfrey, impressed with her beauty, spoke to her cheerfully, saying,

"How much is the debt? Perhaps I can assist you, though I'm not very rich."

The young man was certainly not over wealthy, since about five pounds was all he had in the world.

"Oh! I couldn't think," she ejaculated, "of a stranger like you aiding me. It's kind of you to speak so, but I musn't hear of any such thing."

By this time they were at Collingwood, and had reached the humble-looking dwelling, where the young woman—whose name he learned was Paulina Clarke—lodged. The house, a small dingy brick one, was in an obscure bye-street unlighted by any lamps.

"Can you show me the notice of distress you've received?" asked Godfrey, as the young woman stopped opposite the dwelling.

"I'll let you look at it," she replied, opening the door with a latch-key, "if you will come in a moment."

He followed her into a narrow passage, where she struck a match, and lighted a candle. Then, at her invitation, he entered a back room in which she lived, seating himself on a large chest which stood against the wall near the door, while she got the document he wished to read. Having perused it, he found what she had said in respect to it was correct, and that unless the debt were satisfied the following day, all her little furniture would be seized.

"I see the claim is only one pound four shillings and sevenpence," he remarked, in a cheering tone.

"That is a large sum," she sobbed, "to one who only earns like me twelve or fifteen shillings a week, at most."

"Are you in a situation?" he enquired.

"No," was the reply; "my landlady takes in washing, and I help her at present."

"You don't seem as if you had been long accustomed to such kind of work," he remarked.

"I was born in Australia, and, till lately, lived at home with my father, who keeps a small store up country," she rejoined, going on to give the young man an account of the origin of her troubles.

"It's no use my crying," said she; "but I can't help it when I speak of my wretchedness. I was seduced by a young store-keeper, and he deserted me after I had that little baby by him."

Here she pointed to a slumbering infant, whose pretty sleeping features bore only the divine impress of innocence and beauty.

She had left it during her absence that evening to be looked after by the landlady.

The sin of its parents was happily unknown to that little cherub, who resembled

its mother in everything but guilt. Perhaps Heaven is more loving to weak women who have so erred, than the rigid stiff-necked world.

As tears fell down the beautiful mother's cheeks, the young man's generous sympathy was painfully excited.

"Don't make yourself so unhappy," he exclaimed, "for the debt is only a small one, and I can spare you the amount."

Without another word, he took out his purse, and thrust thirty shillings into her hand. She would not for a long time accept the money; but finally, the young man, by arguments that came fresh and eloquent from his heart, overcame her refusal.

To escape from her passionate expressions of gratitude, he feigned an engagement for which he should be too late, if he did not leave immediately.

After returning the warm grasp of her hand with feelings of emotion, he made his way out of the house, promising to call and see

how she was getting on in the course of a day or two.

He was not now in the humour to pay his intended visit to Ralph Cooper; and, besides, it was too late.

As he walked back to his lodgings, he felt a glow of happiness in the midst of his apparently dark prospects, which made him temporarily contented with his seemingly hard lot.

The indulgence in a generous deed is attended, as a rule, with a pleasure to the performer, in comparison to which ordinary enjoyments are common-place and stale.

Noble minds feel this bliss to the full, so Godfrey Beechworth, with all his faults—and he, like other mortals, had many—went, after relieving the unfortunate young woman, to his humble bed, with a light heart.

Bright were his dreams, and such as Heaven alone vouchsafes to the generous and noble-minded.

CHAPTER X.

NEW PLANS.

BEECHWORTH, the day after his adventure with Paulina Clarke, walked to Collingwood in order to call upon his friend, Ralph Cooper. He found him at home, and was warmly welcomed.

"It's a treat, old fellow, to be able to have a chat with you again," exclaimed Cooper, after sundry hearty shakes of Godfrey's hand.

"'Birds of a feather flock together,' and

since we are both out of employment, we must cheer one another with the consideration that it's pleasant to be hanged in company," laughingly remarked Beechworth.

The two friends, seated in Ralph's humble room, conversed together gaily as if their prospects were the brightest in the world.

"I'll go and fetch pipes, tobacco, and ale," said Cooper, "for it's rather dry work talking without a glass of something."

"I don't, myself, care for anything to drink," urged Godfrey.

Ralph took no notice of his friend's repeated declaration that he would rather not have any ale, but immediately left the house, and in a few minutes returned with a can of that refreshing beverage, along with pipes and tobacco.

Then they began to talk over past times, and old acqaintances.

"Have you heard anything lately of Vincent Paget?" asked Beechworth.

"Yes," was the reply. "I saw him the

other day, looking as happy and devil-may-care as ever. He got the situation of beadle to the Melbourne vegetable market, for which you remember he was looking out, and seemed to enjoy the dignified employment amazingly. The last time I was with him, he was on the point of throwing it up and going back immediately to England."

"How's that?" enquired Godfrey.

"Well, the fact is," said Ralph, "that Paget lately saw an advertisement in an English newspaper, stating that he would hear of something to his advantage by applying to a certain firm of solicitors in Gray's Inn Square, London. He has got somebody to advance him, on the strength of it, just enough money to pay his passage to England, and will start there in about a week. He belongs to a rich family, and, perhaps, he has come unexpectedly into a good round sum of money. If so, he well deserves his luck, for he's a deuced good fellow. Paget has been knocking about the colony for

the last six or seven years, enduring all kinds of hardships, and it will be an agreeable change for him to be well off once more. We'll go and call on him together, this evening, if you like."

"I shall be delighted to see him again," cried Godfrey; "for I always had a fondness and admiration for Paget. He takes things so coolly, and is such a lively fellow."

"By-the-bye, have you recently come across Frank Clift, my fellow-passenger in the 'Lancy,' to whom I introduced you some time ago?" Beechworth inquired.

"He's a clerk in a merchant's office in Flinder's Lane," was the answer, "and as steady and quiet a bloke as ever."

"You seem to have fallen in with most of our old acquaintances lately," remarked Godfrey.

"You see, I've been knocking about Melbourne now a long time, doing nothing, and so I've hunted them up for the want of better employment. I received from my mother the

usual petty quarterly remittance about a month or so ago; but it's at present nearly all gone.

"To continue about old acquaintances, Douglas Baird, your Scotch friend, set sail for Ceylon some three weeks ago, to join his married sister in that island. His brother-in-law, a coffee planter there, heard he was 'going to the dogs' in Australia. He, thereupon, wrote and offered Baird an appointment as plantation overseer, and sent him money to pay his passage to Ceylon."

"Everybody seems to be in luck save you and me," smilingly remarked Beechworth.

"The fact is," philosophised Ralph, "I expect we are neither of us exactly suited for a colonial career, and that the sooner we cut it the better. The sordid, mechanical occupation, such as can only be had by poor devils like ourselves, is, I'm certain, at all events not reconcileable with your abilities and refined mind. You're a clever fellow, and unforunately I'm not; but isn't there some truth in what I say?"

"Perhaps you're right," meditatively replied Godfrey, "and I've lately myself begun to think, that I'm not destined to succeed in a colonial career. Without capital, there's no employment here but the most mechanical, for such as ourselves. I can't take to a clerk's life, for I got sick of it in England. What's the use of coming to Australia, if one is to drudge on at a desk here year after year. I might have remained in England, if I wished to follow the career of a quill-driver. What I relish is adventure, or in lieu of it, an intellectually active life. I am very young yet, and, perhaps, I may get, ultimately, floated into some suitable and congenial career. You are better off than I am, Cooper, because you've a small yearly income, enough to live upon, from your mother, and might get on after a few years pretty fairly in the Colony."

"I hate this infernal country!" Ralph exclaimed.

"What do you think of doing?" thereupon asked Godfrey, in a desultory manner.

"I've been turning over in my mind the last few days," was the answer, "a project of trying to get to Calcutta. My father, who was a Bombay Civil Servant, made many influential friends in India, with whom my mother still keeps up correspondence. She is on intimate terms with two leading members of the Supreme Council there. Besides, there's the terrific rebellion raging in India, and I might perhaps do worse than join one of the Bengal Volunteer Regiments. There's always a chance for any fellow taking part in such a scrimmage."

"How will you be able to get to India, since you say you've hardly any money left?" Beechworth asked.

"I've made up my mind to work my way on board some ship to Calcutta, if I can get a skipper to accept my services. If I wait till I've saved money enough to pay my passage there, I shall stand a good chance, as things generally go with me, of staying here till Doomsday."

Godfrey could not help admiring the courage of his friend in resolving to work his way to India; and the more so, because he well knew him to be constitutionally lethargic, to a degree almost bordering on laziness.

Cooper, indeed, was a thoughtless, reckless fellow; but his thoroughly good heart and perennial good nature, were the qualities that attracted Beechworth.

Although he was several years older than Godfrey, he looked up to his young friend as to a superior being, and could be entirely swayed by him in almost all matters, whether important or trivial.

The two were of totally different temperaments and habits of thought, but they pulled on the whole very well together.

Minds of exactly the same calibre rarely harmonise. The friendship of Dr. Johnson and Boswell would not probably have been of such long duration, had the latter equalled his friend in intellect.

Beechworth had a power of obtaining

irresistible influence over those with whom he associated for any length of time. His mind, though delicately refined, was a very strong one, and by carefully studying himself, and comparing notes with others, he gained a large knowledge of human nature, which he could put to good use when necessary.

"Well, Cooper," remarked Godfrey, after listening to his friend's plan about going to India, "whatever may become of me when I get to Calcutta, I'll try if I can't also work my passage there. If we can both manage to go in the same vessel, so much the better. It's not much use under the circumstances, as Paget would say, 'legislating for the future;' and we must, according to his maxims, 'keep up the charter' and 'trust to the chapter of accidents' after arriving at Calcutta."

"It will be very jolly," cried Cooper, elated with glee, "if you really accompany me to India. Blood and thunder! I'm as happy as a pigeon with the mere idea."

The friends continued talking away in high spirits for more than an hour and a half about their new project. At length, Godfrey wishing to return to his lodgings to dinner, said,

"Will you meet me at my quarters at six o'clock this evening, when we can go and look up Paget, as you proposed?"

Cooper giving an assenting answer, Beechworth left his friend, and walked back to his lodgings.

As he was reading the "Argus" newspaper after a humble dinner, cooked for him by his landlady, his attention was struck by a paragraph relating to the courts of justice.

It was to the effect that the trial for robbery and murder, of the notorious bushranger, known by the name of "Hell-and-Tommy," and who belonged to the infamous gang headed by the so-called Captain Lowe, would begin in Melbourne to-morrow.

As may be imagined, the young man's interest was deeply excited by this announce-

ment. He at once determined to attend the supreme court, and, if possible, hear the trial.

Cooper punctually kept his appointment with his friend, and they went together to Emerald Hill, and found Vincent Paget at home, engaged cooking his dinner. He had learned during his long, adventurous career in the Colony to be a capital hand at the culinary art.

The ex-gentleman-at-arms to the Queen welcomed Godfrey with his accustomed lively hearty humour, and it was nearly midnight when the old companions separated.

Paget delicately tried to force upon Beechworth the acceptance of a loan of ten pounds, out of the money he had managed to borrow to pay his passage to England, but the young man would not listen to any such proposal.

Godfrey always tried to hide the condition of his purse—when it happened to be slender—from his acquaintances; for he had a kind of almost fierce pride, which resented the idea of receiving pecuniary aid from his friends.

"I think, old boy," Cooper remarked to him, as they walked towards Melbourne, "you might as well have accepted Paget's offer just now of a loan of a ten pound note, considering you are, as I know, so deuced 'hard up.' You are too scrupulous by a long way in such matters."

"Paget," was the rejoinder, "hasn't got too much money himself at present for his own purposes."

"You are a queer chap at times, Godfrey, but by Heavens I like you, old fellow!" exclaimed Cooper, in a burst of enthusiastic admiration.

They walked on together as far as Beechworth's lodgings, where Ralph left his friend, and made his own way to Collingwood.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ESCAPE FROM JUSTICE.

EARLY on the morning of the trial of the bushranger, nick-named "Hell-and-Tommy," the Melbourne Supreme Court was thronged with the usual miscellaneous crowd present on such occasions.

Godfrey Beechworth managed to get a place in the gallery, from which he could see the dock. It was nearly eleven o'clock ere the trial began. Upon the prisoner being placed at the bar, Godfrey instantly recognized in

him, Peter Forrester, his fellow-passenger in the "Lancy," and whom he had too good reason to remember, as the bushranger who indulged in such wanton brutality towards him, when he was "stuck up" near the Ovens Gold Diggings.

The accused, who was charged with robbery and murder, at first assumed an indifferent air; but as the evidence proceeded, and it was pretty clear that the trial need not last long, since the testimony of his guilt was concise and conclusive, he became haggard and pale.

The prosecution was conducted by a barrister named Richie, a baker's son, who had fought his way to distinction and riches at the Colonial bar. He conducted the case most calmly, but left no loop-hole for the escape of the accused. The counsel for the prisoner was one Wireland, a blustering clap-trap, stout, coarse man, who, having landed in the Colony with little or no money in his pocket, had first managed to run

thousands of pounds into debt, then to make a composition with his creditors, and finally to get into a large but low practice in his profession.

There were not many competitors at the Melbourne bar about this time, and considerable fortunes were made by most of its members.

As the trial of Peter Forrester approached its end, he trembled in every limb.

The jury having at last found a verdict of guilty against him, he was sentenced in due form to death.

Capital executions in Melbourne take place within the walls of the gaol.

A few days after the trial, Godfrey read an account in the newspapers, of the last moments of the condemned.

He met his fate like a coward as he was, trembling and shrieking from fear on the scaffold in a dreadful way.

Ralph Cooper and Beechworth having thoroughly made up their minds to quit the

Colony as soon as possible, now went to Sandridge every day, and sought to be allowed to work their passage on board one of the numerous Calcutta bound vessels lying there.

For a time they had no success in their object, and began almost to despair of being able to carry it out; but, nevertheless, they still persevered.

Godfrey, in the meanwhile, received a letter in reply to one he had written to Frank Hamilton, detailing his curious rencounter at St. Kilda with Mrs. Hume. He also got a lengthy epistle from Jack Candy.

In connection with the strange words Mrs. Hume asserted to have over-heard Mrs. Bould utter in her sleep, Hamilton narrated to Godfrey the mysterious dialogue between Mr. William Brocker and Mr. Conrad Beechworth, to which he had been an accidental listener, just before leaving England.

This set him pondering night and day for a time upon the matter. He could make nothing intelligible, however, out of it in his

mind, and at last determined, though in vain, to brood upon it no more.

The dialogue in question referred to by Hamilton was recounted in an early chapter of this history. In the course of it, it may be remembered, Mr. Conrad Beechworth had menaced Mr. Brocker relative to money matters, in the mysterious words: "If you don't pay me, by all that is holy, I'll write to the youngster, Godfrey Beechworth, and tell him if I'm hanged for it, what you won't relish."

Putting together this and the strange utterances in her sleep of Mrs Bould concerning the young man, he naturally, in spite of himself, thereafter reflected intensely and frequently as to what they could mean.

Jack Candy's letter to him stated that he still continued hawking fruit and vegetables about the Ovens Diggings, and that he was getting on very well. He also said he had fallen in with Emilio Huberto, who was employed in a store there, and receiving a good salary.

Three or four days after receiving Frank Hamilton's letter, Beechworth went alone to Sandridge, as Ralph Cooper had gone to Emerald Hill to see Vincent Paget.

The weather was magnificent, and the clear waters of Hobson's Bay glittered brightly in the sun.

While strolling to and fro Godfrey noticed a boat belonging to a brig anchored some distance off, approaching the shore. There were four men in it, and one of them was evidently a skipper, while the others were seemingly common sailors.

Beechworth continued looking on with a kind of desultory curiosity as the boat was made fast to the jetty, near which he was at the moment. The skipper stating that he was going to Melbourne for an hour or two, and that his men were to wait for him, walked away towards the town.

There was something in the appearance of one of the boat's crew, that struck Godfrey as he passed near him. In fact, he thought

he recognised in him the form and features of Denny Burnham, his old schoolfellow, or in other words, of Captain Lowe, the famous bushranger. He came at once to the conclusion, however, that he must be mistaken, and walking on in this conviction without looking back, he entered a public-house, opposite the pier, to take a glass of ale.

Going into the parlor, he sat down, and filling his pipe with tobacco, began to smoke. There was no one else in the room at the time.

He had not been there long when, as he was looking out of the window at the bay, the door abruptly opened, and a man entered the room.

What was the surprise of Godfrey to see that he was the same who had struck him a few minutes ago on the jetty, as so like Denny Burnham.

He was lost in bewilderment, when the man seating himself nearly opposite him, said in a low agitated tone:

"Do you recognize me?"

"Good heavens! can you be Denny Burnham?" ejaculated Godfrey.

"Don't speak so loud," was the rejoinder, "or we shall be overheard. I thought you recognized me at the jetty just now, and so I followed you here to find out whether you intended to betray me."

"Are you really Denny Burnham then?" Beechworth exclaimed in a low voice, and hardly knowing whether to believe his senses.

"I am indeed," was the curt reply.

The celebrated bushranger had disguised himself by shaving off his whiskers and moustache, as well as by other means; but his handsome features remained to distinguish him to a penetrating gaze like that of Godfrey.

The two looked alternately at one another, [illegible]n at the door, to be sure that no other [illegible] was going to enter.

[illegible]u need not be afraid of my betraying [illegible]" Beechworth at last remarked, "al-

though you know there is a large reward offered for your capture. My boyhood's associations respecting you would prevent me from informing against you to the police. I shall not utter a word about having seen you here to any one; but you had better get away as quickly as possible."

"I've got engaged," said Burnham, "as ordinary seaman on board the brig at anchor off the pier. She is bound for Valparaiso, and was to have sailed yesterday, but has been delayed. To-night she will probably pass the Heads and be on her route, as there is now a strong fair wind blowing. I'm going to try and enter upon some honest career in South America; for I've lately grown heart-sick of a bushranger's life. I tell you fearlessly so much, because I could swear—from what I know of your disposition—that you will never breathe a word that would betray me to anyone."

"I hope, for mercy's sake! you may safely escape, since, if you are caught, you'll

assuredly die on the scaffold," rejoined Godfrey, in a tone of nervous excitement.

"Oh, God! how I envy, Beechworth, your untainted soul!" Burnham murmured.

He was ejaculating other remorseful expressions in a low, broken voice, when the door of the room opened, and three strangers entered.

This interruption cut short the dialogue between the two old schoolfellows.

How different their positions! Godfrey was very poor, and his present prospects apparently gloomy enough. How vast, nevertheless, is the benefit of an unsullied heart, none more than those who have lost it know.

In the presence of the bushranger, imbued with crime and remorse, he felt indeed the infinite consolation of a consciousness of honour and virtue.

Almost immediately after the entry of the three strangers Denny Burnham quitted the room, giving a hasty sign of farewell to his old schoolfellow.

A few days subsequently Beechworth gathered from a paragraph in the Melbourne newspapers that the famous bushranger had effectually eluded the pursuit of justice.

Godfrey never saw him again; but some time after he accidentally heard tidings relating to him.

CHAPTER XII.

BEFORE THE MAST.

Upon Captain Lowe quitting the public-house parlour, where Beechworth had been sitting, the latter made his way back to his lodgings.

He remained several hours in his bedroom pondering upon his rencounter at Sandridge with Denny Burnham.

Godfrey, about seven o'clock in the evening, received, much to his delight, a call from his friend Cooper.

"How glum you look, old fellow!" Ralph exclaimed, shaking hands with him.

"I'm a little low spirited," said Beechworth, "from sitting and brooding alone in my room all the afternoon. I'm very glad, indeed, that you've given me a look up, for if you hadn't come, I should soon have got a fit of the blue devils!"

"Let's take a walk," urged Cooper.

"All right, I'm quite agreeable," assented his friend.

Thereupon, they left the house, and strolled in the direction of Richmond Park.

As they sauntered along, Cooper remarked:

"After leaving Vincent Paget to-day, I met Frank Clift, and where do you think we went together?"

"I can't guess, and so you had better tell me at once," was the rejoinder.

Thereupon, Ralph related to his friend, that he and Frank Clift had been that afternoon to Collingwood, to call upon Paulina Clarke, the young woman whom Godfrey had a little

time since, relieved from the execution of a distress-warrant upon her scanty worldly goods.

She had succeeded, latterly, in obtaining sufficient needlework to afford her a livelihood. Already, she had offered to return to Beechworth an instalment of the thirty shillings he had parted with to redeem her furniture from the broker, but he stoutly refused to receive back any portion of the money.

Cooper and Clift had several times accompanied him in his visits to her, and she was always gratified to see them.

"Frank," remarked Ralph, as the two friends approached Richmond Park, "has the last few days become so desperately smitten with Paulina Clarke, that he has actually made her an offer of marriage. Of course you may imagine she has accepted it, and as Clift is really madly in love with her, he's determined to wed her at once. I wonder how he could make such a confounded fool of himself!"

"For my part, if she hadn't the misfortune to have a child," Godfrey observed; "I think Clift wouldn't do so badly in marrying Paulina Clarke. She's almost as beautiful a girl as I ever saw, and I believe she has a great deal of fine feeling, and a thoroughly good heart, together with considerable natural intelligence. As for education, it is true she has little or none of it, but then Clift hasn't much learning himself."

"Whatever her merits or demerits may be," rejoined Ralph, "Frank is determined to marry her, and so there's an end of the matter."

"What a sad thing, was the death by drowning of poor Felix Grant, the other day!" remarked Godfrey, changing the subject of conversation.

"He was a good fellow, from what I saw of him," said Ralph.

"He was most likely seized with cramp while bathing in the bay," went on Beechworth, "and so, unfortunately, got drowned,

for he was a capital swimmer. I have not yet learned the particulars of the accident."

Felix Grant, who had so often poured the tale of his grievances against his father into the ears of his friend Godfrey, had been greatly liked by him, and his accidental death was a source of much sorrow to him.

"By-the-bye," said Cooper, going off suddenly at a tangent from the topic they had been talking about, "I hear there's at present lying alongside Sandridge Pier, a fine ship, 'The Typhoon,' chartered to take horses out to Calcutta, for service in the Indian Mutiny. Some one told me that the Captain was in want of young chaps to act as grooms to the animals on the passage. I intend to try and see him, and perhaps, I may get something to do on board the vessel. Will you come with me to Sandridge, to-morrow?"

"I will—with all my heart," was the reply.

"The two friends parted from each other about ten o'clock at night, promising to meet again early the following morning.

Godfrey returning to his lodgings, went immediately to bed. His rest was interrupted by feverish dreams. The excitement of his rencounter at Sandridge with Denny Burnham, reacted upon his sensitive temperament, and disturbed his repose.

After an unrefreshing slumber, he arose early in the morning, and partaking of a frugal breakfast, sallied forth to meet Cooper at a public house, which they had fixed upon as a rendezvous.

He found his friend punctual to his appointment, and they strolled on towards the Sandridge Pier, off which was lying the ship called the "Typhoon," the captain of which Cooper had spoken of to his friend the evening before as in want of hands.

Upon going on board they asked for him.

"The skipper," replied the sailor of whom they enquired, "is upon the poop."

They found the captain there, disengaged, walking to and fro.

He was a very short, stout, and enormously

broad man, with bushy beard and whiskers. His age was about fifty, and his name "Captain Benjamin Parker."

"I believe, sir, you are the skipper," Cooper said, addressing him.

"Well, I rather think I am. What do you want with me?" was the response.

"I heard you were in need of hands on board," rejoined Ralph, "to act as grooms, and I wish to offer you my services. My chum is here on the same errand."

"Do you both understand the care of horses?" asked the captain.

"Yes, we've had experience in that line," Cooper replied, in a confident manner.

"Boy," cried the skipper to a youngster employed in cleaning lamps, "tell the doctor I want to speak to him."

In a minute or two a tall, red-bearded, respectable looking individual, who was engaged as veterinary surgeon on board, mounted the poop.

"Doctor," said the skipper, "here are two

chaps who want to be employed as grooms. Are you in need of any hands?"

"I require only one more," replied the veterinary.

"Never mind me, but try and get your own services accepted," Beechworth whispered aside to Cooper.

"I don't like the idea of leaving you in the lurch," was the rejoinder.

"Don't think of any such nonsense, and, besides, I intend, if you are engaged as groom, to ask the skipper to let me work my passage to Calcutta as ordinary seaman," said Beechworth.

Cooper, yielding to the strenuous persuasion of his friend, addressed the veterinary, saying,

"If you'll accept me, sir, as groom under you, I'll do my best to make you satisfied with me."

A few minutes' parley then took place between the doctor and Ralph. The result of it was that the latter's services were

engaged, to the delight of Beechworth, as groom on board the "Typhoon."

"To morrow morning you must begin your duties," said the veterinary, "for the ship will sail almost directly. You can now come below with me and sign the necessary articles of agreement."

Thereupon, Ralph and the doctor quitted the poop, leaving Godfrey alone for a time with the skipper.

All the horses were already on board, and the sailors were busily employed getting everything prepared, so that the vessel might set sail on the morrow.

Beechworth took the opportunity while alone on the poop with the captain, to endeavour to get him to accept his own services as ordinary seaman. He had become half a sailor on board the "Lancy," having delighted in assisting the crew during his long passage to Australia.

Explaining his qualifications to Captain Parker, and stating he wished very much to

go to Calcutta along with his chum, he begged earnestly to be engaged.

Sailors, at this time, were not very plentiful at Melbourne, and skippers were frequently compelled to accept land-lubbers as ordinary seamen, to complete their crews.

Captain Parker was really in need of extra hands, and this circumstance led him to listen favourably to Beechworth's offer of his services.

"Very well," the Skipper at last said, "I'll rate you as ordinary seaman in the ship's books. You can meet me at the Shipping Office in Bourke-street, at four o'clock this afternoon."

Godfrey, promising to be there punctually, Cooper and he, both delighted with the success that had attended their errand on board the "Typhoon," left the vessel, and wended their way back to Melbourne.

Reaching their respective lodgings, they immediately made preparations to go on board the ship the following morning, and enter upon their new engagements.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, Godfrey met Captain Benjamin Parker, as agreed upon, at the Shipping Office in Bourke-street.

Cooper, in the evening, called upon his friend, at the latter's lodgings.

They sat and conversed together for an hour or so upon their present situation, and possible future prospects.

"We are about to launch in a precarious adventure," remarked Beechworth, in the course of their desultory chat; "and we shall both of us have need of all our energy, courage, and self-resources, when we arrive at Calcutta.''

"The only thing we must do," said Ralph, "is to stick to each other, and trust, as Paget would say, to 'the chapter of accidents.' "

In this strain, they continued talking for an hour or more, when Godfrey suggested that they should go out and purchase some bed-clothing, and other articles, to serve during the voyage that was before them.

Accordingly, they sallied forth, and invested

a small amount of money in a modest outfit that would be serviceable to them on their passage to Calcutta, and on their arrival there.

Beechworth's purse had lately been replenished to a trifling extent, by the sale of some of his things, which Cooper had managed to dispose of for him to a Jew.

The two friends buying what they required at a cheap outfitter's, in Elizabeth-street, then separated, and returned each to his lodgings.

"Good night, old boy," said Cooper, as they parted, "and don't forget to meet me at six o'clock to-morrow morning, at Sandridge Pier."

"All right, I shall be there, punctually," was the response.

Beechworth, upon reaching home, settled his account with his landlady, and then packed all his traps—for they were not very many—into a large canvass bag, which he had bought for the purpose that evening.

About half-past ten o'clock he went to bed,

but for a long time could not get to sleep, for his mind was excited by a thousand whirling reflections during this last night of his stay in the colony.

It was more than an hour past midnight when he at last fell into slumber. He rose at four o'clock in the morning, but his landlady was already up, and had prepared a nice breakfast for him.

She had, with womanly kindness, anticipated his wants.

Godfrey had a magic power of winning his way, without an effort, into the hearts of the fair sex, and his landlady cried bitterly on taking leave of him. She had, indeed, acquired for the handsome young man an humble affection, for which he in his generous heart could not help feeling grateful.

"God preserve and bless you!" she half sobbed, as shouldering his baggage, after wishing her good-bye, Beechworth walked away from the house.

He strode on at a rapid pace, and reached

Sandridge Pier a few minutes before six o'clock.

Cooper was already there, with his traps, waiting for him.

"'The Typhoon,' you see," said Ralph, as his friend came up to him, "is now anchored two or three miles out in the bay. There's, however, a boat going off from the pier to her in half-an-hour or so, with several of the men belonging to her, and we must contrive to accompany them."

"Have you heard when the 'Typhoon' will weigh anchor?" asked Godfrey.

"One of her crew told me just now," was the reply, "that if the present fair breeze last, she will be a long way outside the Heads to-morrow morning."

The two friends arranged satisfactorily with the boatmen to take them off to the vessel, along with her other men waiting to go on board.

Ralph and Godfrey then went to a public-house near at hand, and had the last tankard

of ale together that they were ever destined to drink on Australian soil.

Returning afterward to the boat in which they had left their traps, they found it on the point of pushing off, so that they were just in time.

Besides Cooper and Beechworth, five other men belonging to the "Typhoon," formed part of its freight.

The morning was fresh and clear, but a pretty strong breeze ruffled the bay.

Quickly the boat pulled through the waves towards the "Typhoon," that looked what she was, a most magnificent ship.

Godfrey, on the way to the vessel, indulged in a musing and reflective humour, which was soon, however, cut short in a disagreeable manner.

Two half drunken men, belonging to the "Typhoon," began to fight in the boat.

They were Yankees, and the manner in which they kicked and bit one another, till they were both fearfully saturated with blood,

was horribly disgusting. Upon getting on board the ship, the skipper had to send one of them ashore again, so dreadfully was he mutilated and disabled.

Godfrey having deposited his traps in the forecastle was soon at work with the crew; and Cooper almost immediately began his duties as groom in the steerage.

The 'Typhoon' weighed anchor about ten o'clock, and, favoured by a fair breeze, ere midnight had passed the Queens' Heads, and was sailing gallantly on her route.

Godfrey did not gaze without a sigh upon the beautiful shores he was thus quitting. In his numerous vicissitudes and adventures in the Colony, he had made many friends there whom he regretted leaving.

Besides, he felt that Australia was a magnificent country, and fully worthy to be the future home of a great nation of freemen.

Fired as he was, however, with the spirit of youthful enterprise, he did not repent for an instant the adventurous step he had

taken, in quitting the Colony in order to essay a new career in India.

The buoyant courage of his age is not easily damped, and as the ship, after passing the Queens' Heads, sailed merrily on her course, he banished all fears or misgivings in regard to the future.

END OF VOL. II.

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