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Contains an interesting precis of the evidence taken before the Police Board in connection with the "Kelly Gang" pp. 42-5
NED KELLY:
THE
IRONCLAD AUSTRALIAN
BUSHRANGER.
COMPLETE.

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NED KELLY
THE IRONCLAD AUSTRALIAN BUSHRANGER
NED KELLY,
THE
AUSTRALIAN IRONCLAD BUSHRANGER.

BY ONE OF HIS CAPTORS.

CHAPTER I

A GROG-SHANTY AT FOREST CREEK.

FOREST CREEK was the place to make your pile, otherwise your fortune, in the year of gold, 1852; and where two months previously the blackfellows, the emu, and the kangaroos held it all to themselves, hundreds of tents dotted the thinly-timbered bush, interspersed with wooden stores and grog-shanties every here and there, whilst down by the water's side the cradles were rocking all day long; not the cradles that add to a man's responsibilities, but the rough, wooden machines in which he washed the refuse away from his gold.

But away with all thought of such labour for the present; for it is knock-off hour, and so the holes are empty and the grog-shanties are full and driving a roaring trade, for a hot wind has been blowing all day, withering the grass, curling up the leaves on the trees, and filling the diggers' eyes and throats with burning dust, so that most of them now feel as though they could drain an ocean dry. This is why the grog-shops are doing such a roaring trade.

Let us look in at the Bar, better known as 'Mother Maloney's.' It is a rickety calico shanty of the shabbiest class, but it is big, and it is furthermore the fashion; perhaps by reason that Mrs. Maloney is a bachelor, and is reputed to have been left remarkably well off by 'the late lamented,' as she invariably called her defunct spouse.

However, whether because she was fat, fair, and forty, or because bachelor diggers thought she would be a catch with bilge-water would have been nectar to it.

This strange-looking being threaded his way mincingly between the groups of diggers, until, reaching the bar, he cast a languishing glance at Mother Maloney, and running his long taper fingers through his whiskers, said in a drawing accents:

"Will you credit me with a nobby of rum, my dear, good, kind, sweetheart, until I get my warrantances from England to-morrow?"

"It's indued an', I can't, Miss Norfolk Howard, with some folks to-morrow's river to-day. An' besides, it's entirely out my rules, credit is!"

Scarcely were the words out of her mouth, when some one struck up:—

Picks, shovels, and billies are tossed here and there and everywhere, the confusion is that of Babel, and chaff is flying thither and thither in company with oaths and blasphemy; uttered, however, without malice, but as simple interjections and notes of admiration.

The conversation of most of them would have been as unintelligible as Low Dutch to the freshly arrived out from England.

"Where are you going to mark out your next claim, mate?"

"Guess how many pennyweights I'm making to the tub?"

"I say, Bill Tomkins has had his hole jumped!"

"Yes, they did; me, I never speak another word if they didn't get thirty pounds weight of gold in less than two days, out of a patch of gravel not more than six inches deep."

"Better luck, that, than happened last week to an old chum o' mine, who paid fifty pounds for a salted claim, and found it a swamp. It'll be murder, I reckon, if he comes across the cove who slewed him!"

This was the kind of talk that went round and round, varied sometimes by a compliment hurled like a cannon-ball at Mother Maloney, as with a face as red as her cap, varied even by a compliment hurled like a cannon-ball at Mother Maloney, as, with a face as red as her cap, as a simple interjection and note of admiration.
Evidently the seedy individual who had addressed himself to the hands. "Vewy good, that is to say, I wish I'd fur you; saw the traps coming. I think you owe me a shout for the pleased singer. Out to the diggers to sharpen their tools on. Grindstones thereby; perhaps he was accustomed to such treatment. A werse on, and I'll shout till yer blue in the face, mate," J jokes to the wrong shop.

"What would you do with it if you had?" demanded the pleased singer.

"Why, my dear fwiend, I'd take it round and lend it..."

What would you do with it if you had?" demanded the pleased singer.

"Just exactly what you've done with your voice. My jokes to the wrong shop."

"What would you do with it if you had?" demanded the pleased singer.

"I'll make you shout in another way if you don't dry up."

"It's because I'm so very dwied up that I wheept to be wetted down.

"Pit us a better stave than that ere one we've just had."

"The words are my own, and I've set them to a song after..."

"Now, mother Maloney, its fizz and nothing less this time, shouted someone."

"Chorus for the last time, boys:"

"Oh what a sad tale—Crikey, oh, what a sad tale."

"Lo! the planchets that grated this strange note on its conclusion; and the ragged new chum scarecrow was all at once converted into the lion of the rowdy assemblage. Every one wanted to "shout" (colonial for stand t'ret), and everyone was just as anxious to get another song out of him.

Not much difficulty was there about this. Mr. Norfolk Howard seemed every whit as ready to treat them to song after song as they were to treat him to nobbler after nobbler, but at length the drink he had imbibed seemed to affect him all at once; his words came thick, memory failed him, he began to snore, his nose twitched, staggered, and finally subsided between two casks, where he came to anchor doubled up, with his chin on his knees, and appeared to subside into a state of unconsciousness.

When the diggers discovered that discounting small substances at him, and ticking his nostrils, a tear with a snore or the end of a tobacco-pipe had no effect in at rousing him from his milder sleep into which he seemed to have fallen, one of them crushed his hat down over his eyes with a blow from his open palm, and five minutes later the very existence of the poor drunken leader seemed to be forgotten.

With the reader's leave we will keep a sharper eye upon him.

Suddenly, when nobody is looking, he lifts his sharp black-brimmed hat a couple of inches. Surely those sharp, deadly, raven-black eyes that shine so keenly from underneath the heavy and nearly closed lids, are never those of an intoxicated man? They take in everything that passes around, and they twinkle when any miner blows that he has not paid his license.

By-and-by an expression of uneasiness comes into the face of the leader, however, and he musters, or rather soliloquizes to himself—

"I thought I would have been here by now. Was my information incorrect. I wonder? Curse my ill-fortune if I am to be done this time. If I could stop the three thousand pounds that are offered for Ned Kelly the Ironclad Bush-ranger's capture, I'd ask Mr. Pherson for his pretty daughter Lily in marriage at once. Ha! who is this, I wonder?"

CHAPTER II.

MORE VISITS TO THE "EMU."

At this juncture of affairs two more diggers came into the shanty, shouldering their tools in true workmanlike fashion, that is to say, with the pick-handle passed through the handle of the shovel, and grasped firmly in the left hand, thus allowing the latter implement to hang pendent down the back. Over their left arms they carried their upper shirts, that the stifling, breathless heat had caused them to take off, and in their right hands they bore their black billies. Their faces were wreathed in such broad grins that it seemed to be no easy matter to keep their short black pipes in their mouths.

"Hello, matey! blessed if you don't look in, shouted one some.

"In luck enough to shout for the whole d— lot of you, at all events," rejoined the elder of these new arrivals.

"Now, mother Maloney, its fizz and nothing less this time, shouted out with your boys with the white-night-cap on. Twenty bottles of claret, my blooming old Venus. Hang downing the corsets. Off with their heads and pour the contents of..."
their folely fat bellies into a clean bucket, so that each lad can dip his pannikin in and help himself. That's the way to do business, old girl."

"Sure, an that's right enough, mother, more especial when the price ov the good liquor is paid down first. Twenty bottles ov fizz will be just twenty golden sovereigns, me honey, divil a stiver less."

"Put in a thumb and pull out a plum, my charmer. Not too big an one though, or you won't get it. Now, then, eyes shut, and fancy that you are feeding for valuants, not apples," and the speaker took the lid off his billy and held it over the counter towards the buxom hostess. As the liquid hissed and steamed, and the fumes from its contents the透明 in contact with the old tin saucepan's contents. Fain would it have lingered there, had not the digger ex­ forwarded it over the counter towards the buxom hostess.

"None of your little games, now, take only one and don't be greedy about the size, or I'll have it back, and take my custom elsewhere." And, with a snort, he turned to go. "See how this billy, and how a perceptible gasp as it came in contact with the old tin saucepan's contents. Pain would it have lingered there, had not the digger ex­claimed:

"How could the cleverly-disguised detective have spotted those three men? Their low-toned murrations he could not have caught from the spot where he squatted hunched up so grotesquely; and their outward appearance was that of nine-tenths of the individuals by whom they were surrounded; for their soft felt billy-cock hats were slouched well over their brows, and up to their very eyes they were all hair. They were dressed in a sort of manakin, and the stature of the middle man was somewhat remarkable, for he was at least six-foot-three in height, and of commanding build as well. He who squatted on his left, sitting on his heels like a Gloucestershire collier, was fat and gross, with a nose that looked as though it had been broken in some erg-shanty, or beer-shop row with a potter pint pot, and who balanced himself on the round of his pick to the right, had a nose of the Napier type, shaped like the hooked beak of some monstrous bird of prey, a nose that you might fancy capable of smelling blood at any distance. This man's form must have been that of a skeleton by the way that his clothes hung about him. He looked like a being who could be twisted and turned into the shape of any grotesque capital letter, from A to Z."

"If the powers yes, an I'm much obliged to ye, Misther Dawson." A few minutes later a bucket, two-thirds full of seething and hissing champagne (N.B. As good can be purchased in England at two-and-six a bottle) was handed over the bar and placed in the middle of the floor, and tin pannikins being at the same time distributed, the fun commenced in earnest.

The champagne, however, didn't give unqualified satisfaction, and the giver of the treat, presently, himself declared that he was "rotgut," and that three or four bottles of brandy would make it far finer swizzle.

"Now marm, I suppose you'll own the price of your liquor was paid down for?"

"I ain't a mean, selfish beast as wants to keep every good thing for hisself. I wouldn't be shouting in the way that I am if I was that; and what is ov it? Turn and turn about, I say; added to which, I knows of a place all'll turn out better even nor this one. I aren't quite a green 'un; and perhaps I knows as much about prospecting as Mr. Hargreaves."

"Whereabouts may this new Tom Tiddler's ground be situated?" asked some one.

"Says aye, that's tellings, that is. 'Tis a secret as dear to me as my very life's blood. My matey here is the only man as'll be let into that knowledge. And for why? Because he once saved my life at the risk ov his own, an' I'm a 'art as is stuffed as chock full ov gratitude as ever was a calves' with sage and onions. However, this hasn't business, gentlemen. Who'll bid for Dick Dawson's claim an' a certain fortune? Ned, just show the old billy round, an' listen to how their very eyeballs will jingle as they lights on the treasure in it. There's no need for any one to handle the nuggets, Ned, for they're like quicksilver, an' we'll run down a cove's sleeve before he knows what they're about."

"A loud laugh was produced by this elegant way of hint­ing that the assembled company might not all be as honest as they should be, and it had hardly subsided when Ned began to show the claim to the crowd."

"As 'No, yon don't!" would jerk the billy out of reach as they should be, and it had hardly subsided when Ned began to show the claim to the crowd.

"Face after face bent over it, and ejaculations of surprise and admiration came thick and fast.

Sometimes a dirty and grimy hand would involuntarily shake out, but Ned, with some such ironical observation as "No, you don't!" would jerk the billy out of reach, at the same time giving its contents a rattle that sounded like sweetest music to the ears of the listeners."

CHAPTER III

TREATs OF SELLING AND BEING SOLD.

"But if you three disguised coves aren't Ned Kelly and his mates Lanky Jim and Lardy Bill, then I'm not Tom Conquest of the Mounted Police. I'll have you, my lads, and what's more I'll take you single-handed, for I can't afford to share the reward. Big as it is I fear it will hardly win me Lily McPherson."
night, at my expense. I never likes to disturb harmony, as assembled have whatever else they chooses to call for to
the more sober to whistle, Dick Dawson said—
Mrs. Maloney, my dear, let the other gents as is here
jogging. We've swilled quite enough to transact business
We can borrow a pair of scales at Brown's on the way."

'andsome is as 'andsome does. I won't take a pennyweight
fair price, not a hexorbitant one. Fair play's a jewel, an'
prise.

gets to Melbourne, save, perhaps, a handful for a pretty
street."

Again the tall man nudged his companions slightly, and
there ensued a queer sound half-way down the flat-nosed
man's throat that sounded very like a death-rattle, though
it was in reality nothing worse than a chuckle.

"Now that I've shot up Master Curmiosity, let's return
to business, mates," continued Dick Dawson. "Look here,
I've half a mind to give the claim away. D—ee, I'd do
it, but for the fact that a free gift is never valued. No,
what folks git for nothing, they values at nothing; so I
put this here chance to auction, an' whatever it brings I
hand over to the 'ospital an' the horphian asylum, directly I
quitted the shanty.

"Hear! hear!" shouted every one. "Now that's what
I calls 'andsome," added somebody.

The bids were started and ran up actively, branded
champagne being a fine stimulant to spirited enterprise.

At last, when they reached a sum that caused some of
the more sober to whistle, Dick Dawson said—

"That's enough, mates, let it stand at that; I wants a
fair price, not a horridtainer one. Fair play's a jewel, an'
'andsome is as 'andsome does. I won't take a pennyweight
more, for it's honest Dick Dawson's boast that no one
ever made a bargain with him an' lived to regret it. Now,
mate, you an make that last offer, tell me yer name an'
where yer hongs out.

"Jack Hartley. My tent's close down by Brown's store.
If you an' your mate don't mind seeing me home I'll give
it was in reality nothing worse than a chuckle.

"Can't sing, be-be-before been sick. Fe-fe-fe-feel as

Everything was wrapped in gloom. The hot wind had
been succeeded by a southerly buster, bringing rain on its
leaden pinions. The trooper took off his hat and allowed
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"Hi, we can't spare you!" roared out some one. "Glad
you've come round, old fellow, for we want another song.
A tip-topper like the last."

"Can't sing, be-be-before been sick. Fe-fe-fe-feel as

This observation produced loud roars of laughter, and
before they had subsided the strangely assortd trio had
quitted the shanty.

Hardly had they disappeared from view when Mr. Nor-
folk Howard, the inebriate new-chum as every one be-
quitted the shanty.

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A tip-topper like the last."

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Several hands had been outstretched to detain him, but
this speech caused them to be hastily withdrawn, and
as wide a passage as practicable to be afforded him as well.
Another second and he also was outside the shanty.

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been succeeded by a southerly buster, bringing rain on its
leaden pinions. The trooper took off his hat and allowed
the pelting shower to refresh, for an instant, his heated

Then his sharp eyes pierced the gloom ahead, and he
saw the three men whom he was after about fifty yards
in front, whilst the three other men, whom he rightly
guessed that they were after, showed very indistinctly in
the distance.

"Murder and robbery are clearly their little game," mutu-
tered the disguised trooper to himself. "Perhaps, how-
ever, I'll be able to turn the tables on them. With me on
the other side I'll be those to three; for the drunken men
don't count for much; and then I must pick out the tail-
case for myself and the other cases may settle.

CHAPTER IV.

TRACKING TO MURDER. PUTTING HIS FOOT IN IT.

Now there are exceptions to every rule, and so when we
said just now that one and all had made up their minds to
stay and continue the carouse, we must except four of
their number. We shall see who they were presently.

"Right you are, friend. Come along, then, let us be
calls, and that's a voice as never falls unheeded on a true
Englishman's ear. Good night all, and God bless ye."

And tipping the wink to his mate Ned, they got Jack
back on them, and supported him out of the shanty—for
truth to say he was rather unsteady on his pins—being
followed by the vociferous cheers of the other diggers,
whom the prospect of further drinks, at another man's ex-
pense, deprived of any desire to quit the "Emai" for a
long while to come.

By this time the glaring naphtha lamps had been
lighted, and the place looked extra comfortable.

Mother Maloney was all smiles too, and evidently in-
tended to carry out Dick Dawson's instructions to the
letter, the fact being that he had playfully pitched on te
the counter another small nugget before going out.

"In for a penny in for a pound," was the motto of one
and all, and what mattered it if they were unfit for work
next day, for was it not Sunday, a dieu non?"
and Lardy Bill between them, for they aren't worth pow- der and ball yet."

And as he concluded this mental cogitation the trooper thrust his right hand into the left inside breast pocket of his coat to discover whether the stock of his pistol was handy to his grasp.

Meanwhile, unconsciously that they had either a foe in their rear, the tall man, the fat man, and the man with the mean nose followed the tracks of Dick Dawson and his companions across the Flat.

"This rain is fortunate," said the tall man, "for it has driven every one under canvas. Not that folks are very thick about this part at any time of a night. However, it's best as it is, and there's plenty of light to work by."

"Oh, I feel so soft-hearted," exclaimed the fat man, "I'm in the mood of a sacking dove. Why would the fool flash about his gold so?"

"To tempt better men to possess themselves of it, of course," put in he of the mean-bill. "'W'll put it to a decent better use than he would, eh, Ned?"

"Silence! and listen to me. You see that crooked old gum tree? Curse it, you can't help seeing it, for its trunk looks like a white ghost. Yes, you've spotted it now. Well, the nearest track to the township leads right past it, and almost at its foot there is a deserted shaft close upon ninety feet deep. We must overtake them at that point, overcome them—without using our pistols if possible—for the traps are getting pretty well as thick about the place as the bush flies and the squaws; and pitch em in headlong," explained the tall man grimly.

"Oh lor! I feel so soft-hearted," sighed the fat man; "but what is to be must be, and it would be ungracious not to take the good things that Fortune puts in our way."

"Umph, you was always a very tender young man except with the petitioners," retorted Macaw-bill. "See at you do your share of the work."

Meanwhile every minute brought Dick Dawson, Ned, and Jack Hartley nearer to the lonely spot fixed on for their murder.

Three hundreds yards farther would have taken them into the very thick of the canvas township, Hartley's tent being about double the distance on the other side.

Arrived opposite the gum tree, however, the intoxicated trooper began to chat in a friendly way with their intended victims, so as to catch them unawares. Hence his shouted warning.

Having given it he lost no time in levelling his weapon at Ned Kelly's face, and pulling the trigger.

But the cap failed to explode, and ere he could discharge another barrel, all five men were on him at once; the pistol was wrrenched out of his grasp, and he was absolutely powerless in their hands.

"A Joey in disguise—a wolf in sheep's clothing! And is this great and free country come to this?" exclaimed Broken-nose, lifting up his hands and eyes as though in pious horror at such an act of base deception.

"We will make a stern example of him," said Ned Kelly; "pitch him down that deserted hole. It's ninety feet deep. He won't survive the fall. Well, rascal, have you a bone in your tongue, that you don't cry for mercy?"

"Bugger you a bone!" exclaimed the trooper, "but what is to be must be. And now, I'll work the oracle all right, never fear; and directly that can't be helped now. In with him, mates!"

The trooper was dragged to the edge of the dark, yarning shaft, the Macaw-beak's great splay hand being pressed upon his mouth the while, lest he should cry out and spread the alarm that some devilry was up. A second later he was hurled over the brink, and fell with a dull, hollow thud, into the awful depths that no eye could penetrate.

"Wouldn't it be wise to serve the other bloke the same way?" suggested Macaw.

"If you did, how should I get his gold? No, no, the poor fellow's in a drunken sleep." said Carrotty Larkins, "of course, Ned Kelly would never leave his gold with him."

"Ned Kelly dead or alive. I'll make three thousand pounds out of the treasure. I'll make three thousand pounds out of the treasure of Ned Kelly dead or alive."

Apparently the investigation was satisfactory, for an assumning an upright position he remarked—

"He's tight as a door-nail. You coves had better bring him round by the best means you can, and get him home to his tent as quickly as possible. Yes, get his gold before he is sober enough to wonder whether he has made a foolish bargain, and then hasten both of you to our old quarters in the hills, for Monday night will see me dead or victorious. I will rob the gold escort or perish in the attempt."

"But Ned Kelly stopped down to assure himself that such was indeed the fact.

"We are with you," said Carrotty Larkins and Nimming Ned, in a breath; and the former added, "It won't be all gold. My Brummagem nuggets will be amongst the treasure. I'll make three thousand pounds out of them, never fear."

"You won't have the assurance to try and pass them off on the experienced professional gold-buyers?" exclaimed Kelly, with something of admiration in his tone.

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the thing's done we'll make tracks for our haunt in the ranges. The attack on the escort will be rare fun.

The confederates then parted; and an hour later Ned Kelly and his two companions had left Forest Creek far behind them.

CHAPTER V.

NED KELLY'S HOME IN THE MOUNTAIN RANGES.

Shift we the scene from the busy, rowdy diggings at Forest Creek to the summit of a lofty, volcanic hill, some two thousand feet above the level of the sea, covered to the very top with heavy timber, and surrounded on three sides by a dense forest, a spot where one would imagine the foot of white man had never trod.

And yet, behold a hut, constructed of the immense slabs of bark which the monarchs of the Australian forest shed in their leaves.

Yes, this is a possibility of nearly all antipodean trees, that they rid themselves of their bark but not their foliage, which is evergreen, whilst their trunks, clad in their new, tender coverings, are often of a silvery whiteness.

That bark hut is brown enough, however. It is, of course, a building possesses a surrounding roof of the same material, a door, a couple of windows, and a stuffed chimney formed of old cask.

Up and down its rough, furrowed, outside walls run soldiers and bulldogs. Let not the reader stare; we will be descried with a telescope the square church deed has been committed; for this heavily-timbered hill the metropolis of the colony, Melbourne; a track, hardly the gold fields at Forest Creek and Mount Alexander to the well-grassed plains fifteen or sixteen hundred feet above her eagle's nest on the mountain's summit, looking below her to the land.

That she is a Currency lass, or native-born Australian girl, is perceptible at a glance. An Englishman would have pronounced her a clean, and gracefully formed, and the delicious contours of premature womanhood were already perceptible in her bust; but she was in truth only just turned of fourteen, for the glowing sun of Australia brings flowers, fruit, and girls to an early perfection.

This young girl's complexion was that of a brilliant brunette, her eyes hazel, her hair of a rich glossy brown, her lips red as cherries, and the teeth within as white and small as strings of pearls; yet even whiter, if possible, than these teeth, were the bare, plump neck and shoulders, adown which her glossy tresses waned, and the arms that were crossed on the rough window-sill over which she leant.

There was no danger of the delicate skin getting sunburned whilst she did so, for above the hut towered (to a height of full ninety feet before they began to branch off) the stately iron-bark trees; and the foliage of the blue gum, the peppermint and the shea-oak helped to form a canopy o'er her pretty head whenever she designed to walk abroad.

Suddenly, whilst she gazed, a horse's hoof-strokes became audible, evidently toiling up a steep and rocky pathway close at hand.

The maiden gives utterance to an expression of mingled joy and surprise, and the next instant, on to the tiny glint of grassy open space in front of the hut rides a tall, gaunt man, bearded up to the very eyes.

"Father!" exclaimed the girl, "how glad I am that you are come home."

"Well, my bonnie lass, and so am I; but you needn't have been anxious."

"I wasn't very anxious. I never am when you go out without your armour on, for then I think that you are not bound on a very perilous enterprise."

"No, my girl, you can always depend on that. Come you and take possession of Marco Polo, for I'm dog-tired and have got little time enough to rest in. Short-job him, Rose, so that he mayn't stray far, for I shall want him again anon, and then come quickly in and give me some grub."

The young girl rushed at once out of the door, and the bearded man, clinging himself heavily from the saddle to the ground, first kissed her and then placed the reins in her hand, telling her that she looked blooming meanwhile.

"Father," said she, "Marco don't want me to lead him. He will follow me about like a dog. He loves me dearly. Kiss me, Marco Polo."

The beautiful creature, for the animal was a thoroughbred racer, stretched out his long, vein-traceried neck, and rubbed his velvet muzzle first against a cheek and then against a glossy shoulder.

"There!" said the girl, triumphantly, and throwing the reins lightly over the proud steed's neck she just as lightly vaulted on to his back, and with a merry, ringing laugh, trotted him round towards the back of the hut.

The bearded man gazed after her fondly, but a look of sadness came into his great haggard eyes as he muttered to himself:

"What would become of her if anything happened to me? Good Lord! I know her well. She would seek to avenge me, and her devotion would meet with a six foot drop. Would to heaven that I had not brought her up to regard right as wrong and wrong as right; and that I could not have ensured that the only being there is to a bearded man.

I am only what circumstances have made me, sad why should she be different? My parents were murdered by the law, and her mother was destroyed by a villain. We
both of us ove the world nothing but our hate and our
enmity, and by heaven, I, at least, never let a chanceslip of
requiting the obligation."

This muttering, or rather reflecting, Ned Kelly—for he
it was—struck through the hut into a little lean-to shed at
the back, and forthwith condemned to indulge in a
thorough good wash, a tiresome Australian's greatest delight.

A few minutes later he entered the left-hand room of
the hut, which was at once his own bedroom, when at
home, the kitchen and the parlour, he was a very different
looking being to what he had been when he dismounted
from Marco Polo so short a time previously.

He had taken off twenty years of the apparent age
with the false beard and whiskers that had evidently been worn
as a disguise, and now, with face closely clipped, all but
a heavy, drooping moustache, he looked a very handsome
man of no more than thirty-five.

Rose had already spread the rough table—bough with
his own axe—with the materials for arepeat, and now she
moved up a couple of three-legged stools beside it. The
entire room contained no other furniture.

The table equipment consisted of tin pannikins and
pepper plates, and a couple of old tinash-tins held the
gum, with the sugar.

A large flat damper cake had just been taken up steamin-
good hot from the place where it had cooked itself on the
hot stone hearth, and Rose threw a fastful of tea into the
tin billy, two-thirds full of boiling water as it hung
suspended over the fire, and began to stir it round vigor­
ously with a gum-trove twig: this being the colonial way
of brewing the cup that cheers.

Meanwhile, Ned went to a hanger-safe or cupboard of
his own manufacture, and took out a portion of a cold leg
of mutton.

Fishing a gridiron out of a corner, he cut the meat into
thick slices and laid it thereon, and directly Rose had
laid it thereon, and directly Rose had
concluded her task she returned to the hearth, and
was busy haying a large flat damper cake had just been taken up steamin­
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...as well that you should know it now, if only to make you eager she closed her eyes, that you should never want bite been a fond and loving parent to one who had no claim thankful that you don't bear the name of Kelly."

mother were hanged. I never told you so before, but it's been at war for ever so many years, and it's a natural rau to hate all the world. You see the world and I have enough to serve your turn, but I needn't have taught endeavour to give you the love and obedience of one."

though I was your own child? Now more than ever will time I daresay you can pretty well remember."

last much longer. I'm pledged to my mates to help them why wage such a cruel and relentless war against them?"

of the table and throwing herself on her knees before Ned. on him as a child," said Rose, coming round from her side of the table and throwing herself on her knees before Ned. I cannot believe that you are a bad man, because you have been so good to me; but if other people are not so wicked as you have always made them out to be me, why were such a cruel and relentless war against them?"

"I cannot go into that question now," said the bush-ranger, hurriedly. "Perhaps, after all, the fight won't last much longer. I'm pledged to my mates to help them plunder the next Gold Escort that goes down the road, and then comes this affair of the countess. Perhaps that'll end up my lawless deeds. Stay, though; there is one debt of vengeance that will yet remain! I have sworn to kill your mother's heartless destroyer, like a dog whenever and wherever I meet him. I have been searching for him for fourteen years—your whole life long, in fact; but I'll find him yet! Oh, yes, I'll find him, Rose!"

The girl was about to make some reply, in depression, perhaps, of the bushranger's deadly resolve, when, glancing round to get at his pipe, the outlaw descried a cloud of dust, miles away in the distance. "My telescope, Rose!" said he, as he sprang with an oath to his feet. Rose brought it, and Ned Kelly peered anxiously through.

"By thunder! it's the Gold Escort," said he. "'Tis a good twelve miles away yet; nevertheless, there is no time to lose. On with a high-necked frock and a hat, like light's as well to get at the bush telegraph. The boys are close at hand, though. I've forbidden them to come to the hut to worry you, for I know that you don't like their ways. Kiss me, Rose, and begone. I'll get out my trusty armour, for, clad in that, I'm a match for half-a-dozen men."

The beautiful Australian girl obeyed, for she knew that Ned would break no opposition to his will in a state of excitement such as he was now labouring under; but she was very sad as he turned from her as he departed.

— CHAPTER VI.

THE BUSHRANGERS IN HIS IRON ARMOUR.

When he had lighted this with a common lucifer and puffed it into a red glow, he leisurely proceeded to the other end of the room, and dashed forth from under a pile of dirty, trovesy sacks, two most extraordinary pieces of defensive armour, to wit, a helmet and a breastplate of thick unpolished iron.

The cuirass he proceeded to strap on, and the helmet he laid for the present on the rough bush table.

Like that table, both these pieces of armour were of his own making.

He had fashioned them out of an old ploughshare, and as the cuirass covered almost the entire front of his trunk, so the helmet, when fixed on his head, would meet and overlap it, making him invulnerable save as to legs and arms, unless he turned his back to his foe, a weakness that Kelly was not at all likely to be guilty of, for he had at all events the courage of the lion, if he lacked the jungle monarch's magnanimity.

It is difficult to describe the exact appearance of these two pieces of armour.

They were heavy and cumbersome, but rifle-bullet proof. There was no attempt at ornament lavished on them, for they were for use, and not for show.

The helmet had a narrow slit traversing its front to see through, and in shape was not unlike that worn by the Knights Templars in olden times.

In lieu of further description, let the reader glance at them as depicted on our front page, just as they were sketched by our artist from the originals.

Ned Kelly now looked to his weapons of offence, which consisted of an American rifle and a pair of long horse-pistols, with the Tower mark on them.

If this was a romance instead of a true history we should have made our Irondad Bushranger more terrible by endowing him with a brace of six-shooters, but we write of a time when, thanks to Colonel Colt, that weapon was only just getting known in California, and Dean Adams hadn't begun to dream of his now famous single barrel revolving to six chambers.

Ned had just loaded his rifle, rested it against the table, and thrust one of his pistols down between his left leg and his boot, when Rose looked in at the window, and pointing towards the distant road said—

"It's not what you're looking out for, father. They are only traders' wagons."

"I know that well enough, my girl, but they are travelling in the van of the gold-escort for safety's sake. Like the silly moth, you know, who thinks he's all right as long as he's near the candle. The troopers and the gold-cart won't be far behind them, and they'll give 'em the go by the other side of the Black Forest. That is to say if I and my mates let 'em," and Ned smiled grimly.

"Oh, father, isn't it a sin to rob poor men of their earnings?" asked Rose.

"It's no sin, in my case, to rob a rascally government who robbed my father and mother of life. The diggers have already been paid their price for the gold. It's now the Crown's; and the Crown and I are at open war."

"Well, father, for heaven's sake be cautious. This is a desperate enterprise."

"The diggers of the placer more than compensated for the extra risk, my lass. See what luxury it will procure us when we become honest folks. But, Rose, should anything happen to me—for there's a chance about everything—you need never be a pauper, dependent on the cold charity of the world. You know where the spoil is planted; the boys may murder you on account of it. Ay, lass, one or two of them wouldn't be over-particular. If I do not..."
CHAPTER VIII.

STICKING UP THE GOLD-CART. A BUSH FIGHT.

Yes, there was decided something inexplicable about the newly-felled tree, for if the gold-cart were to attempt to round it, at either end, other trees grew so thickly around that it was doubtful whether it would be able to regain the track.

"Hadn't the driver better pull up whilst we ride forward to reconnoitre?"

It was Tom Conquest who made the suggestion, and the sergeant fall in with it at once.

"Pull up your cattle, Pat Feeney. Troopers, sheath sabres and unsling carbines. Gather round the treasure, and be on the alert for the word of command," he shouted, and then glancing at Tom, they trotted quietly forward.

Simultaneously they leapt their horses over the trunk of the felled tree, but hardly had the fore hoofs of the newly-felled tree, for if the gold-cart were to attempt to round it, at either end, other trees grew so thickly around that it was doubtful whether it would be able to regain the track.

"That looks decidedly fishy," observed he to Tom Conquest.

"No, a tree trunk will stop a bullet, but a horse's body won't. The fellows are armed with rifles. That's plain enough. I picked up in the Maori war a couple of them, and you'll make more accurate firing that way. Don't show yourself in that way, man. Always take cover a smaller portion of your body to your adversary. Look out!"

"Crack!" went Jack Hogan's carbine, but the ball only sent a strip of bark flying from a tree trunk.

"Never mind, old fellow, better luck next time. Duck back in your twopenny, or that fellow will draw a line on you. You'll make more accurate firing that way, and there will be less recoil, and little windage. It's a wrinkle that I picked up in the Maori war a couple of years ago. Bang!"

And Tom Conquest's carbine rang out in turn, whilst a scream and an exclamation of disgust sent a strip of bark flying from a tree trunk.

The trooper gave vent to an exclamation of disgust.

"That's plain enough. I picked up in the Maori war a couple of them, and you'll make more accurate firing that way. Don't show yourself in that way, man. Always take cover a smaller portion of your body to your adversary. Look out!"

"Thanks, friends; to the ground, then. Our nags can take care of themselves."

"All serene, Tom. Wherever you lead we're the boys who will follow!"

"Yes, Tom. The Queen can't afford to lose a single man this day. The rogues shall only seize the treasure over my dead body at all events."

"All serene, Tom. Wherever you lead we're the boys who will follow!"

"Thanks, friends; to the ground, then. Our nags can take care of themselves."

"Why not gather in rear of the waggon, Conquest, and use it as a rampart?"

"Because the bushrangers, lying down each behind his tree, would fire at our legs till we hadn't one amongst the lot of us left to stand upon. Now, lads, no more suggestions. Since I am your leader, I exact implicit obedience. You all of you understand bush-fighting on foot. There's a deep gully about a quarter of a mile ahead, and we must try and drive Kelly and his band towards and into it, then for the first time dare we show them our faces. Forward!"

The troopers therefore made a rush for the nearest trees, but were received by a volley ere they could get under cover that stretched two of them lifeless and wounded a third.

There were only ten of them now, counting the stricken man.

When each trooper had a stout tree in front of him, however, he felt more at home, and began to look about anxiously for the head or shoulder of a foe.

Tom Conquest was well to the front, and within two yards of him, behind another tree, was his particular chum Jack Hogan.

"Jack," said Tom, "if I fall the command devolves on you. Don't show yourself in that way, man. Always take cover from the right of your tree, for in doing so you expose a smaller portion of your body to your adversary. Look out!"

"Thanks, friends; to the ground, then. Our nags can take care of themselves."

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The firing now became pretty general. So much so, indeed, on the trooper's side, that Tom had to shout out to them not to throw away their bullets.

"I wish that fellow had an ounce of lead in his tripe," exclaimed the leader on the opposite side, the stalwart and ferocious Ned Kelly, to Easy Bill and Lanky Jim, who had for shields the thickest trees to right and left of him.

"I never guessed they'd have taken to our tactics. I thought they'd have charged among the trees on horseback, and that we'd have picked 'em off as easy as a, b, c. He's a hawk of the right breed, who's leading 'em on."

"Oh, I feel so faint-hearted. As mild as a sucking-dove," moaned Sindy Bill.

"I'll give you a dove's quittance in lead, if you dare to show an equally white feather," hissed Ned Kelly between his set teeth. "Tell you what, lads, we'll retire from these traps in a half-circle, whose termination will bring us right upon the gold cart. In the eagerness of the pursuit they'll never notice this."

"Look sharp, that notion does you credit, captain," exclaimed Lanky Jim, gravely.

"We will fall back then after each discharge, for then our smoke will cover us until we gain the next shelter. That's an Indian ruse, mates."

The ruse, Indian or no, was put into almost immediate execution, and the troopers, guessing from the imperfect, smoke-blurred view that they obtained of them that their foes were in full retreat, would have broken cover and rushed after them but for the restraining shout of Tom Conquest, who yelled forth—

"Don't leave the trees unless you want to be shot down like possums. Gives a rush for those that the bushrangers have just left, before they can re-load, and then play hide-and-seek with them, as before. They know the game, or should know it well."

So one set of trees was exchanged for another, and the demurly popping whenever a head or shoulder showed itself was roused for a little while.

"Call on Tom Conquest, in an undertone to his mate, "when next the bushrangers fall back we must not push straight forward, but move at an angle towards the cover they have just quitted. You see, when an advance is made straightforward towards an enemy, he has no occasion to alter his aim; whereas, dodging towards him obliges him to take a dying or a difficult shot."

Pass on the order from man to man, but you needn't add a how an equally

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of his mouth and gave utterances to a long, shrill, and
harsh whistle.
On hearing this, one of the chargers pricked up its ears
and, with a joyful neigh, came trotting towards him.
Directly his fine bay horse was alongside of him, Tom
Conquest rose to his feet and flung himself into the saddle.
The robbers were far too busy with the treasure to
notice anything so far away.
Tom McKenzie undisturbed went on to do a second or two
after gathering up the reins, then he ejaculated—
"I'm a darned fool for my pains, and doubtless shall
get a bullet through my hand as the sole reward of my folly,
and then render my gun, I'm dashed if I can.
As he concluded he drew a large white handkerchief out
of his pocket, and fastened one corner to the top of his
carbine-barrel and the opposite one to the trigger-guard.
Holding this primitive flag of truce aloft he set spurs to
his nag and galloped him gently towards the gold-cart
and its pillagers.
He got within hailing distance before he was perceived,
and then relying short up he shouted to attract attention,
at the same time waving his white flag:
"The bushrangers looked round quick enough at this
and seemed to be altogether astonished at the strange
vision and what it was about.
"What the d—— is your little game?" suddenly bel­
lowed out one of them.
"I challenge your out-throat leader to mortal strife, with
whatever weapons he chooses. Man to man, out here in
the bush, I will fight him to the death."
The bushrangers greeted this challenge with a shout of
laughter.
"Look here, you thundering fool," yelled forth Kelly
himself, "my orator is worth three thousand pounds
and yours is not worth as many brass farthings, so I
declare your polite invitation with many thanks. It would
pay you handsomely to kill Ned Kelly, though perhaps
you'll find it no easy task now that he's got his armour on;
but it wouldn't benefit Ned a bit to kill twenty of the
likes of you, and he's a man who never fights unless there's
money to be made by it. He gets quite enough hard
knocks in the way of business not to care overmuch to
indulge in them for a pastime."
"Coward!" cried Tom Conquest, "you are a brag­
ing poltroon, Kelly."
"All right, my man; no one will believe that charge but
a fool, and what feels matters very little to me. Such an insult
however, must not pass unavenged. When he judged himself to be out of range, he again
wheelled round, and continuing that strange patch in the sky which has puzzled all
served that strange patch in the sky which has puzzled all
comparison. Chief amongst them is the glorious constel­
ation of the Southern Cross, and close to it may be ob­
ered the broken boxes in the cart, and set fire to
cart and all. Now then, look lively, my lads.
As he concluded he drew a large white handkerchief out
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pay you handsomely to kill Ned Kelly, though perhaps
you'll find it no easy task now that he's got his armour on;
but it wouldn't benefit Ned a bit to kill twenty of the
likes of you, and he's a man who never fights unless there's
money to be made by it. He gets quite enough hard
knocks in the way of business not to care overmuch to
indulge in them for a pastime."
"Coward!" cried Tom Conquest, "you are a brag­
ing poltroon, Kelly."
"All right, my man; no one will believe that charge but
a fool, and what feels matters very little to me. Such an insult
however, must not pass unavenged. When he judged himself to be out of range, he again
wheelled round, and continuing that strange patch in the sky which has puzzled all
served that strange patch in the sky which has puzzled all
comparison. Chief amongst them is the glorious constel­
ation of the Southern Cross, and close to it may be ob­
the author has gazed wonderingly at that oddly-shaped
sky-patch a thousand times, he can broach no new theory.
How bright that full, large, fair Australian moon is!
The smallest print could be read beneath its rays. It
floods hill and plain, bath and scrub, with its soft white
light, and all the creatures that love the night are up and
about to enjoy it.
The locusts drone like bagpipes out of tune in the tree
branches, and the low, plaintive note of the mopoko, or
Australian cuckoo, is answered by the still more mournful
cry of the wild fowl from some neighbouring swamp, or
the holl of the warriiall, or wild dog, from the deepest
recesses of the bush.
But all these sounds together are eclipsed in mournful
ness by the rattle of the loose bark against the tree-
trunks, which, where their last year's clothing has fallen
off, gleam as white as sheeted ghosts on all sides.
Assume a wonderful constellation, or a comet, coming
rushing through the trees with the speed of the very
wind?
No, it is three great lamps marking the three points of a
triangle.
As it approaches nearer a vehicle all ablaze with scarlet
and gold, and in shape not unlike a circus band carriage,
may be descried, drawn by four long, weedy-looking horses
that have the go of the very devil in them.
High up on the raised box sits a tall, slab-sided Yankee,
walking a fat, drooping felt hat, at least a yard in height from
the brim, which is almost wide enough to hold a donkey
mace on; in his left hand he holds a fatassell of reins, and
in his right grasps a whip fifteen feet long in the lash, with
which he flick a flat from off one of the leaders' ears, or
give a crack as loud as any rifle shot.

But where the driver is the man driving? Will he
question be asked, for to the uninstructed there is not
a trace of a road visible.
No, it is all grassy bush; ups and downs, humps and
hollows, felled trees and standing trees, bushes and huge
massed pieces of bark.
But this is Cobb's royal mail coach, doing its six hun-
dred and nine miles journey between Melbourne and Syd-
ney, and there isn't one of Cobb's drivers who would
hesitate to take his gaudy, springless, wide-wheeled and
hollows, felled trees and standing trees, bushes and huge
massed pieces of bark.

The man on horseback now rides slowly up to the coach,
and, as he draws near the terrified passengers observe
his strange iron head-dress and cuirass.

"It's the ironclad bushranger himself," whispers one in
quavering tones.

"Yes, it's that infernal rascal, Kelly, without doubt,"
shouts another.

"Up with your hands above your heads, every man
Jack of you. Up with them, I say. By thunder, I'll brain
them all with my pistol from my holster.

"All right, sirree. Job Fairweather's always ready to
yield to a convincing argument such as that there!" re-
joints the Yankee, coolly; and reining up his cattle he pro-
ceeds to light a big cigar.

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yield to a convincing argument such as that there!" re-
joints the Yankee, coolly; and reining up his cattle he pro-
ceeds to light a big cigar.

The man on horseback now rides slowly up to the coach,
law. Pray allow me!" and he proceeded to do his work effectively and well, now and then exclaiming in muffled monotone, "For God's sake, gentlemen, continue to keep your hands up in the air, or the misscrint will murder us all in cold blood. Do, there's good fellows!"

The "good fellows" did exactly as they were told, for they had quite as much objection to being shot at, as had the desperado himself.

When all their valuables had been transferred to the ironclad bushranger's pockets, and every one of their own had been turned inside out, Ned Kelly turned to the womenkind, of whom there were three aboard the coach, and said:

"Now, ladies, I can hardly set the parson to search you, for I daresay the black cloth that he pride himself on would blush as scarlet as a soldier's coat at the mere thought of such a thing. I trust to your honour, therefore, to give me all that you have about you. Chains and watches I know all of you possess, and rings on your fingers as well. Stay, up with your veils in the first place. Ned Kelly don't often look upon a woman's face."

Up went two of the veils at once. The third fair one, instant.

"The really beautiful are always modest," said the daring outlaw. "Madam, I have heard that you are partial to rings; won't you show your fair face to the ironclad King of the Australian bush?"

"Ah! and know me!" exclaimed the veiled female, in a slightly foreign accent. "Well, if you want very much to see my face, there!"

And so saying, with two of the tiniest hands, she raised her veil, and revealed a countenance in every way calculated to enthral even the most impressionless by its rich, glowing, voluptuous Southern beauty.

No twin stars that gleamed down from out the indigo-hued heavens were as bright as those large, dark, melting eyes that glowed like two twin embers in the face of the enchantress.

"By heaven, but you'llflill that knife away, or I'll put a bullet through you, beautiful as an angel though you are." "Do it, ruffian. Better death than to fall alive into the power of such as you."

Whether Ned Kelly would have shot her, or whether he used the threat merely to intimidate the proud and courageous Spanish beauty into yielding to his will, is a point that was never decided, for at this critical and highly-dramatic position of affairs, a sudden pistol rang out, and Ned Kelly wheeled his horse round to confront four well-mounted men, the foremost of whom held his smoking weapon still in his grasp.

"Sheriff, ladies, unless you want me to give you a swift journey to purgatory," exclaimed Ned Kelly, with an oath. "I don't suppose you guessed who I was, only seeing my back, eh?"

He spoke in sneering accents, but then all in an instant his tone altered to a shriek of vindictive and triumphant rage.

"Squatter M'Pherson as I live! And so the devil at last has delivered you into my hands? Take this from the lover of the girl you murdered, whom you left to die of rage."

As he spoke, he transferred his reins to his teeth, and drawing his pistols from his holsters, fired both point blank at the squatter.

It was very seldom that Ned Kelly's bullets didn't fly true to their billets, and he was, as a rule, equally handy with his left hand as with his right; but on the present occasion the rage and excitement under which he laboured caused both balls to fly wide, and the next instant two of those who were with the squatter fired at the bushranger in turn, and he found to his dismay and chagrin that a ball had penetrated his right shoulder, depriving him of all use in that arm, whilst he was more than suspicious, from its bearing, that the other had wounded his horse.

Not to flee for his very life under such adverse circumstances would have been little short of madness, so, setting spurs to the troop horse, Ned Kelly broke through the four mounted men, who in vain endeavoured to lay hands upon him as he passed, and made off into the bush.

Before they could reload their pistols he was fairly out of range, and though three out of the number were most anxious to pursue him, the squatter, their master (for the others were his stockmen), refused to hear of such a thing, knowing perhaps that, if they did pursue the bushranger, all the shots from the long rifle that he carried slung at his back would, in all probability, be fired at him alone, strange to say, not one of them had observed that Ned had been fairly winged in the shoulder.

At any other time the bushranger would have drawn his blade of an Albacete knife.
has three reasons for being otherwise, lie mourns the entire colony. He, and who is famed for her beauty throughout the area, as his greatest treasure of all is a daughter who dotes on him. He can count his horned cattle by thousands and his sheep in that direction for no less a distance than fifteen miles. He was monarch of all he surveyed; for his run extended to the west of Mount Macedon—a large, rambling, nates in a wide, deep verandah, that runs round three sides of the building, and is buried beneath the leaves and blossoms of well-nigh every variety of climbing plant. The pulse that had just occurred was almost a weekly one, and he treated it as one of the ordinary incidents of the road. The pulse and heart of only one of the travellers beat as calmly as did his, and they pertained to the beautiful Spaniard, Lola Montez, Countess of Landsfield.

CHAPTER XI
A SQUATTER'S STATION AND A FREE-AND-EASY GUEST.

Change we the scene to a squatter's station some dozen miles to the west of Mount Macedon—a large, rambling, one-storied weather-board structure, whose roof terminates in a wide, deep verandah, that runs round three sides of the building, and is built beneath the leaves and blossoms of well-nigh every variety of climbing plant. Pretentious structures of stone and brick have long ago taken the place of these primitive habitations of the colonial aristocracy, as the squatters indubitably are; but they do not harmonise nearly as well with the characteristics of the surrounding scenery, which requires picturesqueness rather than grandeur for its accompaniments. That pile of buildings a quarter of a mile away on the hill is the wool-shed and its surrounding stables, barns, &c., rough structures built of the native woods, roofed-in with shingles split on the station; whilst just below, near the creek, is the sheep-wash. You may see it glistering beneath the white moonlight; and for the rest behold an undulating grassy plain, sprinkled singly and in clusters with trees, with a glimpse of a white post-and-rail fence at intervals; and in an opposite direction Mount Macedon, begirt by sombre eucalyptus forests, that mount its sides and crowd its very summits. Four or five days have elapsed since the sticking up of Cobb's mail, thirteen miles away, by the ironclad bushranger, and the rescue of Lola Montez, the lovely Spanish adventuress, from her clutches, and now Andrew M'Pherson is at home, where, looking forth from the front of his station, he could have exchanged with Alexander Selkirk, that he was monarch of all he surveyed; for his run extended in that direction for no less a distance than fifteen miles right away; and, scattered over that extensive domain, he can count his horned cattle by thousands and his sheep by tens of thousands. Should he not have been a happy man, more especially as his greatest treasure of all is a daughter who does on him, and who is famed for her beauty throughout the entire colony? Andrew M'Pherson is not a happy man, however. He has three reasons for being otherwise. He mourns the loss of a wife of whom he was very fond; his heart has long been steeled by grief, though brought on by the severest remorse, for the seduction and afterwards brutal desertion of a beautiful and innocent girl, whom fifteen years ago he cast aside (as a child throws away a toy it has grown tired of) in order to marry that wife; and to these two sources of heartlessness and brutality in the one instance, he is doomed to perish by the avenger's steel a bullet within the year; and he feels that the ironclad bushranger is the man of all others most likely to keep his word. But away with ill-omened forebodings. It is Lily M'Pherson's fifteenth birthday, and the event is commemorated by a bull at Mittagarra.

Friends have come from far and near (to use the latter relatively, for people living a score of miles apart were considered near neighbours in Australia in those days), and this is why the stable-yard is full of traps and buggies; the stables of saddle and driving horses; and the roomy and well-furnished rooms of guests.

Yes, if the squatter's mansion of the gold-fever era was still of wood, he had at all events learnt to furnish it luxuriously within; and the bullock-drays that brought up from Melbourne all these new requirements to an artificial state of existence, also brought wives and daughters who had learned and followed the fashions and faddisms of the very latest fashion in Collins-street.

Thus it is that, at the present joyous assemblage, the young people can dance to the strains of a ninety-five guinea Erard's piano, instead of those of an indifferently played fiddle, which would have been the case a few years before; and thus also it is that the trim and graceful, albeit delicately-rounded, forms of Australia's bright-eyed daughters are arrayed with all the richness, taste, and elegance that could have been found in a London or Paris fashionable saloon.

Conspicuous amongst them all, ay, as much so as a stately lily would have been with daisies only for its rivals, behold our Lily, the daughter of Andrew M'Pherson, and the sole heiress to all his wealth. She is attired in simple white, a soft, clinging Indian muslin, trimmed with valuable old lace, and her sole ornament is a spray of silver wattle, intermingled with her golden hair.

There is sufficient of topaz in her eyes, of coral in her lips, and of petals in the exquisite texture of her skin for her to dispense with the real gems, for in her case the presentment is far more lovely than the reality could be. Nothing could exceed the whiteness of her smooth and polished shoulders, save cherry blossom or snow, and not one of the forty-five thousand varieties of rose is delicate enough in its tints for us to compare her cheeks with. She was at once a poet's vision and the bright creature of a painter's fancy, who has just awakened from a dream of the bright and blessed habitants of heaven.

To sum up all, she was perfection's own self in face, form, smile, voice, and movement. No name but that of Lily would have suited her, for she had the lily's purity, as well as its whiteness and its sweetness.

And yet, why does she look unhappy to-night? Is it because she would prefer the respectful homage and attentions of some of the young " Cornstalks " with whom she has been acquainted from childhood upwards (in a less fervid clime she would have been but a child still) to that of the tall, languid, and " haw-haw " kind of swell who seems to have almost wholly monopolised her. Captain Montague Varasseur has come out to Australia to see what the damned infernal place is like," or, at least so he himself would have described to one of his own sex the reason of his visit. He had been at Mittagarra for a week. He had ridden up to the Home Station one evening and, a perfect stranger, thrown himself on the hospitality of the squatter as cooly and collectedly as a man with
a full purse would enter one of our great London hotels.

"He had heard tell of the demed hospitality of the squatter, and he'd put himself to the inconvenience of coming up country to see if it had been exaggerated, as he intended to write a book on the demed country."

This was very much the manner in which he had introduced himself to M'Pherson, and, by way of answer, he had been told to "make himself thoroughly at home for as long as ever he chose to stay," which he had done accordingly, to the very top of his bent.

Captain Montague Vavasseur looked of any age between thirty and forty. He was tall and spare, with a long, drooping, tawny moustache, and curly hair, which was growing thin in places.

"Demmed heavy helmets in the Dragoon Guards—my corps—make all thefellas' heads bald in no time." Such was the excuse that he gave for that.

But the heavy helmet couldn't have given him those very decided cross-features about the eyes, which, in conjunction with the thinning hair and the generally bland manner of the gallant captain, sufficiently hinted to the close observer that not only had he sewn a plentiful crop of wild oats, but was ready to graze in broad daylight.

He had now constituted himself the fair Lily's shadow. Could it be that the captain was a mere adventurer, who had perhaps run through a fortune in the old country, and then come out to the new one to revenge himself by marrying a squatter millionaire's daughter?

If so, he had cut down to lay siege to the proper citadel, at all events. And has he a chance of success?

Let the young lady's actions answer the question.

See, she escapes from her shadow at last. She, in fact, seems to have cut her passage through the air and the earth, as a cat. Three thousand pounds would bring in three hundred a year, which with my pay would keep a nice little cottage going full swing at Richmond or South Yarra, without being beholden to your father for assistance. But even then his consent would have to be asked."

"I would not marry you until it was given, Tom. And I should so shrink from owing your happiness to blood-money."

"But I don't know how to get money any other way. It's within the lines of my legitimate employ. I'm bound down to serve the Queen as a mounted trooper for three more years, and I can't desert my flag, you know. If 'twasn't for that I'd precious soon try the diggings."

"Well, Tom, dear, keep up a good heart for I'll be true to you through thick and thin. We must trust to fortune and better times."

"Lily I will find out a way to make you mine within a year or I will go mad. It is horrible to think how near others can get to you, and I, who love you more than life itself, obliged to keep at such a terrible distance. Who is that tall, pump-shaped fellow who has been meowing over you the whole evening? He's spices on you, ay, snowy spoons at the very least."

"Oh, he's a guest, a self-invited one, and I don't like him in the least. Papa didn't like him at first, but he has changed round and been awfully taken up with him the last few days. He is a Captain Montague Vavasseur, an Englishman in search of the picturesque, and in my opinion no end of a humbug as well. But how did you learn all this, Tom? I hope you haven't been a Mr. Paul Pry?"

"Is there any harm in regarding one's pet constellation or ever-bright peculiar star through a telescope, Lily? No, I haven't been a Paul Pry; I've been a simple astronomer, studying the movements of a heavenly body, through this tiny but very powerful opera-glass. That must have been the reason that I saw the fellow meowing so distinctly. The evening was, I suppose, too warm to have the curtains drawn."

"Warm! I call it melting hot, Tom. I am so glad to get out of the close, stuffy rooms, into the comparatively pure air. But I must not stay much longer, or I shall be missed. How still everything is, Tom. I've read of the weather being like this just before an earthquake."

"Happily, darling, we are not subject to such fearful convulsions of nature in these favoured regions. There's a decided hot wind blowing, though. I wonder your father doesn't clear away the trees a little on the north, for there was a bush-fire to spring up in the ranges I wouldn't say but that a fierce hot wind might not one day bear it on its wings down upon Mitagarma in a sheet of flame. The grass too is as dry as tinder to-night. I have even refrained from smoking my accustomed pipe, rather than be the means of starting a conflagration."

"It is not at all kind of you thus terrifying your adored one half out of her life," retorted Lily, with a laugh. But though she spoke lightly, yet the rapid rise and fall of her fair expanded chest, and the sudden flight of the delicate colour from her cheeks showed plainly enough that the trooper's words had really alarmed her.

"Harmless me, darling," said he, folding her in his embrace. "I told you in order that you might give your father a hint on the matter. That the station has stood for fifteen or sixteen years without being so destroyed, is sufficient proof that the danger is not a very serious one; yet, nevertheless, to be forewarned is to be forearmed, you know, and I haven't known exactly such a season as this.
since my arrival in the colony. Why, the creek has dwindled down to a chain of pools already."

"I'll put an idea of the possible danger into papa's head, Tom. And now good-bye, dear, for I must be going," said Lily.

And, as he put the question, Tom Conquest suddenly opened a little red morocco case that he had for some time held in his hand, and revealed,重复着它在那块朝红色天鹅绒色的齐架上的美丽耳环。"Oh, the unlucky stones!" exclaimed Lily, as she clasped her hands, and heaved her plump and milk-white shoulders far out of her dress. "Oh! Tom, what made you buy me them? Don't you know that the opal always brings true love, that, in fact, it is full of evil meanings and omens?"

"Let me fling them away, then," said Tom, though not without a sigh, for the trinkets represented many a self-denial extending long months.

Perhaps the young girl read the meaning of that sigh, and of the somewhat troubled look that accompanied it, for she suddenly rejoined with a laugh—

"What a little silly I am to take notice of old women's tales; and to pretend to put faith in such ridiculous superstitions. I have never seen such many-legged centipede."

"Yes, Doctor Roper is there. Do you think that I will have it answered."

"First of all, darling, accept the birthday present that I bought you the last time that I was down in Melbourne. A small token of my great affection for you, Lily. Look, do you like them, dearest?"

And, as he put the question, Tom Conquest suddenly came over the post-and-rail fence, and with trembling fingers he afforded the beautiful earrings to the still more lovely ears.

In doing so, their faces came very close together, and to help sealing a kiss was to Tom a matter of sheer impossibility.

It was received with a scream.

"Lily, what's the matter? You are surely not angry with me?"

"Oh, Tom, I've been bitten. It burns. It is some poisonous thing. Oh, God! there it is again!" and as she spoke she thrust her hand down inside her very low-boned dress, from her bosom drooped a hideous, brown, many-legged centipede.

It was at least nine inches in length, and must have crept into its last soft, innocent resting-place from a hole in the topmost raft over which the young girl had lien. With a shriek she now threw it from her, and Tom at once trampled it under his foot. Then he exclaimed—

"Is there a doctor amongst your guests? If so, run to him at once, darling."

"Yes, Doctor Roper is there. Do you think that I will die, Tom?"

"No, no; there is no danger at all when medical attendance is on the spot. Run, dear, run. One kiss, and away. Never mind the burn. God grant that your beautiful flesh escapes a scar. That is my chief dread."

So Lily kissed her lover through her tears of anguish, and rushed away; and he, clinging himself into his saddle, trotted off, muttering—

"Why did she, after all, accept the opals? It must be all their doing."

CHAPTER XIII.

CAPTAIN VAYASSEUR OPENS HIS HEART.

LILY M'PHERSON'S RE-ENTRY AMONGST HER FRIENDS, PALE, TEARFUL, AND PALPITATING, STOPPED THE MERRYMAKING IN AN INSTANT.

She was surrounded at once by an anxious circle, Doctor Roper the foremost of all.

"Off with her to her room at once," said he, directly he was informed of what had happened. "One or two of you girls suck the poison out of the punctures, and be sure that you don't swallow it. I'll be there presently with a bottle of whisky. Queer medicine, Miss M'Pherson; but you'll have to drink every drop in wine-glass doses within the hour. What do you think of that?"

But though he put the question, the doctor didn't wait to have it answered.

"M'Pherson, carry your daughter to her room; her strength is failing her. Now, young ladies, lose no time; away with you! Get as much poison out of the punctures as your pretty lips can, and the whisky will drive out the rest. Cherries dipped in cream the poetical part of the operation, and guzzling raw spirits the practiced. I know where the fire-water is kept."

Within an hour beautiful Lily M'Pherson had drank a quart bottle of proof spirit, in wine-glass doses at five minutes intervals, without feeling it rise in the slightest degree to her head.

"Now you'll do," said the doctor. "Go to sleep, and you'll wake up to-morrow morning almost well."

"Shall I be scarr'd at all, Doctor Roper?" asked Lily, anxiously.

In a month's time there will not be the slightest mark of her bill."

Five minutes later our pure and lovely Lily was fast asleep.

Supper was immediately served; but no one seemed to have much appetite, the gentlemen especially, and directly it was over there was a general move.

Horses were re-saddled or harnessed to traps and buggies; good-nights were gravely said, coupled with evidently fervent hopes that Miss M'Pherson would be well on the morrow, and then the birthday party broke up and dispersed in all directions.

About noon her anxious father came to visit her for the second time.

"Well, my darling, and how do you feel now?" he asked.

"All right, papa; only weak and tired. Isn't it a dreadful day without rain?"

"A regular briar-fielder, my dear, as we used to call them across the border. The thermometer stands at a hundred and twenty degrees, and the cherries and peaches are actually roasting and frizzling on the trees. The water in the creek, too, seems to get lower every hour, and if it goes on much longer, our loss in sheep and cattle will be tremendous. I haven't seen such a summer since my arrival in the colonies twenty years ago."

"I hope there's no danger of a bush-fire, papa," said Lily, uneasily.

"No, no, my dear. I have enjoined everyone about the place to be most cautious how they light fires and pipes out of doors, and to bury broken bottles wherever they come across one. But, Lily, I have something more novel than this kind of thing to talk to you about. I have received an offer for your hand in marriage, and I've very nearly promised it."

The beautiful girl felt almost as sharp and scarce a pang as these words fell upon her ears as when the venomous centipede had plunged his fangs into her snowy flesh the preceding evening.

"Oh, papa," she gasped, "how terribly abrupt you are. An offer for your hand. Who can it be from?"
"Captain Montague Vavasseur. The Honourable Montague Vavasseur, if you like it better, and heir-apparent to the Earldom of Cassilis. Oh, he has perfectly convinced me of the truth and correctness of his statements. I shall one day see my darling child an English countess."

"No, you will not, papa, at all events if the title is to be won through Captain Montague Vavasseur. He is the most brainless puppy that I ever encountered. Of all men in the world I think I detest him the most."

"Are you sure? He concealed his rank, because he wished that anything was the matter with you, and how would it concern him in any way?"

"He is, papa, a beggarly trap with a pay of eight shillings a day. By-the-bye, you never told me yet where you got that centipedebite. There are very few in the house—I haven't seen one, in fact, for months."

"Don't think of vague encouragement in return, and now both men, thoroughly satisfied with themselves and with each other, lean back in their easy, cane-seated armchairs, and, shaded from the blood-red sun, whose hard glare quivers over the yellow-brown plains which stretch away in the distance far as the eye can reach, busy each with his own thoughts of the future."

The cigars are smoked out and fresh ones lighted, but still the castle-building goes on; in fact, it is too hot to do much else. Even the cattle lay under the scant shade of the gums and iron barks with their tongues lolling out for much else. Even the cattle lay under the scant shade of the gums and iron barks with their tongues lolling out for much else. Even the cattle lay under the scant shade of the gums and iron barks with their tongues lolling out for much else.

"I'll be true to you, Tom, as long as mind and flesh can stand it," soliloquised Lily to herself as the painful remembrance of this event occurred to her. "But, oh! if papa beats me into marrying this stranger, I'm sure that I shall give way before very long, for I am such a little coward, and do dread pain so."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BUSHRANGERS AT MITTAGARRA.

As hour or two later the squatter and his guest are sitting under the passiflora-covered verandah of the house, smoking cigars and drinking cold whisky-and-water.

Captain the Honourable Montague Vavasseur has again opened his heart to his host, and has received a good deal of vague encouragement in return, and now both men, thoroughly satisfied with themselves and with each other, lean back in their easy, cane-seated armchairs, and, shaded from the blood-red sun, whose hard glare quivers over the yellow-brown plains which stretch away in the distance far as the eye can reach, busy each with his own thoughts of the future.

The squatter and his guest are sitting under the passiflora-covered verandah of the house, smoking cigars and drinking cold whisky-and-water.

"We don't want to hurt anybody. We feels as mild as lambs, don't we, Jim? We only dropped in on a little present."

"We requires to know where our C.-ppen is, for on*
thing. It's come to our ears that you and he had a bit of a shindy tother night, he by hisself, an' you with three to back yer. He aren't turned up since at our usual roundsay, and so we've come to him by the back or runned him to earth, or what was the upshot on it."

"If you call Ned Kelly your captain, I'm sorry to say he got away from us. I imagine he was badly hit, though, and as he hasn't turned up, I trust that he has died alone, and unreded with an an'hill for a pillow, in the loneliest recesses of the bush, like the wolf that he was."

"Well, those are nice compliments to pay our head boss within the hearing of his two most particular pals. Shall we put a bullet in his crop to teach him civility to his betters, eh, Larry Bill?"

"Lord no, Lanky Jim. I feels so soft-hearted, you can't think. Which way did our noble captaining ride, Mr. McKFerson, Esquire?"

"Towards the ranges at first, and then he turned off at an angle towards the Ten Mile," answered the squatter, savagely.

"Ah, that was to avoid the traps. They was pretty thick over the lower spurs of the ranges about that time. The captaining's a tune up, and I guess we'll find whereabout he has planted his blessed self now. His daughter be in a rare way about 'im, regular demented like."

"His daughter? Has the infernal scoundrel a child, then?"

"A child?"

"Yes, I'm told. The captaining found her a newborn hussy in her dead mother's arms. Long while ago it must have been, for the gal's fourteen year old now, if a day. I've heard tell that the poor woman was trying to find out some infernal scoundrel of a swell squatter cove, who had seduced her with promises or marriage when her heart was sudden, and that Ned Kelly, riding up as she war dying or exposure an' wet an' cold, swore that he'd be a father to her little 'un, which he hov bin all along."

"This is a strange tale. Did you ever hear the name of the woman who—who died? If not, what does Kelly call her child?" asked the squatter, much paler and more agitated at the bushranger's admissions than he had been a minute before at sight of their levelled pistols.

"Never heard tell of her mother's name. Did you, Lanky Jim?"

"No, don't want to either. Just cut this palaver short, Larry Bill."

"All right, don't be in a hurry, old 'un. Don't know the woman's name, sir, but the girl goes by that of Rose, and a handsome, bonny lass she is too, only none of us knew how to earn a brey on her."

"Is she tall or short, dark or fair—tell me what she is like?"

"I can't describe a gal. Perhaps if I was to say she was a feminine, juvenile, an' worry handsome, a flattering edition of your own self, I'd be drawing the best picter as possible. You might stand for her father main well, and if you was so everyone 'ud see the likeness awtixt you."

"Come, stow all this rot. Do you want to keep barneying here until the long-legged cove, as slipped through the window, brings half-a-dozen of the station hands down upon us? Come, just you stop it, Larry Bill. I came to stow the wag, not to yabby yabby about a gal," and Lanky Jim tweaked his macaw-bill with angry impatience as he concluded.

"Lord love the man! how impatient he is surely. None of the station hands can be done on us under half-an-hour, an' by that time we'll be far away. Howsoever, as short reckonings is said to make long friends, Mr. Morgan will now doubtless conduct us to his iron safe, inside which a little bird has sung to us that there are twenty thousand pounds locked up," and Larry Bill bowed ironically.

"Villains! would you rob mo of such an immense amount, even if I had it?"

"Ay, or double as much D—! if money is the root of all evil, as the parsons preach, you should thank us for delivering you from it. Anyhow, it's your gold or our lead—one of the two; and a fortin aren't so much use to a dead body, prowled Mcsway-bill."

Andrew M'Pherson saw that the two men were thoroughly in earnest at last, and that it was as much as his life was worth not to yield to their demands.

"Come along with me, if it must be so; but as my daughter is very ill, I will ask you to make no more noise than necessary," said he, therefore, and, with a bushranger on each side of him, he entered the house.

Surely Captain Vavasseur will turn up at the right moment, and prevent these fellows from decamping with the spoil," thought the squatter to himself. "If he's wise he'll thrust a weapon into my hand as well, and then we'll be able to fight the rascals on equal terms, confound them!"

To his intense dismay and disgust, Captain Vavasseur did not turn up, however.

The men forced him to conduct them to where the iron chest was, stood over him whilst he unlocked it, and then helped themselves to all the bank notes and specie that it contained.

Having done this they forced him down into a chair, and bound him thereto with the tassels and cords of the window curtains, and, for their better security, locking the room door on the outside and taking the key away with them.

Andrew M'Pherson was in a terrible pucker at the way in which he had been robbed of so much treasure, and the non-appearance of Captain the Honourable Moutague Vavasseur.

"The man must be a poltronn and a coward," muttered he between his set teeth, "to desert a fellow in that fashion. I'll tell him a bit of my mind when I next come across him."

Hardly had the words escaped his lips when the object thereof unlocked the door and entered the room, fairly beating all over with weapons.

"Well, you're a pretty fellow, and no mistake," said the squatter, angrily.

"My dear sir, I rushed where I thought you would naturally have sped also, to defend to the last drop of my heart's blood the threshold of your daughter's chamber. As, however, the ruffians approached not, I at last deserted my post, and came to seek you. Where are the ruffians?"

"Far enough off by this time, and my twenty thousand pounds with them," growled the squatter. "Please to remember, when bushrangers turn up the next time, that they aren't a class of fellows who have any design on the opposite gender, unless, indeed, it happens to be a racing mare. Pillage is their sole object, confound 'em! Just undo me, will you? and I'll get up another bottle of whisky. It's no use pursuing 'em, for they are sure to be well mounted, and their haunts are not a score of miles away.

CHAPTER XV.

REVEALS A BREACH OF HONOUR AMONG THIEVES.

It we have made the visit of the bushrangers to Mittagarrga station rather a quiet affair, we have at all events erred on the side of truth.

Bloodshed seldom or never accompanies such visits unless there is some grudge to be satisfied.

The author of this narrative was a visitor at Balboa station at the time it was stuck up by Morgan, who popped in as quietly one night as though he had been a friend of the family, requested a good supper to be laid before him, invited the ladies to play and sing to him, enjoyed a prolonged game at chess with his host (moving the pieces with his left hand whilst he held his revolver in his right), locked his entertainers in their respective bedrooms, when the time for retiring came, with a cheerful good-night,
called them up to give him his breakfast at early dawn, and an hour later rode away on a three-year-old racing colt, worth a thousand guineas, laden with every portable valu- 

Of course his opposition when offered affairs would have 
turned out very differently, but members of the bushranger 
fraternity generally poison down on a farm or station at 
a time when his resistance is to be apprehended, and then, 
as long as they are allowed to have everything their own 
way, they can't be allowed a bit when eating honey, es- 
specially after making a good haul.

On the present occasion Lardy Bill and Lanky Jim rode 
way from Mittagarr a well pleased with themselves and the 
world in general. Their horses they had left concealed 
in the shrubbery, within a stone's throw of the house, so 
that, as McPherson had told Captain Vavasseur, pursuit 
(with the wooded ranges so close at hand for them to fly 
to for shelter and concealment) would have been worse 
without useless.

"A good job, that," said Lardy Bill to his mate as they 
headed their horses towards the Ten Mils. "A very fine 
haul for the two ov us."

"Yes, but not so much when divided between a score," 
grunted Jim.

"And why should it be divided between a score, mate? 
We two got the information out of the drunken shepherd 
whose horse he'd picked up to his chequered "The Leaco," and 
we two did the whole blessed thing between us. so 
why should we go blowing about it, and letting all the 
world know?"

"Lardy Bill, I won't say as what you haint sensible in 
the abstract, but you forget the capting. He'd precious 
soon hev 'is wings tied to a gum-tree branch if he found 
out we was a working on the cross, and not on the share- 
an'share-alike principle—he would so."

"Now that we've feathered our nests so well, why 
shouldn't we ha' done with the capting, and the other boys 
as well? Lardy Jim? Ten thousand apiece! why, what a 
shame we could cut in the old country with such fortuna, if 
we could only once get clear away from this blasted land 
of hot winds, mosquitoes, and sandy blight. We could set 
up a big pub in Whitechapel and do a roaring trade, my 
"Oh, could I but get at those sheeps' heads and trotters, 
And slip into the fried tisb of old Mother Jiggers, 
And the voice of the riotbov JIS comes round with the be«r, 
I'll be off to old ungland and Peticoat-lane.

A glance was sufficient.

"A Scheme of Devilish Vengeance."

CHAPTER XVI

We two did tho whole blessed thing thing 'atween us. so 
we might look upon it in the light of a duty as we ewes 
out we was a working on the cross, and not on the share- 

"That'll do," chuckled Macaw-bill. "I know well that 
a Lancashire-born man won't break that oath. We must 
get ourselves up as a couple of swagmen or shearers, mate, 
for it'll serve no good purpose our being recognised by 
either traps or book, for, though there's a free pardoning 
offered to any members of the band as betrays the capting, 
yet it seems to me as it'd be safer to do it in a private 
kerpacy; for, as the public characters that we are, some- 
thing might be remembered again us, an what we've just a- 
done might crop up on us, too, werry awkward."

"If anything did crop up to hinder our making imme- 
diate tracks out of the cursed country some ov the boys 
would assuredly cut our throats for us. I said, Ned sold to 
the banks, what'll become ov the gal? A line or two, Jim, 
as if I was but a marrying man—"

"But even if I was a marrying man, " said Jim, "if you 
really think as ve could square the 
capting to the traps? Answer me that, Bill-V"

"Stow all that rot:" interrupted Lanky Jim, impa- 
tiently. "An extra fifteen hundred each aren't to be
"Hallo, governor, we was a-looking for you," sang out Bill, as he and Jim rolled out of their saddles and led their horses towards the hut.

"I though that some of you would have been by long ago. I lied here from the traps the night of the gold escort robbery."

"Did you get any tidy pickings aboard Cobb's mail, capit'ning?"

It was Lanky Jim who put the question, and his grey flinty eye gleamed greedily as he did so.

But Ned Kelly answered him—

"What I did pick up will be apportioned fairly when I return amongst you. I've not stayed away from our haunt in the ranges from choice. I was wounded in the attack on the coach, and had to fly for my life. Landed here, I started off the horse, lest its presence should betray my whereabouts, and when, the following night, I started off myself to return on foot, I plunged my left leg into a wombat hole, not a dozen yards away, and gave it such a wrench that I was glad to creep back here on all fours."

"I say, boss, it's lucky for you that shepherds and hut-keepers, stockmen, and station hands in general, have most of 'em sloped to the diggings," laughed Lardy Bill.

"You'd have been nailed, else, to a certainty."

"And as helpless to defend himself as a sucking-babe," added Lardy Jim, more to elicit information than aught else.

"Not quite that," said the ironclad bushranger, bending on his subordinate a keen and searching glance. "I have a ball through my right shoulder, but my pistols are both loaded, and I can make as sure of shooting a man with my left hand as with my right. But here, I am answering questions instead of putting them. When did you last see my daughter Rose?"

"This blessed morning, and a werry white Rose she looked," answered Bill.

"'Till soon restore her colour to her. Thank God she has not left the Lookout-hut—to, to search for me I mean, of course. She—she might have come to some harm if she had. Well, I'm as hungry as a wolf. Roots and berries don't fill a man much. Whose run am I on? I don't know much about this side the ranges. What station's that over there?"

"Mittagarras—M'Pherson's station," answered Lardy Bill.

"What! Andrew M'Pherson's?" exclaimed Ned Kelly, with almost a shriek of delight. "Is the infernal curse be in the ranges?"

"No, I do not think it will lull," said he. "Now listen to me, Lardy Bill and Lanky Jim. Ride back to our haunt in the ranges as fast as your nags will carry you, and bid Rose be of good cheer for that I will be back to-night. You needn't tell her that I am wounded, for it would only cause her to fret needlessly, poor girl," and Ned signed.

"Lord bless us, capit'ning, aren't you a-going to return with us then?" queried Jim.

"No; I have other matters to attend to first. One of you come back with a led horse at ten o'clock to-night to take me away. Ha, ha, ha! there will be plenty of light to find out the hut by," and Ned chuckled, grinning to himself.

"Not any too much light, capit'ning, for the moon's on the wane," said Bill.

"Well, well, there will be the stars, won't there?" answered Ned, his usual caution having by now returned to him. "See that you bear in mind all that I have said. Make it five minutes to ten to be here, and then you are certain not to be over the hour. I don't think we are short of gold watches in the ranges, eh, lads? For the present just leave me a fag of tobacco to steady my hunger and a box of matches to light my pipe with, and I'll last out the day very well; especially as I have pleasant thoughts to amuse me.

"May we make so bold as to ax what those pleasant thoughts are, capit'ning?"

It was Lanky Jim who put the question, but the answer that he got was one that effectually shut him up.

"You needn't snap a fellow's head off, capit'ning," he muttered, apologetically; "and, two fags of Barrett's twist and a box of 'lasses being handed to Ned, the two subordinates hastened to take their departure, for the Iron-clad Bushranger knew how to exact implicit obedience from his men—at all events, whilst they were within sound of his voice or the sinister glare of his eagle eye.

"I wonder what's the natur' ov the little game that he's bent on now?" said Lardy Bill to Lanky Jim, when they'd got a little distance away.

"Blessed if I know, and darned if I much care," retorted that worthy. "One thing, he couldn't be in a better place for us to sell him to the traps, keep it dark, Lardy Bill; keep it dark from the boys, I caution you."

"No fear of me blabbing. And so you think things are working round, Jim?"

("To be continued.")

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NED KELLY.

Do you think this hot wind will blow itself out before night?" was Ned Kelly's next question, as he looked anxiously and eagerly around.

"Not much chance of it, capit'ning. I should say, from the sandy redness on the sky in the direction that it's coming from," rejoined Lardy Bill.

An expression of fierce exultation crossed the haggard countenance of the Ironclad Bushranger.

"No; I think it will blow," said he.

"Now listen to me, Lardy Bill and Lanky Jim. Ride back to our haunt in the ranges as fast as your nags will carry you, and bid Rose be of good cheer, for that I will be back to-night. You needn't tell her that I am wounded, for it would only cause her to fret needlessly, poor girl," and Ned signed.

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("To be continued."

FORMOSA, the Life of a Beautiful Woman.

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“Working round! Why, they've worked round already. Well, bring the trap from Carragul up to the hut to-night. But we'll keep ahead on 'em, and settle his hash before they come up. Did you notice how the weather-boards was shrink, Bill? We can draw a head-line on him from the back of the hut through a dozen gaping fissures. You see he's of the same value dead as already. Well, bring the tripe from Curragal up to the hut to-night, for all the gold and jewels we starts on the expedition, for all the gold and jewels the Joeys as be let fly at us first."

"Lanky Jim, you're the devil's own godson," exclaimed Lanky Bill.

"If so be as that's the case, then we're twins. Brother Smut. But there mustn't be any quarrel or disagreement between pot and kettle in this case. We must force the girl Rose to disclose where the captives' spoil is all hid away afore we starts on the expedition, for all the gold and jewels in the world wouldn't tempt me to trust myself up in them ranges when once the deed as we contemplated is done. The boys would skin us alive, or roast us over slow fires, if once they could lay hands on us. That's why she lay, grinning that grotesque when once we've forced her to point out where all the swag's hung. What must be must be."

"The gal ain't be hurt, Jim: no, not a hair on her head."

"Pooh-pooh, man! Don't be a muddle-head."

I would lay, grinning that toil to stay the wild cravings of his hunger, and all the while gloating over his anticipated vengeance.

"Ay," he muttered to himself, "if the north wind but lasts, as I feel sure that it will, I'll roll a sheet of flame down upon Ned Kelly, theauthor who placed almost implicit confidence."

There was that lay, grinning that tobacco to stay the wild cravings of his hunger, and all the while gloating over his anticipated vengeance.

"Ay," he muttered to himself, "if the north wind but lasts, as I feel sure that it will, I'll roll a sheet of flame down upon Ned Kelly, theauthor who placed almost implicit confidence."

On this remarkable man written by those who know nothing about him, and so, as the glowing sun began to sink in the west, we said good-bye to it with many tears, and her immensity.

"Any" has it—"'Orrid 'ard roads."

"Any" had it—"'Orrid 'ard roads."

Little did Ned Kelly guess, as he indulged in this rhapsody, that she whom he loved, at all events as his own return to it and her. She might not have made up her mind to quit it even when she did but for a dreadful dream that Lanky Bill and Lanky Jim broke in upon her when she was asleep, tortured her and gag her too, if need be; but nothing more serious—no, not for worlds."

Lanky Jim tried to shake Bill's "cussed stupidity," as he phrased it, but all in vain, and so he relinquished his hunt until they had reached their home in the ranges.

Meanwhile, Ned Kelly remained in the hut, little guessing that plots were being hatched against his life by the men in whom he placed almost implicit confidence. He had the worst mistakes in history, and his sprightliness, his agility, and his disguise made also, would do it? But such a journey is no uncommon bottom degree; but it must be remembered the path was green to suffer from thirst."

She therefore no longer dared to remain alone at the lookout station, and so, as the glowing sun began to sink in the west, we said good-bye to it with many tears, and made her way towards the plains. She carried a brace of small loaded pistols, concealed about her person, and much treasure in gold and jewels as well. She was mounted on Swiftsure, and made up her mind to reach Melbourne, though it was ninety miles distant, without a halt. Perhaps there are no horses in the world possessed of so much bottom and endurance as those reared in Australi.

"Any" had it—"'Orrid 'ard roads."

But though Rose Casey intended to make Melbournes in a single stage, she was not destined to do anything of the kind."

"In fretting about Ned Kelly and her abandoned home, she did not particularly attend to the path that she was pursuing. The consequence was that she got out of the long spurs of the ranges at quite a contrary point to that which she should have done and, after only an hour she essayed to strike the main road in vain. At each cast that she made she got further and farther..."
in vain she struggled against the inconvenience, which soon became a positive torture.

Not a creek or a waterhole was to be seen, and so, catching sight of a white-roofed station, Rose resolved to ride up to it and ask for water, both for herself and nag, and then put in the right direction for Melbourne as well.

What if they did question her? she could make some evasive reply or plausible excuse for travelling alone at such an hour, and they would not dare to detain her by force.

So she galloped Swiftsure past the woolshed and the dockyard, through the Home Paddock, and right up to the cockatoo fence that surrounded the peach orchard and the little vineyard.

She was quietly rounding this when she heard a voice exclaim—

"What, is that Annie Martin, and alone? Can it be possible?" and at the same moment a slim and graceful figure, clad in white, came forth from behind a tree and approached her.

"I'm not the whom you imagine. I am a stranger and a lost traveller. I've ridden up to beg some water for myself and horse, and to be put in the right direction for Melbourne," answered Rose Casey.

"You mustn't go any further to-night, wherever you are," said Lily M'Pherson. "You don't mean to say that you are pressing down to Melbourne? Why, I declare, you are a girl too older than myself, and how beautiful you are too. I hope you aren't a ghost."

As darkness was rapidly veiling the scene and such a lovely and mysterious visitor had never before turned up in that region at such an hour, Lily's doubts may be pardoned.

But Rose Casey put them at rest by saying, "If I was a ghost I don't suppose I should feel thirsty, or be such a simpleton as to lose my way. No, I'm a fellow-mortals, and I need much more earthly than you do.

"Then if you are a mortal you will have to stay at Mittagarru all night. It will be dark in five minutes, and there is no moon. You would have to pass through the Black Forest too, and might be set upon by the Ironclad squatter's house in her life, nor had she ever been | take no refusal. An hour is but a very little while."

Rose was over the fence in a twinkling. Her first action was to go to the stables myself, and then take you in to supper, it will be just ready. You don't mind sleeping with me?"

"Do I mind sleeping with a lovely and kind little angel? I should feel. But no, I cannot stay. This impossible!"

"But what makes you in such a hurry? No trouble I hope?"

"Yes, yes, I—I have lost a very dear friend, my only friend on earth, in fact. That—that is why I am in such haste to reach Melbourne."

"Oh, I am so sorry. But do come in, if only for an hour, for rest and refreshment. I am sure my father will send one of our stockmen to see you at all events safely through the forest. How brave you must be to dare to travel alone of a night. Come, dear, come along. I will take no refusal. An hour is but a very little while."

Rose Casey was persuaded. She had never been inside a rich squatter's house in her life, nor had she ever been addressed with words of kindness by one of her own sex. The situation had its charm and she could not resist it.

"All right," she said, "I'll stay an hour, if you wish it; but you must not try to keep me any longer."

Lily was over the fence in a twinkling. Her first action was to clasp Rose's hand, her next to pat Swiftsure's, and her last to say—

"Come along, said she, "the stables are close at hand. I'll call a man to take your horse, but we've not too many about at present, for they've nearly all run away to the diggings. However, I dare say we can manage.

The did manage very well, and five minutes later Lily M'Pherson led the lovely brunette (whom she little imagined to be her half-sister) into the house to present her to their joint father.

At that instant it was that Ned Kelly, far away in the deserted hut in the bush, struck match after match and threw them, flaring brightly, in amongst the long dry grass and the little patches of tea-tree scrub that grew close up to the unhinged but door.

The herbage ignited almost immediately, and the flames began to spread and rush down the hill before the wind.

In an hour that configuration would be miles in depth and breadth, and Ned choked to himself at the thought that every inmate of Mittagarru was doomed by it to a terrible death.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. M'PHerson SEE A GHOST.

Lily M'Pherson was prepared to witness some surprise on her father's part at the arrival of such a visitor at such an hour, but she was wholly astounded at the manner in which he did receive her.

The squatter was deep in his weekly Australasian as they entered the large and sumptuously-furnished dining-room, and at first he did not look up therefrom; but as they drew near he exclaimed—

"Well, Lily, I suppose your advent announces supper?" and, throwing his paper down, he peered up beamingly through his gold-rimmed spectacles—

"In an instant his ruddy cheeks blanched to the ashiness that distinguishes those of a corpse, his lips parted, his eyes opened to their widest extent, his hands closed around the arms of his chair with a convulsive clench, and he gasped with accents of horror—

"Lily—Lily! Great heavens! do you see that you are not alone! Lily, I say, do you or do you not see the thing that is clinging to your arm? You have brought the dead in with you, child; the dead that have been buried for well-nigh fifteen years. Or—was it my conscience that is borrowing this beautiful yet horrid phantom? If so, the hour of my own fate is near. Lily, do you see anything standing by your side?"

"Dear father, what alias you? You must have been asleep in your chair and had a fearful dream. Nay, you cannot even yet be wide awake. This young lady is no ghost; she is a traveller who has lost her way, and in our guest for an hour, that is all."

"No, no, no! It may appear so to you, but she looked just like that before you were born. It is the ghost of Rose Casey, and it has come for me," exclaimed the squatter, covering his eyes with his hands, and shuddering with horror.

"What's your father's name, girl?" asked Rose, sharply, at this juncture.

"M'Pherson, Andrew M'Pherson; did you not know?" answered Lily, hardly knowing what she said, for she could not comprehend the scene at all.

"I thought you'd better tend him. He looks as though he was going to have a fit," rejoined Rose, coldly and slyly; and as Lily flew to her father's side, her half-sister glanced out of the room just as though she was indeed the ghost that she had been taken to be.

Arrived at the door she paused, thrust her hand into her bosom and pulled forth one of her little pistols.

"Would it not be a good deed to slay my mother's murderer?" she muttered to herself, between her tightly-clenched, strong, white teeth; and for an instant the squatter's life really hung in the balance, for the beautiful barbarian was a dead shot.

Happily, ere her finger could curl around the trigger, her true woman's nature asserted itself.

"I can't do it," she half sobbed, and turning round she tore through the passage and out of the house at the back, making her way direct for the stables.

Before Lily M'Pherson, in her new-born anxiety concerning her father, was even aware of the fact that she had quitted the room, Rose was in the saddle again, and riding rapidly away from the station.
She had not quelled her burning thirst, and yet it no longer oppressed her.

She had not the slightest idea how she should discover the road that led to Melbourne; but she thought little of that either.

Her sole desire was to get as quickly away from the house that held her mother's betrayer and murderer as possible; she felt that she should not be able to breathe freely till such time as her horse's hoofs did not even spurn his land. Oh, her wrath and her hatred were very bitter!

Suddenly, however, whilst looking around for some particular beacon or well-known landmark to steer by, she caught sight of a huge surge of fire, rolling with resistless impetus down the wooded slopes about five miles away, and bearing directly towards the station.

"Good God! If none of the station hands are up and about, and there is no one to give them warning, they will be lost!" gasped Rose.

For an instant she almost exclaimed at the fate that seemed to be rushing down from the ranges upon her mother's destroyer and all his flocks and herds and other worldly possessions.

But then she thought of the beautiful young girl who had gone so lovingly to her, and had seemed disposed to show her so much kindness.

"Oh, I can't let her perish without warning. She is not answerable for the sins that her father committed before she was born. I will ride back and save her, even though I lose my own life in the attempt."

Wheeling Swiftsure round, she lost no time in putting her humane project into execution.

The horse had had abundance of water, and was thoroughly refreshed, so that he bore her with the speed of the wind itself.

There was no time to ride round to the side of the house, so Rose put her steed at the garden fence, and thereafter guided him straight across the brilliantly-laid-out flower beds, reckless of what damage he wrought, for she knew well that a far more fell destroyer was near at hand.

And now she had gained the verandah, and was about to shriek out the name of Lily, when a voice exclaimed close by—

"Good gracious! what a shock you gave me. Oh my! I never thought Captain Montague Vavasseur rose from out the depths of a cane armchair, in which he had been comfortably dozing 'neath the starlight."

"Wheeling Swiftsure round, she lost no time in putting her humane project into execution."

"Oh, I can't let her perish without warning. She is not answerable for the sins that her father committed before she was born. I will ride back and save her, even though I lose my own life in the attempt."

"Oh, Lord! oh Lord! here's a go! You are a female bushranger! I do believe, Help! Murder! Fire! Miss Lily! Fire! Murder! Help!"

"That'll do," said Rose, "that'll soon bring her. Go on! go on!"

But the gallant captain, instead of going on, ran off.

He turned backwards through an open French window, such as he had done on the occasion of the visit of Larry Bill and Lanky Jim, and disappeared.

So Rose now began to scream out the name of Lily with all the strength of her lungs, at the same time giving the information as to whereabouts she was to be found.

To her intense relief, she presently heard the swift pattering of feet, and the next instant her half-sister was by her side.

"Spring up behind me on Swiftsure," said Rose, excitedly. "Ask me not why, wherefore, but do as I bid you. Not a moment is to be lost!"

"No, no" answered Lily; "I cannot leave my father. Somehow or other you have frightened him. He is ill. I cannot make it out. I can make nothing out. You have brought some dreadful horror or mystery benedict our house roof. Oh, heaven! what can it all mean?"

"Lily, this is no time for explanations. I want to save your life; do not, by delay, render it impossible. A bushfire is rushing down on the station from the ranges. If you are short of hands you can't drive the fire-plough, and so stop its advance. The conflagration, when it once reaches the grassy plains, will speed on at the rate of twenty miles an hour before this fierce north wind. Lily, I hate your name and race, and not without reason, but I love you, and would save you if you will give me but the chance. So, for heaven's sake, come! What, and leave my poor father behind? Never! Away you! and fear not but that we will follow close behind. Away, away! We will to the stables at once; we have horses enough for all. Good-bye—go, go!"

"Swear to me first that you will be in the saddle in five minutes."

"I do swear it. But why will you think of me more than of yourself?"

Rose made no answer except, "Remember your oath;" and wheeling her horse round again, crossed the garden, leapt the fence, and stretched out across the plain, lighted on her way by the red glare of the conflagration.

She glanced back and was thunderstruck at the headway that the bush-fire had already made.

A dense, lurid smoke spread like a sombre canopy above the blazing bush. Huge trees, like gigantic funnels of steam engines, were belching forth flames thirty, forty, and even fifty feet in height, which waved and curled like the wind like the haunting banners of the dusky legion of hell.

Already horses and cattle, frightened by the glare and roar of the conflagration that was yet miles away, tore across the plains with neighs and bellowings, whilst the poor stupid sheep gathered together in flocks and stared stolidly at the advancing destroyer.

"Oh, God!" thought Rose, "will she escape in time? And yet," she added fiercely, "what is she to me or I to her? I was a fool for my pains. Let her perish with her father, and the fool new-chum who ran away from me, and who doubtless she intends to marry."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FLIGHT FROM MITTAGKRA.—THE PURSUIT OF A FIRE-KING.

And now the big bell that is commonly used by the cook to call all hands to dinner is tolling for dear life.

Vain its iron alarum, for the down-swooping fire wails no herald of its approach.

From the huts tumble the men, all making for the stables, whilst already through the swamp of the none-paddock gallop the station-horses, with Jumbo, the black boy, shouting and cracking his stock-whip incessantly in the rear.

There was "mounting in hot haste" indeed, whilst the eagle-hawks fluttered and circled and indulged in harsh and discordant screams of terror high overhead, and lower rear.

The station-horses, with Jumbo, the black boy, shouting and cracking his stock-whip incessantly in the rear.

There was "mounting in hot haste" indeed, whilst the eagle-hawks fluttered and circled and indulged in harsh and discordant screams of terror high overhead, and lower down flying foxes, singly and in pairs, beat their forked, feathery wings, and with mouse-like squeaks steered southward, with little thought of the neotarines and peach orchards that are the scene of their usual nightly feasts and gambols.

"Can anything be done, sir?" asks the station overseer, as he touches the brim of his sun-tanned cabbage-tree hat to his master.

"No; we are not enough of us. Let us think of our lives and our lives only. It must be madness to attempt anything more," answered the squatter gravely. "Stay, don't forget to tell the poor dogs loose."

"Jackson, Jones, Jumbo, your horse, knaves! Why the devil don't you bring me out my horse?" screams Captain Montague Vavasseur, at this juncture putting in an appearance, with a very pale face and excited men. "I want my nag at once my men!"
“Jack’s as good as his master in a case like this, Vavasseur,” said the squatter, somewhat sternly. “‘Tis each for himself, and God for us all. You know where your horse is stalled as well as anyone. Now, Lily, my dear, you must ride Sheetanchor and I’ll take You Yangs. Don’t be frightened, there is no great danger, I assure you, at all events for you. For me, perhaps, who have had a warning across the spirit world—ah!”

And Andrew M’Pherson, who had muttered the final remark in an undertone to himself, shivered as he thought of his late visitant, whose wonderful likeness to her dead mother at the same age had caused the squatter to regard her, especially now, as having been her ghost.

But she could tell otherwise by the blank-faced and haggard look of her father’s face; but she pretended to be comforted, for she was as brave as she was beautiful; and, in truth, she did not look a quarter so scared as did Captain Montague Vavasseur, who rode on her left, and who could ejaculate nothing but, “Demned country!” which he did continuously.

Already the heat of the conflagration could be felt, though it was still a good two-and-a-half miles in their rear.

Already the onrushing smoke had blotted out the indigo-hued heavens and all its gleaming stars, whilst sparks quivered in their stead amidst the sulphurous canopy—quivered and twinkled and perished in countless myriads.

Around, all was horror and confusion; the sheep were clustering in larger and larger groups, facing and stamping at the roaring flames, as though thus they could intimidate the bears, which approached; while the wild dogs, well armed with the best possible weapons, instinct-led, towards the nearest creek.

Here and there, half-wild horses were pursuing the same wild course, whilst kangaroos “bumped, bumped, bumped” a dozen feet at each leap across the plains, and wild dogs, red as foxes and ravenous as wolves, scudded past the fleecy flocks, for once in their lives without the slightest fear of them from further approach; whilst the panic-stricken horses, despite the heat and the rate at which they are running, are as dry as at starting, the sweat having been absorbed by the intense heat of the atmosphere.

Now, too, their tongues begin to loll out, their shrill neighs of terror.

And Andrew M’Pherson still attempts to comfort and encourage, as best he can, his beautiful child, though he cannot even be sure that she hears him above the roar, ay, almost shriek, of the flames.

Captain Vavasseur has shot ahead long ago, and can no longer be seen. Indeed, presently the smoke grows so thick and dense that it seems as though earth had been left behind and they were winging an aerial flight through dim and lurid clouds.

God of heaven! is the fire heading them?

On either hand now they can hear the crackling of the flames, as well as in their rear.

Yes, the dimly-seen trees spout smoke and fire, and seem to change to columns of red-hot gleaming iron.

A minute or two later and these bush giants, still spouting cataracts of flame, begin to fall about and around them, filling the smoky air with sparks and hot ashes.

Suddenly Lily loses sight of her father.

She looks wildly around but sees him not.

She tries to cry out, but her parched throat refuses to utter an articulate sound, and all the whilst crash! crash! crash! come down the trees around her, happily in this part of the run growing singly and at some little distance apart.

Ah! a shriek from her horse—for horses can shriek under the influence of either pain or terror. A wave of fire flows beneath them, reaching, however, hardly to his knees, and in an instant past; but he falls writhing on the scorched and blackened plain, struggles to rise, falls again, and this time a huge flaring bough hurtles through the air, andcomes down across his neck and shoulders, pinning him to the earth for ever.

Happily in his first fall Lily was hurled out of the saddle, clear of his frantic and agonised struggles, and there she still lies, with a thick rain of ashes descending upon her, when a horsemans, clad in some kind of uniform, draws rein by her side.

CHAPTER XX.

NED KELLY BETRAYED AND CAPTURED.

All this while Ned Kelly, the ironclad bushranger, lay in the deserted shepherd’s hut at the head of the Mittagarras Run, up in the ranges, rejoicing in the havoc and destruction he had wrought.

There was no need for him to hurry on, and what he averred reading on himself as long as the wind continued in its present quarter; and did he not presently expect Lardy Bill and Lanly Jim with his horse?”

Little did he guess, whilst he was so ruthlessly rejoicing over the too probable destruction of Mittagarras and al
who were beneath its roof, that perils quite as imminent threatened himself.

Even now, whilst he laughs and chuckles like a fiend or a maniac, or a strong mixture of both, at the awful fate to which he has doomed the man whom he hates, and all belonging to him, his treacherous accomplices in a thousand villanous, Lardy Bill and Lanky Jim, attired as shepherds, are creeping through the tree-true shrubs towards the back of the hut in order to shoot him down and sell his dead body to the police.

The police themselves are close at hand and watching the movements of the two sounding shepherds keenly, for they are not quite convinced that the whole affair may not be a plant to lead them into a very death-trap, and that the hut towards which the two informers are stealing may not hold a dozen hale armed and vengeful bushrangers instead of one wounded and almost helpless one.

Carefully and very cautiously, for the two slinking Jackals are in heart mortally afraid of the wounded tiger, Lardy Bill and Lanky Jim approach the rear of the hut, gun in hand.

"Oh, I feel so soft-hearted—mild as a sucking-dove!" Do you think so, Jim?"

"No, I don't; and if you experiences such dammed common-place sentiments, why the d—— don't you leave the dead and its reward to me?"

"Because, since he has to be shot, a brace of bullets in his vital won't hurt him more nor one; and, besides, you forget that I alone goes to society along ov him," retorts Lardy Bill, anxiously.

No fear is there of the conversation being overheard, with the roar of the confabulation so near at hand. However, it is prolonged no further, and both the rascals now creep towards the hut in silence.

Presently they reach it, point the muzzles of their pieces through two of the many fissures between the gaping weather-boards, cover their victim as lies on the ground, almost rolling in his fierce joy at the too probable destruction of the man who wore beneath its roof, that perils quite as imminent as the present, are creeping through the lea-tree scrub near at hand, when one of the troopers kicked the ground near at hand, when one of the troopers kicked it out of his reach; and, though he struggled as desperately as he could considering the nature of his hurts, he was soon overcome and bound securely.

And turning round, he dashed away at the top of his speed, followed, after only a moment's hesitation, by the Macaw-beak.

Ned Kelly, with the roar of the flames in his ears, and the blood last against Andrew McPherson in his heart, had not even heard the snapping of the four percussion-caps so close behind him.

Neither did he hear the rending away of his two faithless allies, or the stealthy advance of the police in so close behind him.

He left his had almost clutched a pistol as it lay on the ground near at hand, when one of the troopers kicked it out of his reach; and, though he struggled as desperately as he could considering the nature of his hurts, he was soon overcome and bound securely.

With a bitter oath he demanded to know by whom he had been betrayed. He felt convinced that he had not been discovered by chance.

Two shepherds brought us the information—leastways, they said that they were shepherds, though some of us had our doubts on the point. Have you a couple of choice acquaintances with peculiarly-shaped noses—one flat and broken at the bridge, and the other for all the world like a cockatoo's bill?" asked a sergeant.

The expression of the ironclad bushranger's countenance was terrible to behold as the trooper made this explanation.

He had put more confidence in those two men than in any others of his band, and now they were revealed to him as the worst of traitors and sneakish.

"You can easily have your revenge," said another trooper. "They have given us the slip now but doubtless you can tell us where they are to be found if through your assistance we can capture them, I think I may offer you the satisfaction of having one hung on either side of you."

"I cannot betray their haunts without at the same time betraying that of others who may be true and faithful to me. Besides, I prefer wreaking personal vengeance. Take me where you will, andlock me up where you like, yet I will escape, and kill those two men by tortures such as have never yet been dreamed of. As for hanging! Ha, ha! the hemp has not yet been plaited that is destined to make a rope for my neck. No, no, of that you may take your oath."

And, having thus delivered himself, Ned Kelly rushed into silent silence. Not another word could be got out of him for the present.

"And why don't you leave the bushrangers instead of one wounded and almost helpless one."

One horse was brought up and he was lifted on to its back, and his ankles secured by a strong rope under its belly.

Then the half-dozen troopers mounted in turn, and closed in around him, curving on thigh and quite ready to shoot him through the head should he make the slightest attempt at escape.

Ned Kelly smiled grimly.

"I don't object to all this," said he, "for I want a little nursing and doctors' treatment badly enough. I had a bullet-driven clean through my shoulder the other night, and a police surgeon is just the man to put me to rights and set me up for work again. Directly he has done this I shall wish you good-by and be off again to the ranges."

"I say, Ned, where did you pick up your fine speech?" asked a trooper.

"I had the honour of being educated by an Oxford B.A."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! at Oxford University in old England, Ned?"

"No, at a Government Establishment in Hobart Town, called The Tench. My worthy preceptor had been sent out because, in a momentary fit of forgetfulness, he signed another man's name instead of his own to some money security or other. Hard, wasn't it? He took a mortal fancy to me, the old bloke did, and made me something more of a scholar than perhaps you even imagine."

"It's a pity you haven't put your learning to better account, Ned," said the sergeant, gruffly. "Thunder take that fire," he added, "what a round we'll have to make owing to it. How the devil did it break out I wonder? Is it any of your infernal devilry, Ned Kelly, eh?"

"Yes, I wanted to roast out Squatter McPherson, and I guess I've about done it," answered Ned, with a demoniac and reckless laugh.

"Roasted out McPherson? Had you any down on him then?"

"I've been seeking his destruction for fourteen years and a month."

"Umph! you don't generally leave your debts of hatred unpaid so long. I suppose you didn't care how many innocent people, who had never done you even a fancied injury, you destroyed with him."

"Devil a fear, as long as he went along with them. When a city is bombarded the innocent women and children have to take their chance of hurt. This is a similar case. Who serves Old Blazes must beware of
schorched fingers," and with another reckless laugh Ned Kelly grew sulky once more.

Not another word in fact could be got out of him until the trooper, for it was he, "The two of them I could not have saved, yet it's ten to one that she's had it so or neither, if she had maintained her senses; so it's just as it should be."

He strained the unconscious girl to his breast as he thus spoke, pressing his lips to the floating masses of her hair; albeit, instead of the "perfumed tresses" that novelists are so fond of describing, it smelt most abominably of fire and sulphur.

Then, surrounded by crushing branches, blazing barks, and sudden whirs of yellow flame, that would continually play and crackle about him from some sappy fern, sheltering Lily's face from the intense heat as best he could, whilst he felt his own cracking and blistering, and his eyes apparently changing into balls of solid tire within his head, dauntless Tom Conquest strove his utmost to get out of the fix into which his love for the fair girl, whom he dimly hoped to save, had gotten him.

And whilst he pushed resolutely on in the direction that resembled a raging hell more than anything else, Tom could not help reflecting to himself, uncharitably as it was to do so at such a time, that in all probability Lily was now an orphan, and all obstacles to their union removed by the fact, for, not a couple of minutes ere he had rescued her, he had ridden past her father lying upon the ground.

It was strange that these fearful thoughts and apprehensions did not turn his brain. They certainly seemed to set it on fire, and caused him to shake the iron door, or more as a vent to his fury than with any hope of getting out by that means.

Since the wound in his shoulder has been attended to, he feels almost free from pain, and his brute strength seems to be almost restored by the hearty supper that he has eaten.

True, his right arm is of little or no use, but he feels that with his left he could do wonders were he only free, and how eagerly he longs to be free no one can imagine whose movements have hitherto been so unfettered as his.

And how fierce and burning are the thoughts that course through his brain. How he longs for vengeance on Lardy Bill and Lanky Jim, and how fearful is his dread that, not content with betraying him, they may have afterwards repaired to the hut in the ranges, and tortured Rose into confessing where all her and his private spoil and possession were hidden; as likely as not both ill-using and murdering her when the necessary information has been obtained.

It was strange that these fearful thoughts and apprehensions did not turn his brain. They certainly seemed to set it on fire, and caused him to shake the iron door, or rather gate, of his cell with redoubled force every time that his rage got almost too strong to bear.

But the troopers pay no heed to the row that he is making; and, as there are no other occupants of the cells that night, he has no neighbours to rail at him for keeping them awake with the shindy.

Why are the troopers so oblivious of his existence? Well, the fact is they are entertaining a guest whom they delight to honour, and the like of whom they have never had quartered upon them before.
you think that my dearest uncle and cousin can have fallen victims to it?" And she put on a most anxious expression of countenance.

"No, miss," answered the sergeant, for W. M'Pherson was a great man in those parts; "I don't think as how you have much grounds for fear. The fire broke out in the ranges far enough off to give sufficient warning of its approach, and you uncle, Fintas, keep horses that can go, and no mistake about it. Therefore, I don't see as you need be anxious, and I think you'd a night better let me run across the way to the 'Leichardt Arms' and bespeak a bad for you there. I'm sure Mrs. Jones would be proud to turn out of her own at any hour to accommodate a relative of M'Pherson's."

"But I wouldn't have worthy Mrs. Jones put herself to such an inconvenience at such an hour. What is the use of a bed to one who is far too anxious to sleep? and how could I enjoy comfort in a cozy bedroom when perhaps at this very moment my poor uncle and cousin are homeless and homeless wanderers? No, please to give me a chair to sit in, or a shakedown to lie on, for a couple of hours here; then it will be daylight, and I'll ask you to allow one of your troopers to ride with me over to Mittagong, for I shall be too nervous to go alone, not knowing what horrors or painful surprises may have to be encountered at the end of the journey, or even to give a convulsive movement to her bosom as though she was labouring under some strong emotion; so the good-natured sergeant granted her petition at once, luring her tenderly out of the saddle to the ground, and ordering one of the troopers to conduct her to the stable.

It was certainly rather strange, agitated as she was, that she should have so narrowly observed in what direction the trooper led her horse, and exactly where the door of the stables was situated, ere she suffered the sergeant to lead her inside the station.

Here she drank off three pannikins of water in rapid succession, thereafter indulging in a copious flow of tears; eventually, however, almost permitting herself to be convinced that her uncle and cousin must have escaped the conflagration, wherupon she became comparatively calm.

The sergeant pressed her to partake of some food, and she did so; also to drink a glass or two of Cawarra wine, and she complied. Lastly, she was pointed out a colonial sofa, and told that she might appropriate it to her own use, and she proceeded to take immediate possession.

Still, every one was anxious to do something more for her, which may be accounted for by the fact that she was both too young and too pretty to be left entirely at the mercy of the girl born and reared in a hot climate like Australia are freshest and most charming.

But she would not have anything more. She smiled and brought the deadly battery of her bright eye into full play, and then begged everybody to take no further notice of her, as she meant to snatch a couple of hours' sleep if it was possible.

So the sergeant went and got a couple of pillows for her charming head, and one of the troopers threw a horseman's cloak loosely over her prettily-rounded form, and she complied. Lastly, she was pointed out a colonial sofa, and one of the troopers to ride with her over to Mittagong.
her, raised herself on the couch, slipped off it on to her feet, crossed the floor as noiselessly as though she had been asleep, and listened at the door on the other side of which she fondly hoped that the troopers were all sound asleep.

Then she unbuttoned the big boots and a sabre under one arm, put a shako on her head, thrust a brace of pistols into her pocket, burdened her other arm with as large a sized uniform jacket as in her anxious haste she could lie to select, took down the great bunch of keys with trembling but deft fingers, and, holding them so that they should not jingle, managed to open the door that led into the dark passage with the gratings here and there, and passed through it.

When she had fastened the door behind her she found that it too was lighted a little way down by a common tallow dip fixed in a dirty tin sconce that was hung against the wall.

The vecik had contracted such a cauliflower-top that the feeble rays hardly did more than render darkness visible.

They did, however, enable Rose to peer into cell after cell, and discover each to be empty until she came to the one exactly opposite the light, in the extreme end of which she distinguished a form huddled up in a corner with a pair of keen, dark, vengeful eyes gleaming out from beneath shaggy brows.

Their expression changed in an instant as they lighted on her. The crouched-up form upreared itself to its full height and noiselessly approached the iron grating that served for door.

"Rose!" it exclaimed anxiously, "Good heavens, what brings you here, my girl?"

"I am come either to save or to perish with you, father," she made answer. "Here are disguises and weapons, and the keys to unlock your dungeon door. The police are sound asleep. I know the way to the stables. In five minutes, father, we will be clear off."

CHAPTER XXIII.
THE ESCAPE FROM BORAMA.

Ned Kelly had some difficulty in convincing himself that he was not dreaming.

When by dint of rubbing his eyes and grasping Rose's hand through the iron bars of his cage he had assured himself both that he was wide awake and that she was no jason of a distempered imagination, he began to entertain nervous fears on her behalf which never in his life had he felt on his own.

"Oh, Rose," he said, "they will imprison you for years for this assistance that you are trying to render me. Go away, go away; I will escape without your help by-and-by. I will not have you imperil your precious liberty for the sake of a second-rate like me. I say I will not."

"It's of no use, father; you are only losing valuable time. I escape with you or remain with you. I am quite decided about that. You could not persuade me to the contrary though you talked for a month, so do not let me incur all the peril in vain. All, the right key at last," and, flinging open the door of the cell, Rose rushed in and threw herself sobbing with joy into Ned's arms.

He could no longer withstand her entreaties; the open path to liberty was indeed too great a temptation.

"You are a noble girl, Rose," said he, "and henceforth, I live to lie, and will more be bound up together. How on earth have you managed to work the oracle?"

"This is not the time to tell you, father. We must work now in order that we may have a chance of talking by-and-by. Here is almost a complete trooper's dress. On with it and let us get away as soon as we can."

"But these old moleskin pants, Rose?"

"The high boots and the skirts of the tunic will almost hide them. Be quick, dear father."

"Ned was quick. He dragged on the boots, but the coat was too much for him.

"Give me a hand, Rose, I can't get this arm into the sleeve. Bullet through the shoulder the other night. Still as the very deuce, my dear."

The lovely girl kept her assistance on the instant. She was as gentle as a young mother could be over her first infant.

The tunic on, she buttoned it up, next strapped on the sword-belt, bidding Ned hold the scabbard in his hand so that it should not rattle against his side.

Then she placed the shako on his head.

"Now follow me as noiselessly as a fly creeps over a pat of butter. Come!"

She had not yet given Ned the pistols, for she could not bear the thought that they might have to be used against those who had been so kind to her.

Knowing his ferocity and impetuosity she resolved that he should only have them in case of the most urgent necessity.

He did not ask her for them.

It was strange how a great, heavy man could step so lightly, but Ned resounded a beast of prey in all things, even in this.

Out of the cell, along the dim, candle-illumined passage, and through the door at the end thereof into the main room of the station, and there was only one door between them and liberty.

Ned was halfway across the floor, and Rose was close up to the colonial sofa that had been given her as a sleeping-place, when the bushranger gave vent to a muffled sneeze.

He could not have helped it for the life of him, but it was sufficient to occasion an alarm.

A step was heard in the next room, and the handle of the door was seen to shake.

"Artifice, not violence?" whispered Rose, flinging herself at once upon the couch.

Ned caught her meaning. Three strides and he was pouring away amongst the miscellaneous articles on the mantelpiece.

At that instant the door between the two rooms was half opened, and a trooper's head and shoulders were thrust partly through.

"Hullo, mate! what's up? You're early astir."

"Don't let me disturb you fellows. I'm out of the weed, and I'm after somebody's 'baccy."

"All right."

A minute later and Ned Kelly had noiselessly unlocked and unbolted the outer one.

As noiselessly he opened it, and then gave Rose a quick and significant glance.

She was on her feet in an instant, and out into the star light.

Ned then shut the door, and tramped somewhat heavily down the little garden path to the outer gate, so that the ring of his spurs should be audible.

Rose, on the contrary, crossed it diagonally, so that she might not be seen from the window of the room which the troopers occupied.

Arrived at the fence, she first signalled to Ned which way he was to go, and then scrambled half-through and half-over it.

Presently they stood side by side at the door of the stables.

"But, father, I was not quite so foolish as to leave my bunch of keys in the cell door. One of them will doubtless undo it."

"You are a noble girl, Rose," said he, "and henceforth, I live to lie, and will more be bound up together. How on earth have you managed to work the oracle?"

"This is not the time to tell you, father. We must work now in order that we may have a chance of talking by-and-by. Here is almost a complete trooper's dress. On with it and let us get away as soon as we can."

"But these old moleskin pants, Rose?"

"The high boots and the skirts of the tunic will almost hide them. Be quick, dear father."

"Ned was quick. He dragged on the boots, but the coat was too much for him."

"Give me a hand, Rose, I can't get this arm into the sleeve. Bullet through the shoulder the other night. Still as the very deuce, my dear."

The lovely girl kept her assistance on the instant. She was as gentle as a young mother could be over her first infant.

The tunic on, she buttoned it up, next strapped on the sword-belt, bidding Ned hold the scabbard in his hand so that it should not rattle against his side. Then she placed the shako on his head.

"Now follow me as noiselessly as a fly creeps over a pat of butter. Come!"

She had not yet given Ned the pistols, for she could not bear the thought that they might have to be used against those who had been so kind to her.

Knowing his ferocity and impetuosity she resolved that he should only have them in case of the most urgent necessity.

He did not ask her for them.

It was strange how a great, heavy man could step so lightly, but Ned resounded a beast of prey in all things, even in this.

Out of the cell, along the dim, candle-illumined passage, and through the door at the end thereof into the main room of the station, and there was only one door between them and liberty.

Ned was halfway across the floor, and Rose was close up to the colonial sofa that had been given her as a sleeping-place, when the bushranger gave vent to a muffled sneeze.

He could not have helped it for the life of him, but it was sufficient to occasion an alarm.

A step was heard in the next room, and the handle of the door was seen to shake.

"Artifice, not violence?" whispered Rose, flinging herself at once upon the couch.

Ned caught her meaning. Three strides and he was pouring away amongst the miscellaneous articles on the mantelpiece.

At that instant the door between the two rooms was half opened, and a trooper's head and shoulders were thrust partly through.

"Hullo, mate! what's up? You're early astir."

"Don't let me disturb you fellows. I'm out of the weed, and I'm after somebody's 'baccy."

"All right."

A minute later and Ned Kelly had noiselessly unlocked and unbolted the outer one.

As noiselessly he opened it, and then gave Rose a quick and significant glance.

She was on her feet in an instant, and out into the star light.

Ned then shut the door, and tramped somewhat heavily down the little garden path to the outer gate, so that the ring of his spurs should be audible. 

Rose, on the contrary, crossed it diagonally, so that she might not be seen from the window of the room which the troopers occupied. 

Arrived at the fence, she first signalled to Ned which way he was to go, and then scrambled half-through and half-over it. 

Presently they stood side by side at the door of the stables. 

"But, father, I was not quite so foolish as to leave my bunch of keys in the cell door. One of them will doubtless undo it."

"You are a noble girl, Rose," said he, "and henceforth, I live to lie, and will more be bound up together. How on earth have you managed to work the oracle?"

"This is not the time to tell you, father. We must work now in order that we may have a chance of talking by-and-by. Here is almost a complete trooper's dress. On with it and let us get away as soon as we can."

"But these old moleskin pants, Rose?"
And she produced them from her pocket.

One after the other was eagerly and impatiently tried, but not until the entire bunch was gone through was one found that would properly turn in the lock and open the door.

With fresh hopes then they entered the stable.

"Will you pick out your horse, Rose, or shall I?"

"Oh, I have Swiftsure with me, father."

"But is he used up, that's the question?"

"No, he's fresh as a daisy, I'm sure."

"We have a ninety-miles ride before us."

"All right, father, I am ready for it."

Ned said no more, but selected what seemed to be the most energetic and toughest of the troopers' horses, and began saddle it.

In three minutes it was harnessed and accoutered, and he was not an instant behind with Swiftsure, for like many a colonial girl she could groom, saddle, and ride a horse fully as well as one of the opposite sex.

"Here father, stick these pistols in your holster," she now said, giving Ned the long and brightly-polished regulation double-barrelled for the first time. "Now then, are you ready?"

"Not quite. I'll just hamstring the other mags to bar all immediate pursuit."

"Father, if you do I'll leave you at once and for ever," said Rose in subdued accents of horror. "Poor things! How could you be so cruel?"

"All right, girl, go ahead," rejoined the bushranger with a laugh.

"Father, if you do I'll leave you at once and for ever," answered Rose. "What is the good of living the life of a hunted wolf, with the certainty of being run to earth some day?"

"Perhaps you're right, lass; perhaps you're right; though I don't think I should live long without some excitement."

"An honest life must be a terribly dry and uninteresting one."

"By the road, Rose, there is the Melbourne mail! See the three lamps glimmer amongst the trees? Touch up Swiftsure, and come along with you."

"Father, what would you do? For goodness' sake, don't bail up a coach at a time when every moment is of vital importance to us—when deadly foes are on our track, and at any instant may come up with us. I have gold and gems to the value of many thousands of pounds about me. What do you want more?"

"Nothing, Rose, nothing. I won't meddle with the coach. I only want to see who's aboard of her. Come along, lass, I say, and keep on the off-side, so that that infernal white horse don't show up quite so plain. We shall hardly lose a second of time, for the coach is going toward; and, besides, I'm accustomed to gratify my whims at any and all hazards."

Rose made no further objections. Traversing the rolling plain obliquely, they struck right across the coach's course, riding parallel with it as it drew near.

"Hi there, you! Do you know if any of Kelly's fellows are out to-night?" yelled the Yankee Jehu, as he observed Ned's uniform and dangling sword-scabbard.

"Reckon not. A swaggerman told me just now that Ned was taken, but I'm blest if I quite believe him," answered the bushranger with a laugh.

"If he is, I hope they'll scrag him without loss of time, or he'll manage to slip out of their hands somehow. Good night, mate."

And the great, gaudy, springless vehicle shot past them like a comet.

Rose had taken little heed of what had passed between her companion and the tall-hatted driver, for all her faculties had been riveted and enchained, as it were, in the contemplation of one of the passengers, on whose face, as she sat inside the open coach, much of the light of one of the lamps had fallen.

It was a woman—young, fair, statuesque and wondrously beautiful. And yet to Rose her loveliness seemed to be that of the glittering-scaled serpent, that repelled whilst it attractet; a consolament very alienated from the malevolent rather than the beneficial.

She involuntarily shuddered as she continued to regard her, and a kind of presentiment seemed to enter into her soul that their lines of lives would cross, to the shipwreck of her own happiness and to her father's deification.

"Well, Rose, you see there is no harm done. I have left the coach go on its way," said Ned, turning towards her with a smile.

"Yes, and she is in it who you hoped would be a pas-
sorrowfully. "For heaven's sake," she added, vehemently, "for me cast a shadow over it. Father," answered Rose, "I have our future pretty clearly mapped out, I think. A deuce did you know that th'-Countess of Lansfeldt was wealth about you in gems—in warps gems?

"Yes, father. I've all the diamonds that you have ever brought home."

"That's fine, Rose. We will be able to dazzle the Melbournites in this style, this proud woman included. I have our future pretty clearly mapped out, I think. A brilliant future it will be.

"Not as long as the gibbet for you and the prison-cell for me cast a shadow over it, father," answered Rose, sorrowfully. "For heaven's sake," she added, vehemently, "don't let the light of that woman's eyes blind you to present danger."

The warning was not a needless one, for at that instant the ring of hoofs became clearly audible at some distance in their rear, and Rose, glancing back over her shoulder, dimly distinguished what looked in the starlight like shadowy forms of men and horses coming swiftly on their track.

"'It's the troopers, father," said she.

"Spur up, then, my girl, and we'll soon say good-night to them," answered Ned, cheerily; but even whilst he spoke he inwardly blamed himself for having lost valuable time over the coach.

And now the pursuers sighted the chase, greeting it with a "view hallo!" that would have done credit to a Leicestershire hunting-field.

CHAPTER XXV.

A RACE FOR LIFE.

"This will be a big run, Rose," said Ned Kelly, "so we mustn't take too much out of our nags at first setting off. It's good staying power more than speed that'll win the day. We must try every dodge that occurs to us to throw 'em off the scent, lass."

Ned made no answer save a slight inclination of the head, but she thought within herself—

"Oh, for some big patches of scrub instead of this open ground that the bush-fire raged over last night, strike a lookout for us. That's my scheme, Rose."

"Confounded that devil's imp!" said he, as he returned the pistol to its holster; "it will be of little use our attempting to conceal ourselves during the daytime anywhere, now that that bloodhound's joined them."

"Who and what is he, father?" asked Rose.

"Hah, he-haw, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha; he-haw, ha, ha, ha; the Australian cuckoo, answered perhaps by the jocund "He-haw, he-haw, ha, ha, ha, ha; he-haw, ha, ha, ha," of the laughing jackass; each one of these sounds mingled, however, with the thud of other and more distant hoofs, and the faint chink and rattie of military accoutrements.

"Rose," said Ned suddenly, "We must risk all on a chance. Yes, by George, we must. If we can't shake off those—traps before day-dawn well we have a hundred enemies in our rear and many a foe in our front as well, and be taken to a dead certainty. We must strain every nerve to get out of their sight whilst darkness lasts, and if we can succeed we'll double on them, cross some of the country to Ballan, and gain Melbourne to-morrow night by the Beechworth roads instead of the Kyneton-road, which latter will be safe to be covered with Jorys on the lookout for us. That's my scheme, Rose."

"Pray heaven that it may be carried with success, dear father. Shall we spur on now?"

"Ay, at racing speed, lass. Keep your eyes on my horse's head and handle your own nag to correspond. Now then, away!"

The pace was now increased to almost railway speed, and Rose it seemed as though, instead of their progress, the green turf was flowing under their horses.
As the dusk of the January evening faded away, the stockade on the hillside became a black silhouette. The air was charged with the scent of burnt gum-leaves, which plainly enough told them that they were rapidly approaching the area of last night's conflagration.

Presently hundreds of red-hot stumps of trees gleamed like so many danger-signs out upon the plain in front of them, and ere ten minutes had elapsed they were traversing a scorched and blackened desert where their horses sank fetlock-deep in ashes at every step.

"This'll puzzle the black tracker," laughed Ned. "See, the ashes are so light that even this gentle breeze fills up the slight indentations of our horses' hoofs as soon as they are made. We will skirt it for a league or so, and then cross a creek that I wot of, and steer straight towards Mount Buninyong, which will bring us into the Ballarat and Melbourne road about midway between Ballan and Bacchus Marsh. Are you tired, Rose?"

"No one could feel tired mounted on Swiftsure," said Rose, answering as she spoke, but was suddenly greeted with an apparent half-choking cry of—

"I'm so badly hurt as what I look. I was more suffocated with the smoke than scorched by the flames. I shall live, oh I shall live!"

"By Jehoshaphat, we've given them the go-by after all," suddenly exclaimed Ned as, after traversing the open bush at breakneck speed for half-an-hour, he drew rein to listen if he could still catch the sounds of pursuit.

"Well was it for them that the darkest hour is that immediate before the dawn, for it served them well in the present instance.

"But Jedoshaphat, we've given them the go-by after all," suddenly exclaimed Ned as, after traversing the open bush at breakneck speed for half-an-hour, he drew rein to listen if he could still catch the sounds of pursuit.

"Now, Rose, we must swoop round to the right, and double on them with a wide sweep. Come along."

"All right, dear father, I'm ready for anything."

And away they went again like the wind.

Another half-hour and the air became pungent with the aromatic odours of burnt gum-leaves, which plainly enough told them that they were rapidly approaching the area of last night's conflagration.

"Here they come!" shouted Rose as the .bashful black charger was brought to a standstill, and Ned's foot fell from the stirrup. "Let us get on with the job, Ned."

"Well enough you may tremble at the sight of her, the ghost of your victim, Rose Casey, Lieutenant M'Pherson." said Ned Kelly, in the low and terrible accents of suppressed passion. "That girl is not the ghost of your victim, Rose Casey, Lieutenant M'Pherson."

"Eh, who the devil have we here?" exclaimed Ned Kelly, pushing his big, powerful horse in between Rose's white steed and the prostrate man. "What name do you answer to, eh?"

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ne quarter did not speak, he only glared.

"I see you are afraid even to look. Well then, I was
the boy lover from whom you stole her. I was with
her when she died. I adopted her child as my own,
though her father was a villain, and I swore as I did so
that the day should come when I would avenge both the
dead and the living by taking that villain's life. Andrew
McPherson, you have another child, born under happier
auspices than poor Rose Casey. Well, I hope that
the fire kindled last night in the ranges will make her a
pancer, as surely as this knife is about to make her an
orphan."

As he concluded Ned Kelly flung himself out of his
saddle, whipped a knife out of his pocket which the police
had overlooked when making him a prisoner, opened the
blade with his teeth, threw himself upon the prostrate
squerter, and, heedless of his faintly-gasped petition for
mercy, sheathed it thrive in his body up to the very hilt.

As he withdrew it for the third time he espied Rose
burrnedly retracing her steps with the water that he had
made a feint of rending her for; and anxious that she
should know nothing of the dreadful deed that he had
just committed, he shoved the open knife under the body,
and, leaping into his saddle, laid hold of the bridle of
Swintere, who had stood quiet by the whole while, and
routting towards her with both horses headed her off, as
it were, from his victim, and, as he came up with her, said
cheerily—

"No good after all, my lass. Hardly was your back
plain to gratify her own thirst before.

"As sure as I am that you're alive. Didn't you see
me disconnect and bend over him? It was to make sure
that his heart had stopped. Oh, he's as dead as a dou-

"Father, how comes that blood on your sleeve?"

"Blood? Oh, ah, yes, to be sure. He coughed it up
just as the death-rattle took him in the throat."

"Oh, father, mayn't I go up and look at him?

"No," thundered Kelly. "Get into the saddle; we
have lost more than enough time over him. Do you for-
get that the bloodhounds of the law are upon our track—
that a much worse death than his threatens me, and years
of worse imprisonment yourself? Mount—mount, I
shall tell you I mustn't do a fool. Do you hear?"

"Yes, father," said Rose, obeying his command with
something very like terror, for never had she known him
to speak so crossly to her before.

The next minute the prostrate form of Andrew M
Pherson was left far behind; but little did Ned Kelly suspect
that not one of his three stabs had touched a vital part,
and that the squatter was destined to live, to his(Ned's)
no inconsiderable peril in the future.

Suddenly Rose exclaimed, "Look, father, we are not
the only travellers across this terrible desert of fire
and ashes. Over away yonder I can see two other moun-
ted forms. They look to be our very dupicates; a trooper
and a squatter."

Ned glanced in the direction that Rose's outstretched
hand indicated, and the sight filled him with uneasiness
and apprehension.

"Let us get down into the gully before they spot us," he
said, "I don't think they've seen us yet."

Happily they were close up to the aforesaid gully now,
and the next instant both of them were on their feet, and
carefully leading their horses down the almost precipitous
bank.

How the poor creatures drank of the still pools when
the bed of the creek was presently reached, Ned and Rose
greedily following their example, for the latter had been
so exhausted by the apparently dying man out upon the
plain to gratify her own thirst before.

Their parched throats relived, Ned said to Rose—
"You mind the nags, whilst I climb up the bank again
to take observation. I want to be assured that that trap

CHAPTER XXVII.

A MEETING WITH OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

The horses were much refreshed by the water they had
drank, and also by the wetting of their hoofs as they jour-
neyed down the creek, and now they cantered easily along
as though the load just in his teeth. Hang it, she
turned earthwards, as if looking for something.

The two riders were considerably nearer now, but he
noticed two things—

Firstly, that they rode very slowly and in zig zagging
fashion; and secondly, that their faces were continuously
turned earthwards, as if looking for something.

"It's the legitimate daughter searching for her father's
body," he thought, as he looked at the exposed back of the
yodelling Jim Creek. whose banks were almost carpeted
about midday they drew rein on the margin of the
ranges, having shrivelled

The route of the two fugitives lay across a gently
undulating country, well grassed and watered, dotted
with wild flowers of rich and varied hues, but, with one
or two rare exceptions, affording no perfume.

Above them, litter and there, cropped up picturesque
oranges and ranunculus, intermingled with the creamy

As they passed a sparsely-treed plain, with a curious conical mountain
the chasm, and found themselves on another wide,
undulating country, well grassed and watered, fitted
in every way most beautiful.

The face of nature was revealed, looking calm, tranquil, and
the distant mountains blushed every shade of blue—from
royal purple to the softest ultramarine, and the entire
air with fragrance, and the low rich notes of the thrush,
whilst the strongly-scented wattle-blossoms filled the

The winter torrents of yellow water, that doubtless at
seasons of flood filled the whole gorge, having shrivelled
up under the fierce summer heat to a string of shallow
pools, this was no different at present, and when they
had journeyed about a mile and a quarter in this fashion, they scrambled with their horses up the opposite side of the
chasm, and found themselves on another wide,

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undulating country, well grassed and watered, dotted
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chasm, and found themselves on another wide,
petais of the dwarf banksia, or native honeysuckle, and the silvery and golden bloom of the wattle.

They short-hobbled their horses so that they might recruit their strength with a feed of the sweet rich grass, only to be found at this season of the year growing near running water; but how to fill their own stomachs was a much more difficult problem—in fact, a complete puzzle.

Necessity, however, being the undisputed mother of invention, and Ned Kelly discovering that there were some shovels to be had at the look, conceived the notion of sparring some with his sword as they wriggled their way through the shallows.

It was no easy job this, but he at last succeeded in pulling two, and, having killed them, he and Rose devoured them raw, for they were fearful of lighting a fire lest the smoke should attract the attention of any scouring bands of troopers on the lookout for them.

Nothing but fearful hunger could have tempted them to take of such a repast; but they were surprised to find the flesh really delicious eaten in that manner—a discovery which, however, had been made by many before them.

For in the north of Asia there are entire tribes who declare that eating fresh-water fish in any manner entirely destroys the delicacy of their flavour. _Chacun à son goût_, we say.

After an hour's rest the two fugitives again besought the order of the saddle, and they had not ridden very far when they descried two individuals tramping along in front with shouldered swagges, at whose appearance, as they drew closer to them, Ned uttered an oath that seemed to be one more of delight than of rage.

"What's the matter, father?" asked Rose.

"Don't you know those infernal scoundrels?"

"By George, yes! One of the Joeyes told me all about it, and also how they tricked them out of the reward offered for my capture. They fired at me, Rose, through the back of the hut in which I lay concealed, the treacherous Judases! They dashed not face me living, so they determined to take me dead."

"Are you quite sure, father, that it was them?"

"By George, yes! One of the Joeyes told me all about it, and also how they tricked them out of the reward offered for my capture. They fired at me, Rose, through the back of the hut in which I lay concealed, the treacherous Judases! They dashed not face me living, so they determined to take me dead."

To such high tones had Ned raised his voice as he concluded that one of the men heard him, and turned round to see who it was.

"It's only a trap an' a gut," said he to his companion.

"Don't you know those infernal scoundrels?"

"Oh Lord! won't they, though?" exclaimed that individual, looking round in turn. "Why it's Ned Kelly's gal on her white horse. Oh, can it mean it? I feels so soft-hearted over it, Jim."

"Don't be a mean-spirited cuss. She won't notice who we be in this rig-out; and if you're afeard as how she will, well yer ugly mug with a good cloud of bacey-smoke as they rides past."

This was very good advice, no doubt, but the ruse didn't avail them in the present instance.

"Bug up, you ruffians!" was suddenly thundered in their ears; and the next instant one was hurled to the ground, the other to the left by the buffeting shoulders of the troopers of the police charger.

Both was grass, half-stunned, wholly bewildered; and, before either could rise, he was covered by a levelled pistol, one of which was aimed by Rose Carey.

"Well done, lad! cried Ned. "Don't let the scorpion get a chance of turning his sting towards you if you see his hand moving towards shirt, belt, or pocket, put a bullet through his head. Now, Lardy Bill, I think I'm in your debt, an' I ain't a-going to pay you."

"Lord, capting, who'd have thought it would have bin you? Now, this is what I calls onhandsome ov you—first entering the parlour, an' then 'untin down a couple ov old names as was always true as steel to you."

"Isn't that you know that I'm no traitor enough, ay, as well as you know that you and your mate tried to sell me the other night, and made a nice mull of it. Your gun hung fire, didn't it? Ha! ha! the Joeyes had drawn this argument so that you shouldn't cop a penny of the reward. It strikes me that they've been done brown in turn. But that's no matter. You shall never play the character of Judas any more. I'm going to turn a mongrel beast, half fox and half wolf, into a dead jackass."

"Oh, don't shoot us, capting! We don't deserve it. You've been told a pack of lies about us—nothing more. I'll take my solemn affidavit to it."

"Not only did you betray me, but I'll bet that before you decamped you robbed the general community right and left, you oily-tongued sneak and traitor," answered Ned, severely. "Turn out your pockets, dog!"

Lardy Bill at once did so. "They were empty."

"Off with your jumper, and fling it here."

"Lord love you, capting, and what for?"

"Do as I bid you, or I'll blow your brains out."

Lardy Bill obeyed the order with a groan.

"You've been told a pack of lies about us. Not one of my men he's caught the jumper jacket, and whistled as he discovered how very heavy it was. He banged it against the pommel of his saddle, and it gave out the dull ring of gold."

"Pretty well padded, 'pon my word," said he. "If the rest of your boys are clothed in like fashion, you must be a walking mint."

"Oh, Lord, capting, it's only our own little savings and gains. Don't rob us, capting, pray don't."

"Rob you? I expect I'll only be getting back my own gold, and if it should happen not to be so of what use will it be to two dead men?"

"Dead men? Oh don't go for to kill us, capting!"

At this moment crack went a pistol, and Rose uttered a faint cry of pain.

Involuntarily, Ned Kelly wheeled his horse round to Rose's assistance, and no sooner were his eyes diverted from Lardy Bill than he in turn plunged forth a pistol from inside his open shirt, and took a cock-shot at Ned.

"Are you hurt, dear?"

"No, father, no. Look out for yourself. That man's got another pistol."

It was true that he had, but before he could discharge it Ned's horse was trampling him into the dust.

Seeing his companion's danger, Lanky Jim endeavoured to push by Rose, concluding that a levelled pistol in a girl's hand was most likely of little account; but he had not got three yards when Rose fired at him, and brought him down with a ball through the hip. She had might have killed him had she liked, for Ned had taken great pains in teaching her pistol practice, but she had a woman's natural horror of taking human life.

"Bravo! lass, we have scotched the old serpents finely," laughed Ned. "What made you cry out?"

"A bullet grazed the tip of my ear, father."

"It's lucky it didn't take it off. You ride on a little way now, Rose, and I'll overtake you."

"Don't kill them outright, father. Oh, don't!"

"Ride on, girl, I tell you. Ride on at once."

"Not until you promise me you will spare them."

"Rose, obey me, and don't be a fool."

"Father, you shan't take human life whilst I have the power to save you from a crime," and she looked superlatively lovely as she spoke.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ATONABLE REVENGE.

LARDY BILL and Lanky Jim, with their weapons discharged and no chance of being allowed time to reload them, writhed in their agony and despair upon the ground, whilst Rose pleaded with Ned for their miserable lives.

"Don't kill them outright, father. Oh, don't!"

"Ride on, girl, I tell you. Ride on at once."

"Not until you promise me you will spare them."

"Rose, obey me, and don't be a fool."

"Father, you shan't take human life whilst I have the power to save you from a crime," and she looked superlatively lovely as she spoke.

"I'm an infernal fool to listen to you, but I never could..."
deny you anything for long, and you know it; so you just ride on, and I'll grant your desires," Ned was fain to matter at length.

"But—but you will not break word?"

"Did I ever break a promise to you, Rose?

"No, no; and since you have promised me so faithfully I will trust you—And yet why should I ride on? Why do you want to remain behind?"

"To force these fellows to strip, so that I may be sure they have disgorged all their plunder."

Rose made no further objection, but rode on; and directly she had got a little way off, Ned, again turning towards the grovelling men, commanded them to strip and throw him each of their articles of attire in turn.

It was no easy command to execute, sorely injured as they were, but Ned vowed that he would pepper them with bullets if they did not, and trample them beneath his horse's iron hoofs as well; and so they were fain to make an effort, and as each garment was in turn tossed to him he shook it, and, if it gave forth the chink of gold, spread it across the pommel of his saddle, and if it did not, dropped it contemptuously on the ground with an oath or a sneer.

A dozen times at the very least he found fault with their just as they think fit. I'm not responsible for actions. Now, Lardy Bill, hurry up. Now, Jim, look their

But Lardy Bill was not allowed the opportunity of their

"If I do they'll be all over me, capturing!"

"Get up, you dogn and bind your companion firmly to that tree."

"I can't get on my point, capturing. Your horse has trampled all my bones out of joint."

"He shall trample you into a shapeless heap of blubber if you don't obey me."

"Oh, lor', don't talk like that. Which tree?"

"The one just behind you, that the white bull-dog ants are running up and down so lively. They've got a nest just at its foot:—see?"

Lanky Jim looked round as well as Lardy Bill, and uttered a shriek as he beheld his doom.

"Oh, mercy! capturing, mercy!" he gasped. "The devilish things will cover me all over in five minutes. They will devour me alive. In an hour I'll be a skeling-ton, a hideous, grinning skeleton. Oh, you promised not to murder us."

"Nor will I. The ants may eat you or leave you alone, just as they think fit. I'm not responsible for their actions. Now, Lardy Bill, hurry up. Now, Jim, look sharp. The ants will thank me if I have to puncture your tough hide with a bullet-hole or two so that they may creep into your intestines, but you hardly will."

Lanky Jim shrieked at the mere idea of such a thing, and without further spoken objection walked up to the tree and planted his back against the trunk.

"Bound to do it, mate, though it goes sadly agin my grain," said Lardy Bill, as he followed him up with the trail rope, and then he added in an undertone, "I'll do it so that you can slip out again as soon as his back's turned on us."

But Lardy Bill was not allowed the opportunity of carrying his amiable intentions into execution, for Ned Kelly watched the operation a great deal too closely to give him the chance.

A dozen times at the very least he found fault with Lardy Bill's method of operations, but at last Lanky Jim was bound tightly and securely enough to satisfy even him, and then he commanded Bill to give the ant-mound (a hillock as large as a bee-hive) a good stir with the iron lynch-pin that was at one end of the rope.

"But will you do it? Will you capture!"

"Well, and what do I care about that?"

"They're as big as bees, and they nip for all the world like the cussed quadrupeds they're called after."

"And aren't you in a fine condition for nipping?"

Lardy Bill groaned aloud, but he dared not disobey the commands he had received.

Standing as far away from the ant-hill as ever he could, he stretched out an arm and hand, and gave it a thorough good stir.

The terrified and ferocious insects, the next instant covered it in their countless myriads, some of them making straight for Lanky Jim with wide-gaping jaws, and some for Lardy Bill, with fear-rolling eyes, and his mouth screwed up into the shape of a monstrous capital O, was on the point of beating a hasty retreat, quivering all over like a giant blane-mange cast in a particularly ugly mould, when he was brought to a halt by Ned exclaiming—

"Go back and sit down on that mound."

"Oh, lor', capturing, I'd rather die a hundred times! It would be worse than being kicked to death by spiders, that would," answered Lardy Bill, trying to convince both himself and Kelly that they were both joking, but with lamentable ill-success.

"Do as I command you, scoundrel! Did you fancy

that I was going to let you off easier than your mate, or do you want my horse to knock you down and dance over you again first?"

Ned, father, this is awful, this is," mourned Lardy Bill: and he went and plumped himself down where he was hidden, hoping, perhaps, by sheer weight to squash a few hundred of his foes ere they could attack him in turn.

An instant, however, he sprang to his feet with an awful shriek, and was in the act of rushing away at all hazards, when Ned Kelly levelled a pistol at him, and put a bullet through one of his thighs, thereby causing him, with a shattered howl, to fall backwards right across the ant-hill.

In the twinkling of an eye he was covered with

ferocious insects.

He tried to break away from them again, but his perforated leg refused to support him.

He fell down once more among his diminutive foes, rolling, writhing, shrieking, and endeavouring, but all in vain, to scrape them off his mangled body with his hands.

In vain we say, for even when they were torn limb from limb, the gaping mouths, with the hands only attached thereto, clung firmly to the flesh whereon they had so grimly fastened.

Ned Kelly stayed for a second or two to watch and keenly enjoy the agonies of the two scoundrels who had sought to earn three thousand pounds blood-money (ultimately raised by successive additions to ten thousand pounds) by betraying him to the police; and then, giving utterance to a bitter laugh, he set spurs to his horse and galloped after Rose.

He overtook her about a quarter of a mile on, coming back to meet him.

"What did that pistol-shot mean, father?" she asked.

"Only a bullet through Lardy Bill's leg, so that he should be no better off than the fellow whom you wanged," answered Ned, with a laugh.

"You have kept your word, father?"

"Of course I have. Why these doubts? I ask you again. Did I ever break my word to you?"

"No, father. Forgive my mistrusting you, even for an instant; but I know you must hate these two sneaking sordid wretches. What are those clothes across your saddle-bow?"

"Some of the scoundrels' togs. They are running up and down so lively. They've got a nest just at its foot:—see?"

"And aren't you in a fine condition for nipping?"

Lardy Bill groaned aloud, but he dared not disobey the commands he had received.
ed them on to the exact spot just in time to prevent that vengeance from being wholly consummated.

You can well imagine and deliriously see the persons, who in another five minutes would have been as dead as Hamlet's ghost and Queen Anne, and Lanky Jim has just strength and venom enough to gasp, "Ned Kelly and his gal gone that way, towards Buninyong," etc., with a groan and a gasp, he faint.

So two of the troopers remained to tend the apparently dying men, whilst the remaining three spurred sharply on the fugitives' track, presently holding a brief council of war, and deciding to make somewhat of a detour with the object of heading them, and planting themselves in ambush, pluck them and should they could quietly await their coming, pop off Ned Kelly from behind a tree without allowing him the slightest chance of escape, or of injuring any of them in turn.

CHAPTER XXIX

ROSE GRADUATES FOR THE GALLOWS.

NED KELLY and his beautiful adopted daughter rode as gaily along through the sunlit bush as though grim death wasn't lying in wait for them (in the guise of three well-armed troopers sheltering nimbly in ambush) a matter of three or four miles. As the trundled burden of ironclad no longer now could, would laugh and chuckle to himself at the manner in which he fondly imagined he and the bulldog-ants in partnership had polished off his late treacherous allies, without the breaking of the promise he had made to Rose.

Little did he imagine that Lardy Bill and Lanky Jim had quite as good reason to laugh at him, and the Squatter Andrew M'Therson to join in the chorus. The axiom that threatened men live long was fated to be exemplified in all three instances in a most remarkable and extraordinary manner.

Rose could not imagine what Ned was chuckling about so frequently, but she was unfailingly glad to see him in such good spirits, and sometimes smiled for company.

Both smiles and chuckles were to receive a check before long, however, for as they drew near unto the scene of slaughter.

"Don't fret, father. Let them be," broke forth Rose, interrupting him. "See, I am not angry; no, nor fright­ened either. Let us think only of present dangers, for I can't believe we are out of the wood yet."

"Well, lass, I would be more satisfied myself if darkness was only a couple or three hours nearer. We haven't strike the Melbourne road until dusk has set in; the risk would be too great."

They already had these words escaped Ned Kelly's lips than forth from behind rather a big patch of tea-tree that bordered the faint bush-track that they were pursuing, came spurring the three troopers who had planted themselves there in ambush to await their coming.

The fact of Rose riding between them and Ned had alone prevented their discharging their carbines at him from behind their leafy cover, and in all probability bringing him down without the slightest danger to themselves.

They cursed her for the coincidence, but still, as they were three to one, they did not anticipate defeat.

They didn't regard the young girl in the light of a possible combatant, and so they gallantly swooped around the strangely assorted pair, brandishing their sabres and calling upon them to surrender themselves peaceably.

Ned's answer to this was to pluck forth a pistol from his holster and shoot one fellow through the midriff, who at once dropped from his horse, writhing in the agonies of death.

Then, had he only been able, he would have drawn the sword that hung at his own side, and tackled the other two.

But his right arm being still next to useless, he hurled the discharged pistol at one of the troopers' heads, and then made haste to pluck forth the second.

Ere he could do so, however, both were upon him, the sword of the first raised to cut him down, and that of the second shortened to run him through.

Rose saw with horror the imminent peril that he was in, and thinking only of saving his life, nor pondering that to effect that she would have to commit an act that the law would regard as murder, and punish with the death penalty, she drew forth one of her own handy weapons, took quick aim, fired, and saw a second trooper drop from his charger to the ground.

At the same instant the third and now sole survivor made a slice at Ned's head, but the bushranger ducked it suddenly and avoided the blow, seizing his assailant in turn by the throat and compressing it with such force that he dropped his weapon and looked as though his eyes would follow suit. But Ned's horse suddenly edged away he might have succeeded in throttling him outright, but as it was he was forced either to let go his hold or part company with his steed.

He chose the former alternative, and the trooper took advantage of his sudden liberation from that awful clutch to beat a precipitate retreat.

"You must pursue him—we must kill him, or your own life is sacrificed, Rose," said Ned, with his face as white as that of a corpse.
The lonely and now trembling girl had never seen him look so pale before. On his own account he never would have turned so, but he saw that she had committed murder in his defence, that the trooper was stone dead whom she had fired at, and that if the third man was allowed to survive he would suffocate at any moment to death fair, round, full throat with a collar of hemp 'neath the awful gallows.

Determined, therefore, to slay him at all hazards, Ned Kelly spurred his horse in pursuit; but what was his horror at discovering that he could only get a limp out of the head shot that had lacerated him so well.

He dismounted, to find that it had run the point of one of the dropped swords into the soft part of the off forehoof, the weapon having fallen into a deep wheel-rut, leaving the point some three inches of the blade protruding.

"Dismount and lend me your nag, Rose," said Ned hoarsely; "that fellow must be accounted for."

"I won't have any more blood shed, father."

"Nonsense, your own safety demands it, child."

"I won't lose my safety to more crime. I know what I have done—I did it to preserve your life."

"And now I want to preserve yours in turn."

"It may not be, father; I will not have it so. I will gallop away from you do what I must."

"Rose, are you mad? But what's the good of further talk? Your hesitation has given him already too great a start. I could never overtake him now. There is a police camp not five miles away, and in an hour we shall have a whole pack of them at our heels. Now what shall be done?"

Ned had never been so nonplussed before.

"We must both ride on one horse," said Rose.

"Yes, for those of the two dead troopers have followed their mate at a gallop, confound them. But Swiftsure's nearly used up as it is, Rose."

"There's several horses in yonder paddock."

"By George I won't close upon a station, then. Have it, Rose—we must play a bold and desperate game. I've our only chance. I'll jump up behind you. See, there I am. Thunder! But I'm twice the man that I was yesterday. There's the Home Station, Rose. I can see it between the trees. Spin towards it like wildfire, my lass."

CHAPTER XXX

TAKING THE BULL BY THE HORNS.

Rose did as she was bidden, and would have asked Ned on the way what he intended to do there, but that she knew he would not thank her for disturbing his thoughts in such a way.

Presently he enlightened her somewhat of his own free will, and this was the programme he submitted for her guidance:

"Rose," said he, "Ned Kelly's band have stuck up the Melbourne and Ballarat day coach between Ballan and Bacchus Marsh, and murdered every passenger aboard it except yourself. Of three troopers who came up to the rescue two were served in like manner, and I, the third, had my horse shot under me and cut across a like fate by shaming dead. When they had gone—the bushrangers—my mind—I brought you on here as being the nearest woman, whom we encountered on the way, to bring us help on our journey, and I shall talk of escorting you to Bacchus Marsh, where you can catch the night coach. That's the outline of my plot; I may improve on the details as they are demanded of me. Don't go forgetting your assumed name and calling me father. Be very careful about the way your hair is cut."

"What shall be our respective names then?"

"I'm Mr. Lanyon, and you're Miss Delancy."

"Very well, I'll try my best to sustain my character."

"Right, girl. Try, and you'll do it, never fear. We are close up to the station. This mag was lent us by a woman, whom we encountered on the way, to bring us either as soon as possible, and I am to say that things will be sent for. Stay, no, that will hardly go down, for they will wonder why we didn't push on for the nearest township instead. We must abandon Swiftsure, and do the rest of the journey on foot. I'm as right as minepew, and all my stiffness has passed away. I only wish that my arm was as good as my legs, and I'd be precious well content."

Ned was on the ground by this time, and Rose speedily dismounted in turn.

"Now then, off with saddle and bridle. The grass will hide 'em long enough for our purpose, and there are half-a-dozen other white horses about, so that one more added to their number will attract no suspicion. As to the traps, they'll never suspect us of taking refuge in such a place."

"What are we to do with these jackets and things?"

"With all the treasure in them? Oh my! and Ned gave a low whistle, expressive of embarrassment.

Suddenly, however, he began looking intently along the ground close under the outside fringe of scrub, and presently copying a wombat-hole, he signalled to Rose to follow him, which she commenced to twist up into small compass, and then to ram down into the hollow funnel.

"There's a plant!" he said, "a hundred to one I'll find it again though I don't come for it for a matter of six months; and I'll wager that no one will find it but me. Come along!"

"Must I say farewell for ever to poor Swiftsure?"

"No fear. I'll bring him safely away when I come for the treasure. But let us hurry up."

Rose obeyed, after once rubbing her soft cheek against Swiftsure's curiously velvety muzzle.

The horse uttered a low whinny, and would have followed them had not Ned driven it back.

It is no need for me to give a description of another squatter's station, for they were all pretty much alike at the period of which we write. When our story leaps over a period of some years, as it is destined to do ere it closes, we may be tempted to give a word-picture of what such a residence and domain is now.

The supposed trooper and his lovely girl companion were received with the hospitality that distinguished the Australian squatter of that day, and Ned Kelly's tale was listened to with a mingling of sympathy and horror.

The squatter was an old white-haired gentleman, who had landed with "Johnnie Falkner," the lately well-known Collingwood, J.P., in 1838, and had helped him to build the magnificent city of Melbourne.

He and his matronly, silver-ringleted spouse and two middle-aged spinster daughters all gathered round the trooper and the girl to listen to the thrilling account of the bushranger's fabulous misdeeds, Mr. Fairfax bemoaning meanwhile the fact (Ned was delighted at it) that his three stalwart sons and most of his station hands were cattle-mustering that day; far off in the ranges, so that they would never suspect us of taking refuge in such a place."

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Ned told his tale most plausibly; and Rose wept, over her dying mother, and shuddered at the horrors she had just been the witness of, in capital fashion, so that, as Kelly had foreseen, horses were immediately offered them, and food and wine pressed on their acceptance.
NED KELLY.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THROUGH STILL FURTHER PERILS.

She could hardly help smiling at Ned's change, who had purposely picked out the most dandified suit of all that had been laid before him. Ned declared that there was nothing more left to be done, and Rose said that the only wish she had was that she arrayed as he now was, he would have cut a very passable figure in Great Collins-street at promenades hour.

The squatter and his wife were most anxious to know what they could do more for them, but Ned declared that there was nothing more left to be done, and Rose said that the only wish she had was that he arrayed as he now was, he would have cut a very passable figure in Great Collins-street at promenades hour.

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lookout for us there, and we'd be in hourly danger of arrest, I want, whilst we are wailing in full feathert at Melbourne, for everyone to suppose we are somewhere else."

"Well, father, your will is my will also," said Rose.

"All right, put a good face upon it then. I'm a nephew of old Fairfax, and you are my daughter. We are making a short visit at the station. I enchanted it, did you pick up what the caller was?"

"Yes, father; its name is Tarramea."

"Good! That's fine. We are going to— to— to Bacchus Marsh for evening vespers. This is Sunday, aren't it ?"

"Yes, but vespers have commenced long since."

I'd then, to meet some friends who are journeying to Ballarat by the evening coach. That'll do."

"That'll do; and, our names, father?"

"Roger and Edith Fairfax, but they won't ask them."

"Should they do so, it is as well to be prepared."

There was no time for further colloquy, for the four mounted troopers were now close upon them. Ned and Rose were on the point of passing them by with careless nods when he who seemed to be in command, though none of the four wore a sergeant's stripes, reined up his horse and said—

"A couple of words with you, sir, if you please,"

"All right, my man," said Ned. "What is it?"

"Have you seen anything of a gal on a white horse, and a man on a big brown one?"

"No, we haven't met anyone since leaving Tarramea."

"But I saw two such people, papa," interposed Rose. "or at least I think so, for they were too far off for me to be quite sure about the matter."

"What way were they riding, miss?" asked the trooper.

"I saw their horse's heads and necks on the other side of yonder brush fence as we were coming out of the home paddock. The man's horse was behind, and seemed to be going lame. They were heading towards the gap between the Black Hills."

"Do you hear that, mates?" exclaimed the trooper, turning towards his companions. "Ten to one they are making for the twelve-mile patch of the Malice Scrub that lies between Deep Creek and Burnbank, and I guess we'll overtake them before they reach it, especially if Ned's horse has gone lame. Thank you for your information, gentlemen."

Thus did Ned try to cheer Rose up, and he in part succeeded, little fancying himself, meanwhile, that the perils of the journey were far from being over, that the deadliness was, in fact, yet to come.

CHAPTER XXXII
SOME OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

Ned and Rose were on the point of passing them by with careless nods when he who seemed to be in command, though none of the four wore a sergeant's stripes, reined up his horse and said—

"All right, Rose, it shall be so if you wish it."

"Good, kind father, purchase me then a bottle of the most deadly poison—a phial so small that I may easily conceal it in my bosom. I will only have recourse to it to save myself from a death of ignominy and shame. Indeed I will, father. Why can't we leave the country together, and lead different lives elsewhere?"

"Silence, Rose, or you will drive me mad."

"Not another word after you have promised me."

"Well, well, there! I promise; but, Rose, there isn't the slightest danger. Our detection will be impossible. I can do nothing but a career of splendour and absolute safety before as. I do not, indeed. Tut, tut! my bonnie girl, dry your tears. In four hours' time we will be in Melbourne, gay, glittering, joyous Melbourne, and all our troubles will be over. We will be as 'big bugs' as any people there."

"Such is my plan," said Ned, "and in part succeeded, little fancying myself, meanwhile, that the perils of the journey were far from being over. I say, Ned, tell me, what twos called?"

"Well, well, there! I promise; but, Rose, there isn't the slightest danger. Our detection will be impossible. I can do nothing but a career of splendour and absolute safety before as. I do not, indeed. Tut, tut! my bonnie girl, dry your tears. In four hours' time we will be in Melbourne, gay, glittering, joyous Melbourne, and all our troubles will be over. We will be as 'big bugs' as any people there."

CHAPTER XXXIII
SOME OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

"Silent, Ned."

"Will you listen to me, then?"

"Silence, Kose, or you will drive me mad."

"Hear! hear! Well said, Nimming Ned," growled a chorus of voices, and then a single one added, "Ned here, my dear Rose. By the time that we have reached the Melbourne than that whereon we left Ned Kelly and Rose— a piece of thick scrub about three miles in length and one mile in breadth, situate between Mount Alexander and the Ballarat roads just as they unite in one, and as continue all the way to the metropolis.

"In the midst of that patch of scrub, yet so situated that they can hear the rumble of heavy or the rattle of light vehicles proceeding along either road, is pitched a tent; and around it are gathered a group of seven as ruffianly-looking follows as any nation under the sun could manage to produce."

The full moon shines down upon a dirty ragged calico tent, on a huge calabash of savoury broth that hangs suspended from three crossed props over a big fire; on the gipsy-looking sentry, who stands grasping the barrel of his rifle and intently listening to the slightest sound a little further off; and, lastly, on the five remaining rascals, who sit or stand eagerly discussing the question of vengeance, bloodshed, and murder, in close proximity to the aforesaid ragged tent.

"Are they honest miners, journeys to or from the Ballarat or Mount Alexander diggings?"

"Well, they are got up as much as possible to look like it, but their ferocious countenances give to all honest labour the lie."

"The least ruffianly-looking of the group wears an old bell-top hat cocked rakishly on one side of his head,—albeit it has lost its brim a long while ago—and a red belcher handkerchief twisted loosely around his neck. With one hand thrust deep into the side pocket of his rusty jumper, and the other balancing a dirty clay pipe in such a manner as to give point to his arguments, our old acquaintance Dick Dawson, alias Carrotty Larkins, harangued his cut-throat-looking band as poured in our engraving.

"Ned," said he, "we must all stand true to each other. We are but seven of us left, but seven has always been a lucky number, and I don't so see why it should prove an unlucky one now that you've done me the honour of electing me as your captain. All I can say is that I'll prove as true as steel to your interests, an' that I'll prove as true as steel to your interests, an' that I'll prove as true as steel to your interests."
Kelly too much upon his blessed self. He was a tyrant, he war, divil a doubt of it."

"Which I will never be lads," ejaculated Carroty Larkins quickly; "no double allowance of spoil for me just because I was the last captain. That's the downfall of being your leader. No such thing. Share an' share alike, I say. You see I aren't hampered by the petticoats."

"Blow the petticoats!" came a unanimous chorus.

"Well, they are at the bottom of every mischief," asserted Carroty Larkins. "The instant, I means to say the late captain, and now, though a deal more of that gal Rose nor he did of any of us, and, wither his vitals! wo the late capten, allays thought a deal more of that gal."

"The capten, I moans to say thing. Share an' share alike, I say. You see 1 aren't going to have any share."

"The last capten's son he was, and the last capten's son he is," said Ned Kelly, as he struggled fiercely in the hands of his captors. "And, aye, I'll have a word or two with you about him."

"I wouldn't say as how he hadn't made up his mind to betray us to the traps. If that wasn't his little game why should he have slipped off so sly after the gold escort affair, if he wasn't afraid that the greedy Bill and Lanky Jim betrayed you, as you tell us they did, whatever of its being so, and I therefore resigns the command and beseeches on you to take it up again. There, I've said it."

"Our hailing him as our capten now, don't stop us cuttin' his throat when he's asleep by-and-by. His carrion's worth as much as his living body remember, and I'll cut his head off if you like, and you'll find Lanky Jim's skeleton hidden away about, 'em," and here he chuckled grimly.

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"The other men at once sprang to their feet, and, grappling their weapons, stole after their leader through the thickest scrub of the forest, ready for any deed of villainy as long as it brought them in gold."

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At this juncture, however, the sentry out beyond the belt of scrub to their camping-ground, whereupon Larkins, coming back, declared, "Our hailing him as our capten now, don't stop us cuttin' his throat when he's asleep by-and-by. His carrion's worth as much as his living body remember, and I'll cut his head off if you like, and you'll find Lanky Jim's skeleton hidden away about, 'em," and here he chuckled grimly.

"The other men at once sprang to their feet, and, grappling their weapons, stole after their leader through the thickest scrub of the forest, ready for any deed of villainy as long as it brought them in gold."

After a moment's consideration, Then Carroty Larkins, taking the lead, asked—

"Ay, on course we will. All's fish as comes to the net, lads. Come, let us look sharp."

"Which way is it to be, mates—the old capten or the new un? I'm for Carroty Larkins, I am."

"And I'm for Ned Kelly, still!" at once spoke up another bushranger; whereupon Larkins, coming back, exclaimed heartily, "I'm for Ned Kelly as well, and as I expect are we all. Ned, I was opposed to you as long as I thought you'd used us meanly and brutally, but I accept your explanation as a true un; indeed, I've no doubt whatever of its being so, and I therefore resigns the command and beseeches on you to take it up again. There, I've said it."

"Blow the petticoats!" came a unanimous chorus.

"The other men at once sprang to their feet, and, grappling their weapons, stole after their leader through the thickest scrub of the forest, ready for any deed of villainy as long as it brought them in gold."

"The other men at once sprang to their feet, and, grappling their weapons, stole after their leader through the thickest scrub of the forest, ready for any deed of villainy as long as it brought them in gold."

"Riders—two of 'em!" ejaculated Nimming Ned. "Which way is it to be, mates—the old capten or the new un? I'm for Carroty Larkins, I am."

"And I'm for Ned Kelly, still!" at once spoke up another bushranger; whereupon Larkins, coming back, exclaimed heartily, "I'm for Ned Kelly as well, and as I expect are we all. Ned, I was opposed to you as long as I thought you'd used us meanly and brutally, but I accept your explanation as a true un; indeed, I've no doubt whatever of its being so, and I therefore resigns the command and beseeches on you to take it up again. There, I've said it."

"Blow the petticoats!" came a unanimous chorus.

"The other men at once sprang to their feet, and, grappling their weapons, stole after their leader through the thickest scrub of the forest, ready for any deed of villainy as long as it brought them in gold."

"Ay, on course we will. All's fish as comes to the net, lads. Come, let us look sharp."

"The other men at once sprang to their feet, and, grappling their weapons, stole after their leader through the thickest scrub of the forest, ready for any deed of villainy as long as it brought them in gold."

"The other men at once sprang to their feet, and, grappling their weapons, stole after their leader through the thickest scrub of the forest, ready for any deed of villainy as long as it brought them in gold."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.—MELBOURNE.

Yes, Ned Kelly was really annoyed, almost beyond all patience and endurance, that his lot was again cast amongst this set of ruffians. He had made up his mind to have gone to the neighbouring colony of Sydney—to have introduced Rose to the respectable world, and somehow or other secured her a brilliant marriage."

"Yes, he had determined to be a political refugee (a class of men that all romantic women love), an Irish noble with a price set upon his head for endeavouring to emancipate his unhappy country from the rule of the bristling Saxon."

"Yes, he had determined to be a political refugee (a class of men that all romantic women love), an Irish noble with a price set upon his head for endeavouring to emancipate his unhappy country from the rule of the bristling Saxon."

"And now here was a dead weight cast upon all these brilliant plans and prospects, a dead weight that he dared not cast off. But in the meantime what should he do with this disreputable-looking tail in Melbourne? They would never pass rauster as Irish refugees, they looked a deal more like Neapolitan brigands, and the chances were that they would find themselves
totally unable to keep out of mischief, whilst the odds were at a hundred to one that if one got legged he would seek to slip his own neck out of the hangman’s noose by substituting those of all his comrades, his (Ned’s) and Rose’s included.

And yet Kelly felt that to shake them off now was impossible. Having re-elected their captain, an honour that it would have been as much as his life was worth to have declined, they would stick to him as tightly as barnacles stick to a drifting piece of wreckwood, expecting him almost daily to plan out schemes of villainy that would enrich the entire commonwealth, which riches would be quickly dissipated in women and wine, two sources from which betrayal was about equally to be expected. Could things possibly have happened worse?

But Ned now regretted that he had revealed himself to the bushrangers, for he felt sure that even Carroty Larkins would have recognised him also.

True, he had done so in order to save Rose from their ruffianly hands; and when he reflected that the revolution certainly had saved her, he became convinced that after all he had acted for the best.

So the question was reduced to that of making the best of a bad bargain. What was already done could not be recalled. He must make what use of these men he could, controlling them so that they should do as little harm as possible.

Rose guessed pretty nearly what were the subjects of his thoughts, and so did not interrupt him even by a word.

The bushrangers, however, soon showed themselves to be more importunate; and when supper was disposed of and pipes lighted, they nudged each other as to who should be spokesman, and presently Carroty Larkins made bold to speak up—

“Well, capten, since I’ve given up the command to you with a very good grace, I suppose as I’ve a right to con­"ider myself your lieutenant; and in the character of that there middle I now ax you the plan of our future campaigns.”

“May I first enquire of you what you intended to have done in case I hadn’t rejoined you?”

“In course you may, capten; an’ in the present instance easy axed is easy answered. You see we’re a tidy little outfit here, right across two roads, and them the main roads to and from a couple ov rich diggings, so that we couldn’t be in a better spot for filling our pockets at other folks’ expense. Ain’t it, boys? If so, speak up.”

“Ay, ay! a fine place,” echoed several rangers.

“‘Well, capten, since I’ve given up the command to you,” echoed Ned testily. “The thing can’t be done. It stands to reason as how it can’t be done. A short road to the gal­ lows, that’s all that it’ll prove,” and so on—Ned raised a hand to impose silence, and then said impressively—

“Tut, tut! nothing’s impossible to brave and determined men. But there’s a hard nut to be cracked first—the nut that the golden kernel is inside of. What say you, lads, to robbing the richest bank in Melbourne city and des­­­camping with the spoil? Don’t speak all at once!”

But they did speak all at once, the scheme was so exactly to their taste.

Even Nimming Ned was won over.

Larkins alone was obdurate, for he hadn’t forgiven Kelly for so severely criticising his generalship, and out­­­of sheer spite he felt disposed to oppose him in everything.

In reply to a host of questions—all poured in upon him at once, and mingled with Carroty Larkins’s clearly audible notions of “The thing can’t be done. It stands to reason as how it can’t be done. A short road to the gal­ lows, that’s all that it’ll prove,” and so on—Ned raised a hand to impose silence, and then said impressively—

“Listen, lads, to my scheme. The Bank of Australasia is on the right-hand side of Collins-street, a few doors from the Criterion Hotel and the Argus Office. Opposite are some fine shops, and it’s not very often in these times of everyday slopping off to try their luck at the diggings that one of ‘em can’t be had. I’ll take one of those shops, and open it, say, as a wholesale drug store, or a merchant’s of some kind. The upper portion I shall appropriate as my private residence, whilst the entire ground floor and cellar will be devoted to business. Do you follow me?”

There was a general shuffling of heads, and looks of quite comical bewilderment.

Not one of the assemblage understood him in the least degree.

Ned smiled grimly, and then continued—

“In my business I shall require many hands—ware­housemen, and shopmen, and carters, and indoor and out­­­door porters. They will live nowhere or other about the basement premises, and talk to customers and act like other folks. They will make no friends in or about the city, but be sober and orderly and civil to all cus­tomers and others, and work by night as well as by day,”

“Ooh, that be bloomed at this point remarked some­body.

“Yes, they will,” said Ned Kelly, fixing the speaker with his eye; “for at night each man will be working for his own future. He will be wielding spade and pick to make himself a millionaire.”

“A milliner! What the deuce do we want to make ourselves milliners for—a trade made as is only fit for women?” growled Carroty Larkins.
"The captain don't mean that kind; he means the sort as is rolling in wealth, mumskull. Millioners and millioners hasn't the same thing either. Go ahead, boss, and don't mind him."

"Well then," said Ned, "at night, to speak more plainly, we'll be a fowling a tunnel right under Collins-street, waiting for anyone guess where?"

"Ay, close up to some bonnie craft as is lying alongside the quay at the bottom ov Flinder's-street, which we'll board and carry on, then put in sea," hazarded one of the ex-sailors wildly.

"'Tain't a chance game!" muttered Larkins.

"I should think it would be," laughed Ned Kelly.

"The tunnel will be into the bullion vaults of the Bank ov Australasia, where each one of us will be able to enrich himself to the very top of his bent. Ha, ha! you seem to grow suddenly interested. What think you of my plan, lads? Do you fall in with it, eh?"

"Fall in with it? There wasn't a bit of doubt about that. The seven men suddenly changed into seeming munies in their greed for gold. Their eyes almost started out of their heads, and their hands clasped the air or the grass; they gasped for breath, the scheme seemed to them so grand and sure, and the success thereof so extremely probable.

"And when we've copped the gold, if so be as we do cop it, what then, captain?" asked Larkins.

"Ere that time comes I shall have chartered a slope or small coasting schooner to convey some of my merchandise to the place where we mean to strike, and if I can make a fortune more quick than can be readily concealed, behind you, that you enter Melbourne singly, or at most in pairs, and from different directions; that you get yourselves shared and looking decent as soon as possible, and even before you think of reasssembling, each in the kind of dress that was the badge of his calling or pursuit before he took to a fierce and lawless life, for there are stop and second-hand clothes shops everywhere, and that you avoid my coming in the employment office will you? Two of the men first go, and the captain, nearly opposite the Horse Bazaar, at noon, on Tuesday, all pretending to be strangers to each other. You understand me?"

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed everyone in a burst.

"Make haste with our horses, then," answered Ned.

"It's round the Horn we'll have to go; and for the success of their daring enterprise the men who brought up the horses set off to catch and equip a couple of steeds, and Ned whistled to Rose.

In a minute she was by his side, and looking up anxiously into his face.

"We are about to continue our journey," said he; "shake hands with our friends, lass, for when next you see them we shall all of us be engaged in honest and legitimate trades."

"I am so glad to hear it," answered the lovely girl, and she held out one hand to Currawy Larkins and the other to Nimming Ned at once, who each laid hold of the tendered article as gingerly as though it was a piece of valuable waxwork that without tender handling would be very likely to break off in their grasp.

The others copied their tactics exactly, as presently did the two men who brought up the horses.

Ned Kelly laid Rose into the saddle and then mounted himself.

The bushrangers would have raised a cheer, but Ned stopped them, as it would not have been altogether safe, and after retarding some of his cautions and directions they rode away.

"We are well out of that mess, dear," said Ned.

"Yes," answered Rose, "but I'm glad we fell across the men, both for their own sakes and that of others, since you have really persuaded them henceforth to turn over a new leaf and lead an honest life.

"The bushrangers would have raised a cheer, but Ned stepped on the brake, as it would not have been altogether safe, and after retarding some of his cautions and directions they rode away.

"We are well out of that mess, dear," said Ned.

"Yes," answered Rose, "but I'm glad we fell across the men, both for their own sakes and that of others, since you have really persuaded them henceforth to turn over a new leaf and lead an honest life.

"Oh, father, I hope none of them will betray you." "I have no fear, girl.

"Yes, Rose," he said, with the capital that I have in hand I am going to open business as a merchant, and take all these men into my employ.

"Oh, father, I hope none of them will betray you."

"Well, you know them better than I do, and if you feel certain that you can trust them I of course shall be very happy in the thought that you have done them good."

"He happy, then, for I am quite safe."

And then he changed the conversation to other topics, for he dared not dwell longer on that one.

Melbourne was now only fifteen miles distant, and scattered villages and townships soon began to call on the way.
CHAPTER XXXIV.

MESSRS. BELLAMY & CO., WHOLESALE MERCHANTS.

A week has passed away, and a new and extensive place of business has been opened in Great Collins-street, exactly opposite the Bank of Australasia, under the designation of "Bellamy & Co., wholesale merchants."

The warehouse is, however, apparently crowded with great bales and boxes and articles of merchandise, done up in every form and shape; and clerks and indoor and outdoor porters and warehousemen, all clean and business-like, are eternally pottering hither and thither; and cuts and wagons are continually being laden and unloaded before the doors; and sailors, with a fresh and wholesome smell of the briny about them, visited the premises hurriedly and hastened away again with equal speed, lightning up their unmentionables, and quenching thirsts for grog poured down the pavement, as sailor-men are proverbially supposed to do.

Had anyone looked at the upper windows of Messrs. Bellamy & Co.'s, he would have observed those of the drawing-room floor to be draped by cloth-of-gold curtains, decorated with heavy bullion fringe and tassels; and at one or other of them he would have frequently seen the face and form of a young and lovely girl, the face framed by a mass of glossy clustering curls, that gleamed with almost the brilliances of jet as they rippled over full, fair, creamp-coloured shoulders that would have put to shame the whiteness of Carrara marble; and the form, that was just swelling into the rounded contours of womanhood, draped in the most expensive stuffs that the whole world was capable of containing to its adornment.

After business hours a couple of thoroughbred horses, held by a natty groom, or a high dogcart and tandem, might be frequently beheld in front of the side private door, and presently that young girl would trip forth, attired for riding or driving, as the case might be, and attended by a gentleman, who was supposed to be her father, but who might almost have passed for her elder brother—said gentleman being always faultlessly attired, and neatly gloved and booted—and bystanders would remark, as the comely and aristocratic-looking couple dashed off—

"There go the rich Mr. Bellamy and his only child."

"And how happy is Rose. She believes that the man whom she regards, and notwithstanding all his crimes seemingly to her father, is really leading an honest life, and, furthermore, has induced others to do so. She recognises at least half those clerks and porters and sailors and warehousemen as former members of the bushranger band up in the Mount Macedon ranges, and the new hands who are strangers to her, and about equal them in numbers, look to her equally honest and respectable.

How changed would have been her feeling had she but known that the whole lot of them were the biggest set of villains ever left unhung, that the subterranean tunnel was already commenced whose termination would be the bullion vaults of the opposite bank, and that one and all, her stylish-looking companion included, were ready to commit any and every crime rather than be foiled in their undertaking.

Behold them of a night in a large room on the basement-floor of the mansion, that has been given up to them for their sole use, and you would not suppose this comely and aristocratic-looking couple sitting at Carver's, or in the Temple of Venus, or in their rugged, wide-spreading tent, beneath a clear sky, and drinking and talking peaceably and quietly, and smoking and laughing, and making plans for the capture of some of the most notorious bushrangers of the West. No wonder they think they are safe, for they are!
NED KELLY
THE IRONCLAD
AUSTRALIAN BUSHRANGER

[Image: Illustration depicting a scene with a central figure lying on the ground, surrounded by other figures in a dramatic setting.]
CHAPTER XXXV.

NED KELLY.

Am I always to be in danger from your infernal stupidity, by which you risk your own necks and ruin too? Clear of this, the lot of you! Such pails as you are, are not to be trusted. I'm only safe because I've got your necks in my hand, and don't you go with me if I go to the drop.' I'll shut up this crib to-night and leave it. We don't work together any more. I'm done with this job. Now squeeze!' The men expostulated, but they might as well have tried to move the pyramid of Cheops. Out they went.

Ned locked up the place, and, to battle his crew, he arranged to meet them in a week on the ranges.

He appointed another meeting with Carroty and Dawson, and removed the same evening with Rose to an hotel.

He began to fear that so many coons would spoil the brood, and that their want of caution would betray them and him too. They had nearly 'knocked down' the 'spoils' they had in their possession when arriving in town; and if they required fresh supplies they must return to their old bush practices of robbing, and perhaps murdering, lucky diggers.

This was of daily or nightly occurrence at Gambiers and Ballarat.

The ground was honeycombed with pits from twenty to fifty feet deep, and nothing was more easy or common than for half-drunk or perfectly sober diggers being, like Joseph, 'nest into the pit,' there to remain and rot.

Many a lucky digger has entertained his assassin, and, when asleep, been murdered and thrown into the nearest hole in the nearest 'clay.'

Ned's band were most practised in this style of 'foraging,' as they named it, and always knew how and where to replenish their exchequer.

Consequently the most of them cleared out of Melbourne the following morning at daylight.

To decide suspiion Ned removed the same night to a third-rate hotel. To give orders to have all his merchandise and furniture sold (as he was about to proceed to England), paid a quarter's rent, and gave up the premises.

But nothing was more foreign to his intentions than to abandon his bank project. Rose did not know whether to feel alarmed or pleased at being an inmate of what seemed to her too public a residence, but, keen and observant, she followed Ned Kelly, and uninvited, took a cool determination.

Graceful and ladylike by nature, and not being too demonstrative in manner, she passed muster for the daughter of a gentleman who was visiting the land of gold for amusement, while the sight of so many gaily-dressed people and waiters, flitting about in hot haste, brought all her self-control into action.

Ned seemed to know the hotel as well as if he had been its oldest inhabitant, and bringing Rose into the dining-room, he ordered a plentiful rather than elegant repast, which was quickly served, and as quickly dispatched.

"Rose," said Ned Kelly, as he pushed away his plate and leaned back in his chair, "it is time that you went to bed. The long journey is too much for you. You look thoroughly done up—washed out; but a good long 'coil' will bring the bloom back again. Listen to me. Keep up the name of Bellamy; show no surprise at anything you may see or hear, but keep your ears and eyes open, and let me know all you see and hear.'

For the unfortunate girl Rose with a sigh to go to the room appointed to her, she stopped and kissed the horrid bushranger.

The caress seemed to produce a soothing effect upon him; he leaned his elbows upon the table, and shivered his head with his hand as if striving to conceal its expression from Rose.

"What is the matter, father?" she asked. "It is you
who require sleep. Your eyes are sunk deep in your head. Rest, father, or you will be knocked up."

Ned laughed bitterly as he pushed back the hair from the girl's brows and looked fixedly into her eyes. "This place was ill, Rose," he said. "This place and all about it call up strange recollections. I am rather downhearted at times, and particularly so to-night. I've something to think of, so be off to your room."

She obeyed without uttering another syllable, but was evidently depressed by Ned's manner and words. Ned sat staring for a long time at the gaudily-decorated walls.

Her eyes were fixed upon vacancy, his thoughts evidently concentrated upon some important project. At last he sprang to his feet, and giving himself a shake, as if to dissipate unwelcome thoughts, he put on his "billycock" and rushed out into the open air.

He was in a restless mood, and paced nervously through the streets, stopping now and then to scan the faces of the passers-by, for, like all criminals, "he feared an officer in every bush."

There had only just arrived in the colony, and exhibited all the curiosity and interest in surrounding objects, of "new chums." Activity and ardour seemed the characteristic of everyone. He was about business or pleasure;"the world before them where to choose," as Milton says of our first parents—no downcast labour-worn faces—plenty reigned, one. Busy about business or pleasure, "the world before him.""Billycock" and rushed out into the open air.

The very stars were almost as bright as northern ones; but I don't suppose who or what I am matters much to anyone. Enough," he ejaculated, with some regret, "I won't forget it in a hurry. No angel of light could be more welcome than the sight of you.""I am not quite one of your angels of light; yet," Ned Kelly said, laughing, "a little darkness suits me better at times; but I don't suppose who or what I am matters much to anyone. Enough," he ejaculated, with some regret, "I won't forget it in a hurry. No angel of light could be more welcome than the sight of you.""I am not quite one of your angels of light; yet," Ned Kelly said, laughing, "a little darkness suits me better at times; but I don't suppose who or what I am matters much to anyone. Enough," he ejaculated, with some regret, "I won't forget it in a hurry. No angel of light could be more welcome than the sight of you."

"My name, if it's any use to you, is Harry Marston." A sudden thought flashed through Kelly's brain. "I'll use him," he muttered; "just the man I want—unsuspicious, young, and respectable. He's the ladder I'll climb out of danger on.

"There's a sovereign for you; you can repay me when you can, and, if you follow my advice, you won't long want tin. Give me a look in at the Bush Inn to-morrow morning—Mr. Bellamy. Hump! We don't do the swell business with cards here. What's your name?" He asked, with a fierce smile.

"Remember the name," Harry Marston said, his face blazing with hope and gratitude; "by Jove! I won't forget it in a hurry. No angel of light could be more welcome than the sight of you.""

He had nearly reached the top, when he stopped and clutched at his hair. His blood, which seemed to suddenly stagnate, in another instant coursed madly through his veins, for right in front of him stood "Sandy" M'Pherson, or the "fetch" of the squatter. "Death and furious! speak if you are a man," Ned Kelly growled between his teeth.

At last he fell into a troubled heavy sleep, but was evidently greatly disturbed by his dreams. His whole career, as well as its probable end was vividly pictured by the nightmare that oppressed him. Day dawned, and found Adam. His knife had dived three times into his body, trembling, and continually glancing over his shoulder.

As Andrew M'Pherson rose before his heated imagination he looked wildly and ferociously around.

"Are you mad?" he muttered. "Has my brain turned? Come back, and if you can be grappled with, let me place my hands upon you, and I will finish the work I thought I had done before."

There was no reply to these ravings, and after a moment's hesitation, Ned Kelly entered his room and looked wildly and fearfully around.

"I was my fancy," he said, "but I'm not a fellow given to that sort of thing. Palaw! When Ned Kelly's 'nut' fails him and he goes wild, some of the lot hereabouts will have to look out; but I'll get out of this right off, and out the road. I've enough, and "Roses must be looked to."

To throw himself on the bed, but could not sleep. Whenever he closed his eyes the figure of Andrew M'Pherson rose before his heated imagination. He certainly saw a man he thoroughly believed to be as dead as Adam. His knees had divested three times into his body, and if he lived after that, more than Ned Kelly would have been assassinated. He trembled and tossed about all night. At last he fell into a troubled heavy sleep, but was evidently greatly disturbed by his dreams. His whole career, as well as its probable end was vividly pictured by the nightmare that oppressed him. Day dawned, and found him awake but restless and feverish. He was weak, trembling, and continually glancing over his shoulders.

He did not leave the room until he had swallowed a
as he had been, he would have shrunk from the service as to his free-mannered and free-hearted employer. Little as any in or out of the colony."

He went to fulfil it. He was sure the young fellow would whom he communicated the fact of his having become the place with an expression of satisfaction on his countenance. 

He thought of plundering a company was more to his liking. 

as if he was from the right stock, eh?"

Kelly had passed, or of the "shadows that struck more terrors to the soul of Richard" than the forms of fifty ordinary enemies.

"Yes, Ned," said Kelly, compressing his lips, and grasping the edges of the table. "This must be a visitation from the dead. No man could live after the way I handled him with my knife. I couldn't be such a butch as to do my work so badly. I don't generally leave much to finish when I'm on the war-path."

and strange terrors are often made. However, its not worth bothering about, so we'll talk of something else.

"And so, you see, you could have prevented the young fellow from accepting the key of the house, and made a close examination of the contents of the premises and saw they would do well for his purpose. They were furnished, which would save him a great deal of trouble. He took note of the shop's address, lost no time in possessing himself of the key of the house, and made a close examination of the rooms, but especially of the underground portion. Tare he was for some considerable time inspecting. He left the place with an expression of satisfaction on his countenance. He immediately took the house, and then sought Rose, to whom he communicated the fact of his having become the tenant of the premises in question.

"Now, Rose, make yourself at home as soon as possible. We shall be very comfortable there."

He told her of his rendezvous with Marston, and then went to fulfill it. He was sure the young fellow would keep the appointment, the sovereign lent him would ensure his punctuality.

Kelly reconnoitred the premises and saw they would be well for his purpose. They were furnished, which would save him a great deal of trouble. He took note of the shop's address, lost no time in possessing himself of the key of the house, and made a close examination of the rooms, but especially of the underground portion. Tare he was for some considerable time inspecting. He left the place with an expression of satisfaction on his countenance. He immediately took the house, and then sought Rose, to whom he communicated the fact of his having become the tenant of the premises in question.

"Now, Rose, make yourself at home as soon as possible. We shall be very comfortable there."

He told her of his rendezvous with Marston, and then went to fulfill it. He was sure the young fellow would keep the appointment, the sovereign lent him would ensure his punctuality.

He found Harry Marston waiting for him, and it leaked to him that Marston had not paid any attention to strangers. Rose.

"At once," Ned replied. "Of course I shall want you to see that the shop is properly fitted, so you can well come along now, and I must introduce you to my daughter, Miss Bellamy."

Harry Marston looked uneasily at his rather dilapidated clothes, which Ned Kelly, over observant, understood in a moment. "Never mind your togs," he said, jovially. "It isn't the feathers that make the birds here. We'll rig you up to-morrow in first-class style, and in such a way as will make you think you've never left England, and you shall yet 'swell it,' as finely as any 'big-wig,' in the colony. Rose is not the girl to judge a man by his coat."

Harry Marston sighed. He was then thinking of a quiet little village, and an ivy-covered cottage, with a lawn running down to the banks of a stream ever making music as it hurried to greet its parent ocean. He was thinking of the garden-gate where he parted with some one inexpressibly dear to him, and the words he uttered were impressed on his memory.

It was the old tale—never to forget her—that hope would buoy him in his efforts to win that which would have been his; but, if not, there was yet hope for the in his gratitude he could have embraced Ned Kelly. He never once had his lips pressibly dear to him, and the words he uttered were impressed on his memory.

But now there was a chance of retrieving his fortune, and in his gratitude he could have embraced Ned Kelly.

"Rose, my lass," he said, after he had introduced her to Harry Marston, "what do you think of him? He looks as if he was from the right stock, eh?"

"I think I shall like him very much; especially, father, as you seem to be quite taken with him."

But you mustn't be falling in love really, Rose, for that would spoil all our future plans. He is an instrument I must use. All men are vain and weak, especially where women are concerned. When a man thinks a woman—especially a pretty one—is taken with him, he's half-captured, and already started on the road to meet his fate. So, exercise your influence over him, Rose; make him your slave, and when the time is ripe for action, we can mould him as we wish."

"Love him, indeed!" she said. " Why, father, what nonsense you talk. When I fall in love with anybody, I think the sky will fall—there's not much danger of that."

"But I want you to fall in with my little plan. You must gain his love if you can, it will be most necessary to our future plans. He is an instrument I must use. All men are vain and weak, especially where women are concerned. When a man thinks a woman—especially a pretty one—is taken with him, he's half-captured, and already started on the road to meet his fate. So, exercise your influence over him, Rose; make him your slave, and when the time is ripe for action, we can mould him as we wish."

"When am I to commence work?" he asked."

"At once," Ned replied. "Of course I shall want you to see that the shop is properly fitted, so you can well come along now, and I must introduce you to my daughter, Miss Bellamy."
He here revealed to Rose his intention to rob the bank, and the means by which he intended to do it.

Rose seemed greatly agitated, but knew it was useless to expedite him. Besides all this, her moral sense had not been improved by her relations with Ned; but he assured her this would be his last coup, and then he'd be off to South America and lead a different sort of life.

CHAPTER XXXVI.
HOW THE DRUG-STORE FLOURISHED.

It took some time for Harry Marston to believe in his good fortune, or to thoroughly appreciate it.

His patron, Mr. Bellamy—as Ned Kelly called himself—interfered but little, save in the employment of a porter or two, and, as the reader may guess, Dick Dawson and Carrotty Larkins were not long in establishing themselves on the premises.

One evening, as Harry Marston was writing a letter full of hope and good tidings to Amy Melville, Rose entered the room, and looked over his shoulder.

"Who is it, Dick?" she asked. "Pardon me, I am sorry that I disturbed you."

"Don't apologise, Miss Bellamy," Harry Marston said, as the colour mounted in his cheeks. "I am writing to those who are most dear to me in the world. I was telling them of my good fortune, and that I could not make out why Mr. Bellamy and you are so kind to me."

Rose sighed, and cast down her eyes.

"My father is a peculiar man, and he acts on the impulse of the moment," she replied. "It is no vain boast with the intention of tearing the letter into fragments, and then he'd be off."

"For your sake, Miss Bellamy?" Harry Marston said, opening his eyes in astonishment. "I fail to comprehend your meaning."

"Do not question me," Rose said, turning her head away shyly. "My father desires that I shall become the wife of a worthy man, and he has left me to follow the dictates of my own heart, and...

She ceased speaking, and with hurried footsteps she turned and left the room. The fact was that she was not playing a part. She was evidently attracted by the handsome and amiable manners of the "manager."

The evening was cool, and Harry Marston strolled quietly along the street, enjoying the cool breeze that had succeeded a blazing day.

Two men talking rather thick and loudly attracted his attention, and hearing Mr. Bellamy's name mentioned he stopped.

"Well, Jack," said one, "our new boss is cutting a fine figure with his money; and did you twig the girl? Why she's dressed like Queen Victoria."

"And yet he ain't no gentleman, I'll swear," Jack replied. "See here, Bill, was it in a swell's service for many a year, and I can spot the real thing as quick as you can a diamond from glass. Why this feller don't brush his teeth in the morning as all the swells do, and his hands are as hard and coarse as bullocks' hoofs. And as for the girl, I'll tell you what she is—"

"What is she?" demanded Harry Marston, losing his temper and striding up to the fellows. "Keep a civil tongue in your head, and don't be talking of people you know nothing about, or you may get into trouble, my friends."

"Who in thunder are you?" the man demanded. "If this is not a free country I should like to see one. A man may say what he likes here."

"But he must take the consequences," said Harry Marston. "I happen to be the keeper of the drug-store, and to be on good terms with Mr. Bellamy and his daughter, so I won't hear their names bandied about by such scum as you."

The men looked at the well-knit muscular figure before them and felt abashed.

"Don't rise your dander," Jack growled. "When a man comes into such a place as this and flings money about as the wind scatters chaff, it is only natural that people should wonder where he got it from."

"What's that business of all this?" Harry Marston replied hotly; and it is like your confounded impudence to mention his name in any way but with respect."

"Well, you have a right to stick up for him," and the man called Bill, "especially as you are the young fellow he has taken under his wing. Don't be above taking a bit of advice. Keep your eye open; mind who you're working with. We knows a thing or two."

Harry Marston was too indignant to reply, and, turning sharply on his heel, he left the two men staring at him. The conversation did not add to the ease of Harry Marston's mind.

Why should Mr. Bellamy be suspected by anyone, and suspected of what? The want of cleanliness about the teeth and the hard hands had never impressed him before; but he thought of all now.

But what were such trifles to the gigantic he owed the men who had lifted him from the mud to a state of prosperity? Filled with thought, he was nearing the shop, when a man slipped a piece of paper into his hand and glided away like a shadow.

The paper was a printed bill, offering ten thousand pounds reward for Ned Kelly, dead or alive; and Harry Marston, after reading it carefully, folded it up and placed it carefully in his pocket.
"I am not likely to fail across this celebrity," he said, laughing, as he entered the house, "and if I did I think I should give him a wide berth rather than risk being made a target of to his sure aim. Besides, by this morning's paper he's far enough off just now.

He was thinking of an account of a "hailing up" of a back-manager which appeared in that morning's paper, and in which the name of Ned Kelly prominently figured.

The fact was, some ruffians belonging to his former band traded under his name, and caused it to be supposed the ubiquitous Ned was always the chief of that party, and in front of their offending.

This suited his purpose well, and directed suspicion upon his person when residing in the city.

He was not quite so prodigal of showing himself now until after dusk. He became more cautious as the great aim and end were approaching.

But to return to Harry.

"Halloa! What are you waiting for?"

He addressed Dick Dawson and Carroty Larkins, who were hanging about in the passages.

Mr. Bellamy told us to wait," Carroty Larkins replied. "He says that as we are sometimes late in the morning he will have us sleep in the house.

Harry Marston made no reply, but the intelligence astounded him; and he was puzzled to know what motive Mr. Bellamy could have in keeping two such fellows under the same roof.

"Very well," he said at last, "I will see Mr. Bellamy and have the necessary arrangements made for you. By the way, you are a couple of strong fellows, why don't you go into the bush and earn ten thousand pounds by catching Ned Kelly?"

"Eh?" said Carroty Larkins, starting back. "Who put you up to that dodge?"

"A notification by the Government," Harry Marston replied. "Here it is, and you may make what use of it you think fit."

Carroty Larkins and Dick Dawson exchanged glances; but Mr. Bellamy's voice calling for Harry Marston put an end to all further conversation on the subject.

"I have sent for you," said Ned Kelly, "to ask you a few questions. I may be right or I may be wrong, but I fancy that you have been casting sleepy eyes on my daughter Rose."

"I give you my word of honour that such a thing has never entered my head," Harry Marston replied hastily, and he kicked up to the roots of his hair. "My dear sir, I would not dare to think of—"

"Lut, tut!" said Ned Kelly laughingly. "Boys will be boys, and girls will be girls. Hear me out. I rather suspect that Rose has been drifting in the same direction. You have acted squarely with me, and I will be honest with you, and I tell you plainly that if you can win her, I will throw no obstacles in the way.

Harry Marston drew a deep breath, a mist gathered before his eyes, and the room seemed to swim.

"Mr. Bellamy," he said, "I am at a loss to understand why you continue to shower favours on me. You picked me up a beggar, knew nothing about me, and yet overlooked me with kindness, and would even sanction my marrying your lovely daughter!

"My dear fellow," Ned interrupted, "I haven't travelled round the world half a-dozen times without knowing when I see a real good fellow—one of the right sort! Well, of course, I come of a good family myself, so you see I am able to judge. And as to knowing little of you, perhaps I know more than you think. Well, think over what I have said, and keep the matter a secret.

"I will be plain with you," said Harry Marston; "instead of having any thoughts of your daughter, who is far removed from me in point of worth and wealth, I am engaged to be married to a lady in England."

"So are many young fellows here," Ned said; "but they have left others behind them who may take their places. But I don't want to throw cold water on your hopes, and as I have said before, I suspect that Rose is getting fond of you; you had better close up the house, and see as little of her as possible."

"But, sir," said Harry Marston, "I hope you do not think I have taken any mean advantage of my position here."

"On the contrary, I think you have acted like a man, in telling me the truth," Kelly replied. "Well, there is an end of the matter for the present. Look out for a suitable place in the morning, but in all other respects you will be master here as usual."

As soon as Harry Marston left the room, Ned rose and walked hurriedly to and fro.

"What am I doing?" he said aloud. "I am tampering with the girl's happiness—she fancies him already, that's clear, and what sort of a mate am I preparing for him? My example has not been of the best—but there, it's no use preaching; she must take things as she finds them, and if they are a little against her girl—well, I can't help it. I've done my best for her, and I love her as a father—ay, better than half the fathers and mothers in the world—and ought she not to serve me? Of course she ought. Yet I would not be sorry if she could marry Harry Marston; he's a decent, good chap, but he's booked in England, and says, Well, that takes off some of the regret I should feel at his being bugged for the little affair that's coming off. But what does it matter when we're all off with the bank's gold? He'll be nabbed as a party to it, because his name is over the door. I can't, however, sacrifice us all to him—no, Rose neither. He belongs to another woman, more fool he, that's all I've got to say—good chance for him lest here."

He started as the door opened, and Rose softly entered the room.

"Father," she said, "am I to continue this deceit with Harry Marston? I assure you I don't like it, only you tell me it is necessary to your plans. I have had an interview with him, but he is gloomy and silent."

"I hardly know what to say, lass," Ned Kelly replied, knitting his brows, and speaking in a low tone of voice. "I begin to wish I had never set eyes on him, or brought you into it. You ought to be away from me altogether, I'm bad company, my girl, for you."

"I don't like me," Rose said earnestly. "What can I do to repay the love and gratitude you owe me? I fear very little, and yet in my poor way would sacrifice my life for you, so I ought to do, if necessary; and I would do so to the last."

"To the last?" Ned Kelly repeated. "What do you mean by that last?"

"I have strange fancies at times," Rose replied. "I dream of a sort of mist coming over the future, and seem to wander into the future, where I have more showers, and gazed thoughtfully into her eyes."

"I am not likely to fall across this celebrity," he said, laughing, as he entered the house, "and if I did I think I should give him a wide berth rather than risk being made a target of to his sure aim. Besides, by this morning's paper he's far enough off just now.

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"I will be plain with you," said Harry Marston; "instead of having any thoughts of your daughter, who is far removed from me in point of worth and wealth, I am engaged to be married to a lady in England."

"So are many young fellows here," Ned said; "but
"Come! look sharp there! I want a shilling, and so would you, miss, I can tell you, if you had ridden and walked the number of miles I have."  

The speaker was a smart young fellow, booted and spurred, and as he stood at the bar he hummed in a rich manly voice a tune to the time he impatiently marked his whip on the counter.  

The pert and pretty barmaid who was spooning on a young and good-looking man just returned from the diggings, said "Don't you think it's the best thing for him in a matrimonial sense, did not seem pleased at the stranger's manner. But his good-tempered face and handsome appearance brought back her good temper, and she added a smile,gratis, to the drink."

"Phew!" said the stranger, as he put the empty glass down and snacked his lips, "Tom Conquest feels something like himself again, but whether I continue to feel in the same frame of mind depends on whether the news I have got is true or false. I've heard funny facts about the same frame of mind depends on whether the news I have got is true or false. I've heard funny facts about..."

"What have you heard?" said the digger, "From all I have heard of him there isn't much against him. He's shut up only a bank or two, and it's only the rich that he makes shall out. Whoever heard of Ned's molesting a poor or a working man? Why there isn't a shepherd in the colony who wouldn't give him his last pipe of negro-head and every bit of mutton and damper left in the hut."

"Oh that may be," said the trooper, "but robbery is robbery, whether it be rich or poor. I suppose if you made a pile worth £1,000 you'd be rich, wouldn't you? Well, if Kelly stuck you up and took the savings of your life's work how would you feel? Do you think that would be only robbery the rich? He don't rob where he can get nothing, that's about it, and he wants the shepherds to keep him fly to the movements of the police. I hope my suspicions about Ned Kelly are right. My information ought to be good if those two fellows I rescued from the ants can be believed, and yet it seems hardly possible that Ned would have the audacity to come here."

"Tom Conquest called for another "nobbler" and lingered some time over it; standing with his back to the counter he could see the people passing to and fro in the street."

Suddenly he gave a start, and uttered an involuntary cry, much to the astonishment of the young lady and her half-encumbered swain, and rushing out of the saloon he reappeared dragging a man with him."

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CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A PASSAGE TO WEALTH.

HARRY MARSTON was not long in noticing that Ned Kelly was anxious to get him out of the house each evening as soon as the premises were closed. He saw Rose at times, and she continued part of the love-smitten maid, but Harry avoided her as much as possible. Rose felt that she would not stay in Harry Marston's house; she said, one day, "I am very lonely here. My father has much correspondence, and he prefers to be alone. Sometimes I write far into the night." Harry told her who he was; and she continued her part of the love-smitten maid, but Harry avoided her as much as possible.

"Mr. Marston," she said, one day, "I am very lonely here. My father has much correspondence, and he prefers to be alone. Sometimes I write far into the night." Harry told her who he was; and she continued her part of the love-smitten maid, but Harry avoided her as much as possible.

"Meet willingly, Miss Bellamy," Harry Marston replied. "It has been the impression of friendship that purvey, pure and simple, between a man and a beautiful woman could not long endure without degenerating into love, degenerating. I say, because in friendship there is no element of selfishness, whereas in love the subtlety of affinities on both sides. Each party loves because each party gratifies itself. In friendship I feel for you, and I do not fear misconception."

"That is almost saying that you are incapable of falling in love," said Rose, coaxingly.

"Far from it," Harry Marston rejoined. "I am helplessly bound and galvanised in love already."

"Indeed," said Rose, with something of disappointed irritation in her manner. "I am not inquisitive, but I should like to know who the lady is."

"You may see her sooner than you expect," Harry replied. "I am about to write and ask her to come out to Australia."

Was it perfect acting that caused the blood to fade from Rose's cheeks? No, she had overdone her part, the play was becoming a reality, and although she struggled against her own feelings, she confessed that she was not half in love with Harry, his own and Ned Kelly's intended dupe.

Her reluctance to play a part that might imperil the future of Harry was rather weakened by the assurance she had just heard from his own lips.

"I would have saved him in some way," she said, "but not now. Let him come to the rescue if she can; she has despised my love, for she must have seen that I am not indifferent to him. He is all of his life in getting to the bank too soon."

"Peace, you ass! " Ned Kelly hissed. "Omens are for the work of making a cavity here was speedily accomplished. The men went at it with a will with pick and spade. Ned took his turn, and at it they went; not a word was spoken.

The tunnelling was easy work through the clay-soil not 1 got to the bank foundation-wall. The rattles and rumble of the vehicles overhead all day long prevented the noise the quiet work. Now then, lads, clear away and let us go to work. We have plenty of time, but I want the work to be done quietly and without loss of time."

"The work of making a cavity here was speedily accomplished. Ned Kelly swung the instrument over his shoulder and struck the collar-wall with a skilful and powerful blow. A dull sound, like the booming of a muffled bell, came from the wall, and Ned Kelly looked askance at his comrades.

"What is the meaning of that? " he asked, under his breath. "I never heard such a sound come from solid earth."

"It sounded like a death-bell," Carroty Larkins said. "I don't half like the sound."

"Peace, you ass! " Ned Kelly hissed. "Omens are for children and frightened women, not for men with gold within their grasp. Go in and win, you fools, while you've got the chance."

Thus encouraged, they worked silently on, and succeeded in accomplishing their object.

Then they brought the instrument into the vault until such time as the bank officials would be absent on a public holiday or the Sabbath.

Kelly took care the men should keep sober, and prohibited any "liquoring up" until they had got clear out of Melbourne.

They gloated a good deal at this prohibition, and would
have disobeyed but for the glorious golden prospect before them. Once successful, they could bathe in brandy. When their work was done, the men removed to a back room to examine the progress made, and test the tunnel. Apparently satisfied, he turned away, but sprang sharply round as he thought he heard a voice. So he did, but only the voice of a Bank clerk in the Bank vault storing away raw gold.

Scarcely had his briered and dust-like hat appeared through the overhanging of his cheeks. Clenching his fists and assuming an attitude of defiance he hissed out—

"Man, goblin, or devil, Ned Kelly is ready for you.

But it must have been fancy after all, for who should be in the tunnel? There was not a living creature but the voice of a Bank clerk in the Bank vault stowing away raw gold.

Scarcely a word was exchanged until they reached a house in a by-street. The stranger tapped sharply at the door, which had been promptly locked and bolted as he entered. "For what reason have I been led to this place?"

"Patience, my friend," said the man who had brought him to the house. "You will know the reason presently, and admit that it is a good one. My name is Conquest, and I am on the track of that murderous villain, Ned Kelly!"

"Well, what has that to do with me? Surely you do not take me for that notorious scoundrel?" said Marston, in an amused tone of voice. "For my own part, nothing would please me better than to see him dangling from the gallows!"

"You are the keeper of the drug-store in Colling-street, I believe?" said Tom Conquest.

"Yes; but what right have you to cross-question me?"

"No strict right as yet; but I think you will prefer answering a few quiet questions here, to the exposure of going before a magistrate, who will make you answer what he likes. Your patron goes by the name of Mr. Bellamy?"

Marston saw the force of his interrogator's representation, so replied—

"Go on by it? Why, of course, his name is Bellamy!"

"You think so, but I think otherwise," Tom Conquest observed quietly. "It disreput will cause you some alarm when I tell you I suspect that this so-called Mr. Bellamy has a strong likeness to Ned Kelly!"

"Why, you must be cracked," said Harry, "or he must be, to venture into such a place as Melbourne. Bah! He's a kind, good, generous fellow. I know him well; I've been venturing against him. He's as much Kelly as you are."

"I don't blame you," said Tom Conquest, "but listen to me, and drown all sentiments. I saw you with a lady to-night, and I'll swear in any court of justice that she is Rose Casey, Ned Kelly's adopted daughter."

"Nonsense," said Harry Marston, "her name is Rose Bellamy!"

Tom looked perplexed, and stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"I seldom forget a face, especially when it belongs to a woman," he said. "Well, we will say, for argument's sake, that I am mistaken in the young lady, but if Mr. Bellamy, as you call him, has a bad name on the back of his left hand, and wants a piece of his right ear to make it complete, Ned Kelly is as good as in the meshes of the net which the law has been weaving for him."

Harry Marston's heart beat high, and the colour in his cheek faded away. He had often wondered why Bellamy generally wore a glove on his right hand, and his hair over his ears in so hot a climate. Yet he could not credit that the man so highly worthy of gratitude could be the man whose hands had been stopped in crime of every kind.

The whole colony was on the alert for the villain who had wrought so much mischief; the blood of Kelly's..."
victims, and the wholesale, during daylight robberies he had committed cried aloud for vengeance; his name was used as a taunt to the police, and the influence of his courage, success, and example was most pernicious and dangerous in a population so leavened with new and old crime, for the jails of the neighbouring colonies had been silently emptied into Victoria.

"If Deliberation is the mark I want," Tom Conquest continued, "he bears the trade-mark of villainy stamped upon him in the very signs I have mentioned. Test him. My friend, and let me see you again to-morrow evening, here and at this time. If you are an honest man, you will be as anxious to prove the truth or falsehood of this suspicion as I am.

"I am sure that I shall disappoint you," said Harry. "I admit, he always wears ceiling when he goes out, but not in the house. I have noticed a tear that any man might get.

"We're on the track, believe me. At all events you will keep this meeting a secret?"

"Yes, because I would not wound so good a fellow by the bare mention of your suspicions," Harry replied.

However, he was glad to get into the open air, and away from the keen-eyed man who scrutinised him so closely, and now the light and almost contemptuous demeanour he had assumed gave way to a whirl of conflicting emotions. His brain thrilled with such men with his heart. and he turned faint at the thought that he might have taken service under the greatest scoundrel unhung.

Maret was early at the store in the morning, but did not see Kelly, who was not visible till the evening. When he did appear he was restless and uneasy.

They were having a pipe together in the back-room, and were keeping up a constrained conversation. Both were evidently not thinking of the subject of their talk, and at last both relapsed, with abstracted air, into silence.

This was suddenly broken by Kelly, who said—

"I was wondering what brought you out to this country without plenty of capitation."

"Oh, many men of first-rate family have come out buggers."

"Oh, you did not need to tell me that good blood ran in your veins, for any man with an eye in his head can see you've got the points of breeding—foot, hand, and ear.

"There are thoroughbred marks that don't escape me any more than they do a woman."

"You don't want money, I think?" Kelly said.

"No, I have sufficient to last for a long time yet."

"Well, said Harry, forcing a laugh, "I see you have two of the points, but let me see the third, your ears."

Kelly started to his feet as Harry Mareton approached, and showed evident signs of apprehension and dislike to the move. There was obvious hesitation to undergo the examination. He was more angered and confused than the circumstances warranted.

"Harry," he said, with an awkward attempt at dignity, "I never take liberties with others, and never allow them to be taken with me."

"I allow no man to trifle with me," Kelly said, rising up and down the room in a towering fury; and then as if recognising the suspicious violence of his own conduct in which was that of Harry's movement to uncover his ears, he seemingly calmed down, but felt rather nervous and suspicious that something was up or why this attempted scrutiny? He left the room without a word, leaving Mareton pondering over his conduct and the allusions of Conquest. Harry did not well know what course to take, so was content to await his next meeting with Kelly, who had left him serenely with his questions, and even if satisfied of his identity would hesitate to denounced a man from whom he had received nothing but generosity. He had not saved him from starvation, lifted him from the streets, fed him, clothed him, and paved the way to prosperity? But a murderer and a wholesale thief—his kindness must have a motive. If they were really

the notorious ruffian, Kelly, so savage a beast and reckless a robber could not be actuated by honest feelings towards a stranger like him. "If he were Kelly!" The thought fully possessed him, he could not shake it off. "Better the streets and starvation than to cut the broad of charity from the blood-stained hand of such a merciless, dog," he suddenly exclaimed.

Meanwhile Ned Kelly was not idle. As soon as he was clear of the room, he sought Ross, and stood before her with troubled aspect; her face was pale and rigid, and he walked up and down the room like a caged beast.

"Would you imagine what was the matter with him, and her first thought was that some dire calamity had or was about to happen. She was in constant fear and trembling, not knowing at what moment the thunderbolt might fall.

"Father! father!" she said, placing her hands gently on his arm, "what has happened? Don't look so wild, you alarm me!"

The clouds were lowering on Kelly's brow, and his face was almost purple with perplexity and annoyance; but with a great effort he recovered his self-control.

"The game is up," he said; "we are sold! That accursed whelp, Mareton, knows who I am! I saw it in his eyes. You must try, Rose; take the first vessel for Sydney, and when there go to the post-office, and ask for a letter addressed to Rose Jennings. It will be for you, and will contain instructions when and where to meet me. By that time I shall have matured my plans, and will be either a man or a mouse."

"Oh, father!" Rose cried in a sudden agony of fear, "if you alarm me! I don't want money, I think?"

Kelly said, "No, I have sufficient to last for a long time yet."

"Well, you ought to have, as I drew out the rest of my balance at the bank, and gave it into your charge, Rose. Keep it and use it, my girl, until we meet."

"Kiss me, and begone, before it is too late; my heart grows cold." Rose replied; at the thought of what will happen if you remain here.

"You must stop in the house for another hour," Kelly said, "by that time I shall be out of Melbourne, but first—"

His chest heaved, and again the terrible evil light flashed from his eye.

"What are you thinking of?" Rose demanded.

"Thinking how I should like to be in the cellar with Harry Mareton just now. I know he's the traitor—I saw he suspected me. How I should like to clench him by the throat, and feel him growing weaker and weaker under my hands. But I suppose I must reserve that luxury for the future. There's life in Ned Kelly yet, as those who try to nab him will find to their cost."

CHAPTER XL.

UNWELCOME VISITORS.

"And so," said Tom Conquest, "you are satisfied I am right, and that you have been made a fool and dupe of?"

He addressed Harry Mareton, who stood with his back against the wall, looking glumly at the young trooper.

"Yes," Mareton replied, "and yet it goes against the grain to talk of an informer. If I could give back the favour the man has shown me I should feel satisfied."

"Favourites?" Tom Conquest repeated, accuracy.

The murderer of men and helpless women and children deserves no mercy. You ought to think yourself lucky that you have escaped so easily, and proud of having done society so good a turn. I and my men will make the raid
in two hours' time. Now go, and use your time as you think fit. We'll not want you.

"Little dreaming of what had happened, Dick Dawson and Carroty Larkins were waiting as usual for Kelly.

"I wonder what keeps the gypsy?" Dick Dawson growled. "He's mighty particular about keeping the key of the cell. We might have made the haul by this time if he hadn't been foolish.

"And the girl has shut herself up," said Carroty Larkins. "I don't like the look of things, Dick—I don't, I tell you. What if Ned has heard something, got scared and run off by himself, and left us to stand the racket?"

"No fear," said Dawson. "He wouldn't leave the girl. Come, Carroty, let us be off. Just to pass the time till he comes. Strike up, old man, don't be downhearted."

An uproarious chortle of applause followed Nimming Ned's song, and scarcely had the sound died away when Rose, plainly dressed and wearing a thick veil over her face, appeared on the scene and was passing out, when Carroty cried--

"Here, stop a minute. "When are you going, miss?"

"How dare you ask the question?" Rose returned.

"Are you my gover? Out of the way, or you shall answer for this to my father."

Mr. Marston, and say that I should like to see him in the

"I am quite ready," she said; "give my compliments to Mr. Marston, and say that I should like to see him in the morning."

"That tale won't do for me," said Tom Conquest. "Marston has evidently let the cat out of the bag too soon. Kelly smelt a rat and has bolted. Well," he added, turning to one of his brother officers, "I don't see the use of keeping the girl here; she has made up her mind to keep her lips closed against the truth."

"But what's the row? What have we done?" Dick Dawson whined, while a wink passed between him and Tom Conquest.

"You'll be to tell your story to the magistrates," Rose replied haughtily. "He is dining with some friends at the Albion Hotel."
"We have heard of you," said Sam Clinton: "so well come to what we have and a share of what's going."

After a hearty meal of mutton, damper, and tea, Kelly went out to see that Marco Polo was safely hobbled, and, returning to the party, threw himself down on his side, and apparently went to sleep; but no nosegay was more wide awake than he.

He noticed that the men wore broad belts, filled with nuggets and gold-dust, round their waists, but they were not to be caught napping, as they took turns at scutty duty.

"I wonder why they did not employ the Government escort," Kelly mused. "Perhaps they thought they were strong enough in numbers to do without it, but if I had another man with me, I'd make them go a little lighter in their pockets to Melbourne."

But they had sheltered and given him food in the hom of need, and, remorseless villain as Kelly was, he banished all thoughts of robbing the men.

Before the sun rose the party of diggers were astir, and after breakfast Ned Kelly bade them adieu and went his way; but his horse had not taken many paces when he heard a shouting after him.

"What's the row?" he demanded, wheezing his horse round, and clapping his hand on a pistol. "There's no good luck for anybody in turning back."

"You have left something behind you," said the digger. "What is it?"

"One side of your whiskers," the man replied, laughing.

Ned Kelly cursed as he touched his cheek and discovered the truth of the assertion. The whiskers had fallen off during the night, and as Ned Kelly rode up to the man who held it, he said sternly—

"A man in my line has need of some kind of disguise. Take care that neither you nor your mates say a word about this."

"I don't see anything to get your dander up, Mr. Conquest," said the digger. "I'm jiggered if I'm quite sure you're as square as you look."

"Just mind your own business, and don't bother about mine, I'd advise you."

As he spoke he saw something resembling a cloud of dust in the distance, but his practiced eye convinced him that it was a scouting band of troopers, and, giving the reins a shake, he swerved Marco Polo round, and set off at a fast gallop.

"Show them the way, my lad," he said, getting Marco's neck; "those cocktails would be stumped in half an hour at such a pace as this."

(To be continued.)

THE CELEBRATED NOVELS,
BY W. STEPHENS HAYWARD.

Picture Boards. Published at 2/-.
NED KELLY
THE
IRONCLAD
AUSTRALIAN BUSHRANGER
A rather uncomfortable conversation.

It took Ned some weeks to traverse the distance to Sydney, seven hundred miles as the crow flies. But he had no adventures on the road worth mentioning, and only awaited the arrival of Rose, to quit the colony for some safer abode. He anxiously read the local papers to see if anything of his doings was known, but beyond the announcement of his departure for Adelaide (as was given out), little else was said.

Conquest, who suspected Mr. Bellamy's identity, called at the Melbourne newspaper offices and requested silence upon the subject, as likely to furtur the ends of justice. Almost the first person he met in George-street, Sydney, was the black-eyed Lola, who was playing at the theatre.

Mr. Bellamy paid her great court, and the countess received his advances with pleasure; perhaps because she was struck with his bold, manly, devil-may-care bearing.

There was the opera and the theatre, and banza red and coarse, and pleasant parties upon the Parramatta river, and it was upon one of these latter occasions that Lola Montez said to Mr. Bellamy—

“You are not very colonial. Do you never take off your gloves?”

Ned started at the question and a flush of evident confusion rose to his face.

“Oh, a strange question!” he exclaimed, looking at her keenly.

“I am an acknowledged eccentric, and as such am privileged to ask whatever comes into my head. Have you a reason?”

“Yes, I have; but I would far sooner not confess it.”

“Ah, a mystery! Do you know I hate mysterious people.”

“Is it because you don't care for a rival in that line?”

“No but I believe all women hate puzzles that they can't unravel.”

“Very well, since to be hated by you would be worse than death itself (there he bent upon her an amorous glance), I will no longer allow this little habit of mine to remain a mystery to you. I wear gloves for the most unromantic of all reasons, namely, because my hands are not very colonial. Do you satisfy with the explanation?”

“No, because I do not believe it. What nonsense you talk.”

“Truth is often considered nonsense, for the reason that we are so little accustomed to its sound. I wear gloves because I am too colonial. I find my men (and I employ manual labour himself. Such things are not expected of employers in old and long civilised countries, but out here by honest toil. It would be a novel sight to me. Pull off your right-hand glove.”

“Why particularly my right-hand glove?”

“Because people work more with that hand than the other.”

“And it is more apt to meet with accidents also, such as cuts and blows?”

Ned felt that the present moment was one of deadly peril; his hand was so firmly cuffed and nonchalance could alone carry the day.

He laid a hand lightly on Lola's arm, at the same time saying with an easy laugh—

“Now is it you who are growing mysterious. You are not driving me to the most commonplace and unromantic of explanations. I will be frank with you, however, if you have the patience to listen. I was one day holding a chest of mere trinkets, steady for one of my men to split it open with an axe, when the instrument slipped to his hand and descended on the back of mine, inflicting the most unsightly gash. Behold the direct testimony of the truth of my words,” and pulling off his right-hand glove he held up the scar for her inspection.

“The lovely Spaniard looked at it closely, and then suddenly raising her superb eyes scanned still more morosely his face.

“But he stood the keen, searching gaze with an easy smile and without the quiver of a muscle.”

“Forgive me,” she said, “I must be mistaken, and yet it is very strange.”

“What is very strange. If I may make so bold as to ask you a reason?”

“Was that more than one occasion you have remembered me a bushranger who attacked the coach in which I was journeying to Forest Creek, and whom I slashed across the back of his right hand with a Spanish knife. I carried, because he was rather too demonstrative.”

“Happy man even to receive such a remembrance as that from the most lovely woman who ever trod Australia's golden soil. Do you know I almost wish that I was he,” answered Ned, with a glance of admiration.

Chapter XLIV.

Ned Kelly is set a strange task.

Tops in evidence that the countess's suspicions were at all events allayed if not entirely dissipated.

Nevertheless, Ned Kelly felt that for a few minutes he had been standing on the brink of a precipice.

If with her known impetuosity she had denounced instead of questioning him he might have found himself in a particularly awkward fix.

Lola Montez having shown her cards, however, he now played his trumps in such a manner that by the time their pleasant picnic was over and they had all got safely to their suburban residence at Potter's-point, close to the large and commodious Police Barracks, and delayed no more, the countess significantly observed that it was getting very late he refused to accept that or her yawns either—

“Happy man even to receive such a remembrance as that from the most lovely woman who ever trod Australia's golden soil. Do you know I almost wish that I was he,” answered Ned, with a glance of admiration.

“Whatever your identity,” she said, “You are not a colonial. Do you know I hate colonial people.”

“Alan, a mystery!” he exclaimed, looking at her keenly.

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“Is it because you don't care for a rival in that line?”

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winced with the pain, whilst beggmg her to accept his love. 

She heard him through to the very end of what he had to say, merely interrupting him once to request him to remember that her hands were not of cast-iron, but when he had finished his speech, and after an interval of silence, she said: "You had better get up and sit down now, for I'm sure you must feel exhausted after all that exertion. Is it not the case?"

"I will never rise from my knees until you grant my prayer."

"Oh, but I don't mean to grant it until you have done something to prove yourself worthy of it, and you can't perform that in such a foolish attitude."

Ned Kelly was on his feet in a twinkling, and regarding her earnestly.

"Pour yourself out another glass of wine, take a seat, and look like a reasonable being. I hate to be stared at. I get so much of that kind of hommage at all times. Now drink your wine, and listen to me."

Her admirer instantly vowed that he was all attention.

"Then I'm going to say to you almost the exact words that very nearly, at least a dozen others who during the past week, have made of me the same complimentary request that you have just done."

The glass was at Ned's lips, and he also, at bit a piece out of it at being thus cooly informed how many rivals he had.

"Don't excite yourself," exclaimed the countess, who had remarked the action. "Besides, those glasses are rather expensive. I will not say yes, to a single Australian admirer—and I assure you again that I have a host of them—until I am avenged for a terrible insult that I have received in their colony."

"Tell me the name of the rascal who has dared to offer it to you, and, if it will give you any satisfaction, I will shoot him down like a dog."

"There is no need for such extreme measures. The man who insulted me is a common criminal, with a price upon his head; a brutal bully who could threaten a weak woman, and even maltreat her; a monster who could clench my poor arm" (and here she stretched forth a delicately-rounded arm, white as milk, and bare to the very shoulder) "and, whilst he poured forth the most infamous indesecres, squeezed it in his iron grip, until it bore the marks of his vile and ruthless fingers for days."

To win my love, you must: hunt to the death the man who has so grossly ill-used and insulted me. The day that the bushranger Ned Kelly is lodged in gaol I will—"she held up her empty hand with a slight smile and hurried off to unbutton his coat and dive into the depths of an inordinate pocket-book to get at it; before he had effected which, if she but suspected his design, she would have play of time to shoot him through the heart."

Besides, how could he hurt her as she lay there looking so beautiful? Her broad white chest, palpitating with violent emotion, was in its loveliness a far stronger defence than his own thick Irish beard had ever been.

But what should he say—what do?

He could not sit there looking like a fool (though he felt quite as big a one as ever he looked), without making some kind of a proposition likely to please her.

"I would not have you risk your life for worlds," he therefore contrived to grasp out. "I—I will go and unearth this Kelly, wherever he may be; and—when found, I will—will either shoot him dead, or hand him over to the tender mercies of the law. Of course, if he resists and I have to shoot him you will marry me equally as though Jack Ketch had the final disposing of him?"

"Well, yes, I will; but there must be no doubts about his death. His corpse must be recognised and sworn to by at least a dozen people."

"Of course, of course. But suppose I strive my very utmost to bring him to book, but cannot? In my case then hopeless?

"Ned Kelly once really dead, you having done your very best to be the instrument of his death, and falling through no fault of your own, your case will be still worse.

A desertion of all American admirers, and I assure you again that I have a host of them, to end the matter."

"But do not excite yourself," the countess said, "at the thought of having a single Australian—"

"No; but I shall only be satisfied when he is dead," answered the countess. "Thanks to you, however, I have little doubt that that event will come to pass ere long. Good-night, Mr. Bellamy. It really is getting very late."

Then I will take an immediate farewell. One kiss to seal the contract."

"No, I never pay beforehand for what's to be performed. Good-night, Mr. Bellamy. Don't trouble to come round the table. None but the brave deserve the fair. Show me that you are brave, I am yours."

CHAPTER XLV

NED'S DISCONTENTED TRAVEL TOUR

So Ned Kelly left the presence of the beautiful Lola Montez without a kiss or even a hand-shake, and departed for the insulting words that he dared to utter to my face than the mere hurt he did me, for that was but a trifle. I will seek him myself, since heaven will not raise me up a champion, and with my bare breast opposed to his ironclad one. I will fight with him a duel to the very death!

"Then I'll hunt all Australia over for the miscreant," said Ned. "I will start in search of him the day after to morrow. Will that satisfy you?"

"No; I shall only be satisfied when he is dead," answered the countess. "Thanks to you, however, I have little doubt that that event will come to pass ere long. Good-night, Mr. Bellamy. It really is getting very late."

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to kill himself or hand himself over to Jack Ketch before he could even hope to obtain for himself such favours—a odd position to be placed in.

He was an unusual and capricious as a child; and, by George, how bitterly she can hate, to be sure. By thunder, its fortunate she has never taken it into her head to inspect my ears. The curls hide 'em pretty entirely, but if she was to poke at them on one side and find the top of one ear nearly gone altogether she might remember her pistol-shot as well as the slash she gave me with her knife.

He stalked along in moody reverie after this self-colloquy; but soon he broke forth again, for his mind was very ill at ease—

"If she found me out after she had married me—I say self! for I don't consider it at all likely—she'd not dare to split on me then for very shame's sake, for I know she'd the rather than the world should know she had become the wife of a bushranger. Ha, ha, ha! I should be sure of her then. But how the devil am I to get her? Well, all events, I must set out in search of myself, and glad can I be that I shall find the road by the mark of the bush dog for a while. I only wish that some lucky chance would throw in my way a man closely resembling my bushranger self, and I'd soon provide the carrion she wants, and swear till my eyeballs started that he was Ned Kelly himself.

All the while that Ned, according to his regular custom, was thus musing his inward thoughts and resolutions half aloud, he was striding along the road in the direction of the city, whose myriad lights covered the slopes about a mile and a half in front of him.

A full moon looked down from the star-spangled heavens upon the still and tranquil scene, but Ned frowned as he presently passed the dark and gloomy pile of Police Barracks on his left, for therein dwelt the men with whom he had waged war for years, the "bloodsmudges of the law," as he was wont to designate them.

For a minute he paused, folded his arms across his chest, and, regarding the flint-stone pile sternly, muttered to himself between his set teeth, whilst his bushy brows were at all events, I must set out in search of myself, and glad can I be that I shall find the road by the mark of the bush dog for a while. I only wish that some lucky chance would throw in my way a man closely resembling my bushranger self, and I'd soon provide the carrion she wants, and swear till my eyeballs started that he was Ned Kelly himself.

Again his stride doughtily on. Never before had he felt so excited and all at once with himself as he did on that particular night. Was it that "coming events threw their shadows before," the awful shadows of the condemned cell and the gallows-tree?

And now the rambling, wooden, one-storeyed Emigration Depot is abreast of him on the right, and at the foot of the gentle descent that appears beyond lies the bountiful Sydney Harbour, like a moonlit lake, beyond which a gentle elevation, and is a well-known "bit" to all artists.

Specimen of country scenery. The "North Shore" is a gentle elevation, and is a well-known "bit" to all artists.

Yet it seemed to be an operation of some difficulty, kindling the contents of that pipe, and Ned was getting out of patience altogether, when suddenly it clouded over all over, and the trooper, returning the match-box, observed—

"We are old acquaintances, I fancy. Your face seems very familiar to me.

"Well, you've looked at it long enough for it to be, at any rate.

"Oh, no offence, I hope? Only everyone likes coming across old friends.

"I don't recognise an old friend in you. I don't fancy I ever saw you before.

"Don't you? I feel pretty well convinced, mate, that I've seen you before, but when and where I'm blest if I can exactly remember.

Kelly was now clean shaven, and the absence of beard and moustache had metamorphosed him completely.

"It don't much matter. I've been pretty well all over the colony in my lifetime, and so, I expect, have you," rejoined Kelly mildly.

"Oh, you are colonist-born then?" said the trooper, suddenly and sharply.

"No, far from that, but I've been out here some years, nevertheless."

"The colony seems to have served you well at any rate. Made your pile?

"Almost. I've prospered on the gold-fields at Ballarat, and since then equally so in trade. Yes, I've no reason to speak ill of the colony."

"Ever been at Forest Creek or up Kyneton way?"
"No. I don't know those parts. I made my pile as Golden Point, Ballarat."

"Ah, many fortunes have been made there. Carrying on business?"

"Really, I don't see why want right you put to me all this business."

"Oh, I don't know exactly about the right; but when two fellows are walking along the same road side by side they generally elicit the dulness of the way by conversation. I'm just as ready to answer questions as to put them."

"Very well then, just for a chance I'll ask you who you are?"

"Corporal Tom Conquest, of the Victorian Mounted Constabulary."

"You are rather young to be a corporal, are you not, Mr. Conquest?"

"Well, you see, capturing bushrangers leads to quick promotion in these times, and shooting them down is almost as good. I hope to be a sergeant before long."

"Allow me to congratulate you on your prospects of speedy promotion. I suppose you have no scruples of conscience at winning it through bloodshed?"

"What! scruples of conscience at shooting two-legged vermin like that gives me very considerable pleasure."

"And I don't suppose you object to the pecuniary reward that is generally attached to their capture or destruction? Wouldn't you like to lay that infernal scoundrel Ned Kelly by the heels, and pocket ten thousand pounds, and win every honest and upright man's gratitude and lip?"

"I believe you, mate; and that's just what I intend to do."

"May you succeed. But there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip."

"Not when the holder of the cup's hand is steady, I have taken a solemn oath to bring this villain Kelly to the gibbet, and I'm on his track now."

"On his track at the present moment? The devil!"

"And Ned's hand involuntarily stole towards the pocket that contained his loaded pistol."

"Oh, I don't say at the present moment exactly," retorted the trooper, with a laugh. "But I am on his track for all that, and I'm bound to run him to earth in the end. you'll see. Do you know why I stopped you to ask you?"

"Because you wanted to pump me for some reason or other, eh?"

"Say rather because I had more than half an idea you were Ned himself."

"The bushranger thought that a good laugh would be the best answer he could make to this remark, and he managed to laugh with a great deal of boisterous vivacity, as though it were really an excellent joke to be mistaken for so bloodthirsty a misanthrope."

The trooper laughed too, and to Ned's intense relief added—"I soon found out my mistake, though I was convinced much against my will, I am assured you. Still, there is a likeness between you, especially in your build."

"I'm certainly very much obliged for the handsome compliment you pay me," said Ned, bridding up. "Some people perhaps would feel their vanity dinked at being told that they resembled so celebrated a character, but, as an honest man who never wronged anyone of a penny, I assure you that I do not. However, I must go jogging on, so I will wish you good-night. I hope you will catch him."

"I'm off again to-morrow night at nine o'clock or about."

"Say rather because I had more than half an idea you were Ned himself."

"The bushranger thought that a good laugh would be the best answer he could make to this remark, and he managed to laugh with a great deal of boisterous vivacity, as though it were really an excellent joke to be mistaken for so bloodthirsty a misanthrope."

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able to keep out of my clutches for very long now. To­

tomorrow I go back to Melbourne to see a couple of his old

mates, who he believes to be dead. Ha, ha! ha! he left'em

wounded in the bush, to the mercy of a nest of bulldog­

nants, and, egad! those industrious little insects would soon

have made skeletons of them if some of our fellows hadn't

trysted up in time to save them. They are as well as we

now, I hear, and, shearing on the run. A Mr. Fairfax

somewhere up Bellarat way, past Bacchus March. It

seems that Ned robbed them of every silver before he left

them, so that if I can induce them to turn Queen’s evi­
dence, and help me to hunt. Kelly up—a job that I guess

they'll precious well enjoy after the track he's served them

with. He'll get a free pardon.

"Wherever do you pick up all your information from,

Mr. Conquest?"

"Ah, that's a mystery of the service, and must never

be let out."

"But when these two fellows are coming won't they
take to flight?"

"Why, bless your heart. I shall not venture near'em in
these togs. There's an awful clever shearer, who's the
talk of the whole country round, and whose nickname is

Fleecy Jim; in fact, I very much doubt if he's known by

any other. The cove is rather like me, and so I shall in

cure myself turn up at Tarramee, under his name and char­
ter."

"But if you are set to shear sheep what will you do—
oh?"

"Why, sheep'em, to be sure. I assure you I'm a dab

at it."

"I hope you won't come to any harm. Aren't you rather
too daring?"

"Not I. Nothing venture nothing have, you know.

Set these two fellows and one Dick Dawson on Ned's

track, and I'll nab him in less than a week. They'll know

every trick and disguise, you see, which I do not, and

with them for my allies, I'll cop the whole of the ten

thousand pounds that are offered for his apprehension; for

they'll have a quittance in full, and far more than

deserve, in the shape of a free pardon for all their

past offences. Do you see that?"

"Yes, and I hope that you'll be successful. That and

a villain as Ned Kelly is left so long unavenged is a positive
dignity to the colony. I declare we all shudder here at

the mention of his name."

"You would shudder more, perhaps, were I to tell you

that he was in Melbourne for nearly a month, bolted to

there to dream that Mr. Bellamy was the ferocious iron­

souled bandit and not just a Yankee barmaid. Ha, ha, ha, I

left 'em to mope and never a word did they say."

"Almost relieved, she betook herself to bed, and as she

lay there to dream that Mr. Bellamy was the ferocious iron­
souled bandit and not just a Yankee barmaid. Ha, ha, ha, I

left 'em to mope and never a word did they say."

"Sixthly, get his pile out of the bank, and slope (via Adelaide)

on his run, disguised as a pair of false whiskers, but omitted

the beard. He also mounted a pair of blue spectacles.

When the landslady took Mr. Bellamy in this second

glass of brandy-and-water she could not help noticing how
deadly pale he was, and how his hands shook as he

raised the tumbler to his lips.

The lady withdrew, and some five minutes later Mr.
Bellamy quitted his retreat and walked out through the

bar, wishing her good night as he passed.

"Odd gentleman in his ways and not over amiable, I

should say," thought she, when he had gone; and as she

was that moment relieved, she betook herself to bed,

to dream that Mr. Bellamy was the ferocious iron­souled

bandit and not just a Yankee barmaid. Ha, ha, ha, I

left 'em to mope and never a word did they say."

The subterranean passage that was to open into the

bullion-vaults of the bank would not be completed for

nearly another week, and there was nothing to prevent

the trooper being back in Melbourne with these two men

in the course of two or three weeks. So he resolved on

a bold stroke.

He knew his work in the cellar was accomplished; that

a little more work would place wealth within his grasp.

He would return by the steamer at once, disguised, to Mel­

bourne, leave Conquest in Sydney to follow when too

late, get his pile out of the bank, and slope (via Adelaide)

for South America and England, where he was totally

unknown.

He left the next morning undetected, and in three days

trod the streets of Melbourne.

He timed his arrival to take place at night. Larkina

locked almost frightened when he presented himself.

That ladly and ladylike girl had served him well in the

course of a few weeks, and he was anxious to see if her

words were true. He had a pleasant surprise in store for

her. He was to find she was as kind and gentle as he had

promised. She was a true-hearted girl, and she was

waiting for her lover with open arms and a heart full of

love. He knew she would be true to him, and he was

happy to think that he could depend on her.

"Ah, shouldn't wonder. I only asked out of idle curio­

dity. I don't suppose you ever observed whether Mr.

Bellamy had a gash, a heated scar, I should rather say,

across the back of his right hand, and a portion of his ears

gone? If 'tis so I should know the firm to be a respect­
able one."

"I don't believe I ever saw Mr. Bellamy without

gloves on his hands. He often pays me a visit, but I am

sure I should have noticed his ears had anything been

wrong about them. Dear me, how inquisitive you troopers

are."

"All in the way of business, madam. All in the way

of business, I assure you. Well, you look tired and bored,

and just a trifle sleepy, so I'll say good-night."

"No, indeed! I trust you too much, sir. I shall be

awake till morning. I hope you will be able to sleep.

Tonight I shall try and forget the past."

"So shall I, madam. I have had enough of the past."

"I trust you will be successful. That such

past offences. Do you see that?"

"Odd gentleman in his ways and not over amiable, I

should say," thought she, when he had gone; and as she

was that moment relieved, she betook herself to bed,

to dream that Mr. Bellamy was the ferocious iron­souled

bandit and not just a Yankee barmaid. Ha, ha, ha, I

left 'em to mope and never a word did they say."

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That ladly and ladylike girl had served him well in the

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happy to think that he could depend on her.

"Ah, shouldn't wonder. I only asked out of idle curio­

dity. I don't suppose you ever observed whether Mr.

Bellamy had a gash, a heated scar, I should rather say,

across the back of his right hand, and a portion of his ears

any stain upon their characters, at least without any proof of the reverse.

Rose then confined herself to the house, with the intention of taking the first opportunity of joining her father.

As we have seen, when Ned entered, he found Larkin in charge. Rose was lying fast asleep.

"They must never reach Melbourne—no, nor that soddleback trap be permitted to return to it either," he at last muttered fiercely to himself. "I must take the bull by the horns if I would escape being gored to death by them. I must overtake Master Tom Conquest on the road to Tarraema, and put either a bullet through his brain or a sabre-blade between his ribs. Ay, and then bull by the herns if I would escape being gored to death at last muttered fiercely to himself. "I must take the bloodletting will do me good; it will rid me of the megrims and blue devils."

CHAPTER XLVII.

NEP KELLY.

At breakfast the following morning Ned was a new man, but it was in vain that he urged Rose to leave the colony before him, and set sail for England at once.

Ned had informed her that he would have to go to England and he gave her many reasons, all in fact that for what he could think of, but the real one, why she should start at once and leave him to come on after.

"Neither in safety nor in danger, adversity nor prosperity will be of no parted, father," said she. "I suppose this is that woman's suggestion? She has conspired to carry you, and she wants you all to herself on the long voyage, but I have a prior claim on you, and I'm not going to relinquish it at a stranger's bidding."

Ned assured her that such was not the case, and brought other reasons forward, and prayers and entreaties to back the argument, and that was why he wanted her to get away, for he knew that he had concealed in the wombat-hole, and if possible to laugh and jest, and then he told Rose that he was that night to relinquish it at a stranger's bidding.

Ned formed the opinion that she had not regarded it as a crime, shooting a man to save his life, but rather as a justifiable act.

That Conquest had imparted his suspicions to any of the other brothers Ned thought most improbable, as he would naturally be desirous of covering the whole of the reward that was offered for his (Ned's) slaughter. Why, once in England, every man Jack of them, for what he had hardly regarded it as a crime, shooting a man to save his life, but rather as a justifiable act.

As she was not to be moved, he resolved to abandon his own fears.

He convinced himself that their danger would not after all be very great when once the troublesome trooper, Tom Conquest, and the treacherous Lardy Bill and Lardy Jim were put out of the way, and he had put them both in fact that for what he could think of, but the real one, why she should start at once and leave him to come on after.
Chaptef XLIX.

FOURTH MEETING OF TOM CONQUEST AND NED KELLY.

NED KELLY had set out on his present hazardous, though to him pleasantly exciting, enterprise a very different looking man from what he had ever appeared before. He had studied a coloured glass photograph of Fleesy Jim, the shearer, in a Bourke-street shop window, and had got himself up much like unto it as possible.

He had when least expected it, taken up from his bed, presenting a bare upper lip, but he had made up for its loss by donning a false sandy-cooured whisker and beard in one, that fastened by springs over the ears, and he had dyed his hair and eyebrows of a still warmer and redder hue. Not content even with this amount of metamorphosis, he had by the use of walnut juice given his complexion a feature of your face? Do you think I've the eyes of a Tom-cat that can see in the dark? I can judge of your horse by his step and the way he carries his head, but I can't say the same for you. Anyway you are my prisoner.

"But, tut, man! I thought everyone in the force could swear to Tom Conquest's voice, though, truth to say, he don't recognise yours."

"I know Tom Conquest's voice well enough, but he would have declared himself to a brother trooper at once. Yours sounds to me a deal more like Ned Kelly the bushranger's, and I'm — if you aren't Ned, too."

"Almost every trooper out of his mouth he whipped a pistol from his holster, and at the same instant spurring his horse down upon that ridden by the disguised trooper, rolled it right over in the mud."

"You infernal ass!" roared Tom, as he discharged himself from his fallen steed and struggled to his feet. "You're just as valuable dead as living, see that you keep your potato-trap shut, and that you obey my commands of Tom's head, and the bushranger's horse stood as firm as any rook for its rider to deliver his fire, whilst his own quick and sharp, without cavil or question, or, by gum! Tell me, mate?"

"How the devil should I, when I can hardly make out a feature of your face? Do you think I've the eyes of a Tom-cat that can see in the dark? I can judge of your horse by his step and the way he carries his head, but I can't say the same for you. Anyway you are my prisoner."
knew that to get at his own backside ere he was shot dead would be a matter of some delay.

"Strip!" roared the disguised bushranger. "Off with your jumper, your hat, your boots, trousers, and shirt. Come, look slippery!"

"But—"

Tom had not as far as that, when a bellow of—

"Dry up, or take the consequences, d—n you!" in conjunction with the advancing of the pistol-muzzle still nearer to his face, convinced him that silent obedience was the only way of preserving his life.

So he did as he was bidden, in a minute or two standing upright in only his under-shirt, drawers, and stockings. Both pistols were now on the ground inside his jumper side-pockets, for not a chance of handling them had presented itself.

The bushranger laughed grimly as he looked at the disconsolate Tom Conquest, and called to mind their very different experiences of the night in Sydney, and the vanity the trooper had afterwards indulged in.

"Now, you hound," he exclaimed, "I think I have clean bowled you over. So you were going to Tarramea to join your old pals, Larry Bill and Lanky Jim, who are already engaged there in murdering the poor old squatter and all his sheep and cattle, and then to plunder the Home Station.

"Of course, I'll make you a stiff un anyway, for second thoughts, I'll make you a stiff un anyway, for you see, we lads of the Victorian mounted police are sometimes one too many for you."

"I swear—" began Tom.

"You don't need to swear," thundered forth Ned. "A single word, and you're a dead man. By George, on second thoughts, I'll make you a stiff un anyway, for you see, we lads of the Victorian mounted police are sometimes one too many for you."

"Crack!" went Ned's pistol, and Tom Conquest felt himself unwounded; but, turning sharp round, he was off the metal road in a twinkle, into the scrub where no horse could follow.

"Bung!" went the bushranger's second pistol, and the trooper felt himself hit.

He was still able to dive into the scrub, into and through the undergrowth for some distance, until he reached a spot where Ned saw that Tom had lost sight of him.

Ned swore bitterly to himself because his shots had not proved more deadly ones.

He wasn't going to leave the man whom he so intently hated for a moment he could not be found, and he thought he could push his way through the dense tea-tree branches, and yet were he to dismount and explore them on foot, the trooper, if not apprehending this move Tom tore off his coat and hung it on the metal road in a twinkle, into the scrub where no horse could follow.

The bushranger laughed grimly as he looked at the disconsolate Tom Conquest, and called to mind their very different experiences of the night in Sydney, and the vanity the trooper had afterwards indulged in.

This conversation was rather a loud one, as the men were a hundred yards apart, separated by, to a horse, an impenetrable scrub.

At this moment the moon shone out for a brief season behind the scrub in the thickly-shaded masses of laden cloud.

It was what Ned Kelly had been waiting for.

Staining his eyes he saw the topmost branches of the dwarf tea-trees shake at a certain spot, and knew that the movement must be caused by a motion of the wounded trooper beneath them. He was a guide to his aim.

Ha! would you, though?" thundered forth Ned. "A mighty clever-contrived scheme, I'll prove more deadly ones."

"You beast!" screamed Tom.

"Ha, ha, nail hear that he's in Melbourne, and I want a good mile away from the scene of his crime before he can bring it to a standstill.

At that moment a deeper, pitchier darkness than ever encroached upon the bush, and, to a horse, an impenetrable scrub.

Ned kept his seat, but the terrified horse had borne him a good mile away from the scene of his crime before he could bring it to a standstill.

He rode back to the spot where Tom Conquest had dropped his shearer's rig-out, and dismounting he carefully rolled up the clothes, with the stiff, narrow-brimmed straw hat in the middle, into as narrow a compass as possible, and strapped them on to the saddle in front of him.

This done he remounted, reflected for a moment whether it would not be as well to penetrate into the scrub to make quite sure that the trooper was dead, and decided in the negative when the probability occurred to him that another flash of lightning might terrify his horse and start it away past recovery, whilst he was pottering about amongst the Septospermum bushes, looking for what he might never be able to find in the almost opaque darkness.

"The skunk's bound to be dead," he muttered to himself, "and I'm blest if I'll waste any more time over him, for I've still a longish ride.

"Come forth and I'll spare your life," said he. "Better go with me to Melbourne and chance it than be helpless there till the wild dogs gather round you, and, hungry wolves, tear you limb from limb."

"You rascal—" began Tom, feebly, out of the scrub. "I believe that you knew I was all along, and shot me because you wanted to nab Ned Kelly all to your own hook. You possess the same information as I do."

"Get along. False Alarm Tarramay, under promise of a free pardon from Governo-
He exchanged his own for the sheaver's dress, concealed the former trappings in amongst the thick undergrowth.

He now started down the hill for the woolshed, where shearing was in full swing, and where he had ascertained his two "blood-money" friends were engaged—rocking his hat rakishly on one side of his head, and lighting up a short black cutty pipe, he walked in at the journey done, to all outward appearances, as could have been found between the Murrayambidgee River and famed Hobson's Bay.

He chuckles as he reflects how well he has rid himself of the troublesome trooper, but perhaps he would not have felt quite so comfortable and assured that he would never be in danger from him any more, had his but known that neither of his last-fired bullets had as much as touched his supposed victor, and that the shrugs, the groans, were all put on. The first shot inflicted a slight flesh-wound.

CHAPTER I.

**FLEECY JIM AT TARRAMEA. SHEARING EXTRAORDINARY.**

Every country has its special products. England has its manufactures, America its cotton and sugar, and Australia its wool. The production of this latter article has called into existence three very distinct Australian characters—the shepherd, the bullock-driver, and the shearer.

The two former varieties of the Antipodean genus homo we may hear of on a future occasion, but we will deal with the sheaver now. Curiously enough, it is claimed that the shepherd may be said to grow the wool, the shearer to gather it, and the bullock-driver to carry it to market.

There you have the avocations of all three.

As shearing only comes for a few months in the year, every class of impecunious men become sheavers for the time being, and the money earned at shearing-time contributes greatly to help people to start a little farm, or to save a little for the ship, or to pay off debts placed on them by the landlady of the "Currency Lass" who had handled his last fiver in exchange for the sheaver's dress, concealed the former toggery in amongst the thick undorganths.

His close-knit cabbage-tree hat had even a very smart ribbon on it, and was always rakishly cocked on one side of his head. His clothes were always clean and smart, and, according to his ideas, both professional and fashionable. He spoke, of course, authoritatively, and his decision, like that of more stodgers, was always considered final.

In fact, Slashing Bill was an important man, in his particular line, all over Victoria—a man talked of and envied in his little world. An even the children grew up with his name in their mouths, as Bill on the "Currency Lass," Andrew Fairservice observed, "likes his day," and now in this fourth year of Slashing Bill's reign, and just in the middle of the fifth season, there came a rumour from the borders of his kingdom that there has suddenly turned up a fellow who bids fair to beat him, or at all events, as the sheavers phrase it, to give him such a lunging up as he never had before.

Bill was at the time in Ballan, the head township of the immediate district, drinking and flaking about, trying to create a sensation with the last of his money, just as an expiring candle gives a great flare up before it goes out. He was, in fact, playing the part of the heavy swell, before he began the sober comedy of the sheaver.

Bill was a great man amongst the ladies, as he called the barmys and servant-girls of the township, and he lavished half his money on them, and in showing off before them.

Since his fourth season he had been losing his heart over a pretty barmy, but after taking nearly all his money from her in various covenants, and to make up this idea, and, with a penny still his own out of a $30 cheque, made off with his horse and swag on another perambulation, and in the course of a few hours duly arrived at Tarramea Station.

He had barely sharpened his shears, tied his handkerchief round his head, and put his saddle alongside of him, when the talk commenced about the new sheaver, Fleecy Jim, who was surprising the natives all along those parts.

The younger operators began to talk with almost wondering awe of his new method of opening a sheep, and his quickness in running down the whipping-shoulder; and even hinted that he'd been known to shear a hundred and four sheep in a day.

Slashing Bill listened to all these mutterings with great contempt, and silently set to work to surprise the gossipers.

But no one praised him now but his old pals; all the rest only "blowing" about Fleecy Jim and his wondrous doings, until at last Bill, after trying in vain to convince them that he was the best of the two, threw down his shears in disgust, and made the following speech:

"Tell ye what mates, I'm darned if I'm afraid to meet any such a blooming sheep as Fleecy Jim. I've got it all their own way, but I guess I'd show 'em how to do it. I'd say, "Come out an' make a ring, an' show fair play, an' by that, if they wouldn't take the lesson quietly, but they've got it all their own way, but I guess I'd show 'em how to do it."

He even became so sentimental on an iniquitabil delirium trancas, that he began to talk of drowning himself in the creek; but, after duly considering the extreme dampness of the water, and that it was wholly unmixed with rum, he got warm over it, an' wanted cooling down a bit, why, then I'll polish you off one by one up to a round dozen'!"

"Tell ye what mates, I'm damned if I'm afraid to meet any such a blooming sheep as Fleecy Jim. I've got it all their own way, but I guess I'd show 'em how to do it."

"Come out an' make a ring, an' show fair play, an' then I'll polish you off one by one up to a round dozen!'"

"Tell ye what mates, I'm damned if I'm afraid to meet any such a blooming sheep as Fleecy Jim. I've got it all their own way, but I guess I'd show 'em how to do it."

"Come out an' make a ring, an' show fair play, an' then I'll polish you off one by one up to a round dozen!'"

And having thus delivered himself, Slashing Bill wheeled himself round, caught hold of a sheep, and took off its fleece in less time than many a man would have taken in counting where to begin.

Then as he gazed at the aborn animal as he let it go, he declared with a good round oath, that—
"If Fleecy Jim shod his sheep in that style, he must be summat most extraordinary."

And thus encouraging himself, he set to again, vowing with a whole host of sanguinary adjectives and powerful noun-substantives coupled ingeniously together, that—

Fleecy Jim directed a long look at the shed, held it out of him, not only with the shears, but with his two bunches of fives afterwards. And he certainly looked as though he meant it.

The opportunity was destined not to be long in arriving—in fact, it arrived, so soon as to suggest the idea that the old gentleman down below had had a finger in the pie.

Work had hardly been commenced on the following morning when a flying rumour flew round the shed that Fleecy Jim was approaching on a brown horse; and fast on the heels of the tidings came the apparently veritable man himself.

Slashing Bill glanced at him, and then eyed him with open contempt.

"That a sheerer, indeed, for him to knuckle under to! Why, he wore tweed trousers, a plaid Crimean shirt, and a stiff, narrow-brimmed straw hat, with a simple black riband around it, and was, besides, fresh and sober-looking, and seemed as though he was in the regular habit of washing himself!"

Bill muttered to a pal that "he didn't care a straw for that there milk-and-water chap, with all his new flash togs. He'd precious soon show him what an old, tried man he was, and was, besides, fresh and sober-looking, and seemed as though he was in the regular habit of washing himself!"

"But the struggle for precedence was not of much longer duration. Fleecy Jim had passed his opponent in another five minutes with ease. There ensued cheers from Bill's party, and Fleecy Jim's backers began to look downcast."

But just as Bill had got two sheep ahead, Jim let out his hand, and the fleeces rolled off his sheep like the froth off a pot of porter swept by the hand of a thirsty and impatient digger, when he's been working ten hours and the thermometer stands at 114° in the shade.

When he saw his adversary three sheep ahead, and perceived that he was thoroughly bent, he threw down his shears, and, springing to his feet with a face as red as that of an angry turkey-cock, vowed he had had enough of it, and that, though "he could shear against any man, he'd be damned if he'd try it any longer agin the devil," for his Satanic Majesty in person he certainly took Fleecy Jim to be.

CHAPTER LI.

FLEECY JIM DENOUNCES LARDY BILL AND LANKY JIM.

So concluded did Slashing Bill lick in his half-starved discomfiture, that rows of laughter arose from the assembled shearers, in which all alike joined.

Fleecy Jim laughed as heartily as any of the rest; but all in an instant his manner changed, his movements died up, so to say, to freeze on his lips by a single wave of some invisible enchanters wand. An expression of horror crept over his ruddy countenance in its place, and, stepping back, he pointed to two of the shears, and exclaimed—

"Holla, mates, did you know you'd two murderers in your midst?"

The laughter was all over now with everybody, and all eyes were turned upon the two men, the one fat, with a broken nose, and the other thin, with a manly-bill-shaped snarl, at whom a dozen or so of the hands were drawn.

And the worthies in question did not conduct themselves in a manner that was at all calculated to convince the bystanders of their innocence.

Horror and terror were in their eyes as they turned tail, with the evident intention of making tracks, but a couple of shears promptly collar'd them, only to be fiercely struck at by the sharp-pointed shears with which the fellows were armed.

Noticing the cowardly action, however, half-a-dozen were quickly upon them, instead of two, and within a few minutes the precious pair of rascals had no chance.

Fleecy Jim, alias Ned Kelly—for it was he,—bellowed grimly to himself, for his victims could not have behaved in a manner to please him better.

By their very actions the fools had admitted the truth of his charge.

"Who are they, mate?" asked a lot of the shearers, as they clustered around him. "What have they done? They've stabbed Bouncing Bill, anyhow."

"He's not the first by a good score," answered Fleecy Jim. "They are a couple of Ned Kelly's lambs. I've good cause to remember them, the scoundrels! seeing as how they murdered my wife and three young children."

"Let me see at them, boys, let me get at 'em!"

And Fleecy Jim pretended to struggle desperately with those who now began to lay hold of him, and beseech him to "draw it mild."

"Not until those two villains are lodged in a devilishly hotter place than Australia. No man's life is safe whilst they exist—no, nor woman's or child's either, the cold-blooded villains!"

Immediately there was the roar of many voices, fusions, excited, and revengeful in tone, striking terror into the souls of the panic-stricken men. Their limbs trembled, and their faces assumed the aspect, that made the features of those who stand on the drop.

"Lynch 'em! Lynch 'em!" was the universal cry—or, rather, scream—from every mouth.

"Hold up your hands, all who are for it!"

Every hand was raised in an instant, except those pertaining to the two culprits and to Slashing Bill.

The laughter was all over now with everybody, and all eyes were quickly upon them, instead of two, and against such fellows were armed.

With the evident intention of making tracks, but a couple of shears promptly collar'd them, only to be fiercely struck at by the sharp-pointed shears with which the fellows were armed.

Noticing the cowardly action, however, half-a-dozen were quickly upon them, instead of two, and with the evident intention of making tracks, but a couple of shears promptly collar'd them, only to be fiercely struck at by the sharp-pointed shears with which the fellows were armed.

Noticing the cowardly action, however, half-a-dozen were quickly upon them, instead of two, and against such fellows were armed.

With the evident intention of making tracks, but a couple of shears promptly collar'd them, only to be fiercely struck at by the sharp-pointed shears with which the fellows were armed.

Noticing the cowardly action, however, half-a-dozen were quickly upon them, instead of two, and against such fellows were armed.
On hearing the name of M'Pherson Fleecy Jim might have been observed to start in a most peculiar manner, and become almost livid; there was one man present who did notice it, namely, Slashing Bill, for hatred has sharp eyes, and he hated the man who had beaten him in shearing, to no small measure.

"I'd give something to be even with thee, lad," he muttered to himself, and then he began to persistently look out for that something.

Meanwhile a rough stretcher was brought out. such an one as a lance shocp was not unfrequently carried on, and the two condemned men, almost dead with fright, were placed thereon, with their ankles secured together, their arms strapped down to their sides, and the halters all ready adjusted to their necks.

Then four of the shearsers laid hold of the stretcher and the execution party set out for the other woolshed, that was situated a mile farther down the creek.

CHAPTER LII.

LARDY BILL AND LANKY JIM HAVE A KISE IN THE WORLD.

The path to this second woolshed was across a narrow valley, through the centre of which flowed the creek, and about half the journey had been accomplished when Lanky Jim, who for some minutes had been regarding his denouncer intently, suddenly exclaimed in a shrill voice:

"I'm bloomed if it ain't Ned Kelly himself! That man's Ned Kelly, I say!" he roared out.

"So he is, by the living Jingo, Jim!" almost screamed Lardy Bill.

All eyes, upon this, were, of course, instantly centred on Fleecy Jim.

But instead of looking in the slightest degree confused, Fleecy Jim burst into a contemptuous laugh, and then answered the accusation with:

"And couldn't you really think of anything better to say than that?"

"Ah! I'm bloomed if you ain't Ned Kelly, though. We mates with you for two years, and saw you every day all that time, and so if we aren't able to swear to you we don't know our own names," said Lanky Jim spiritfully.

"Just listen to the fool, mates!" laughed Fleecy Jim.

"He calls me Ned Kelly, and says that he served under me for two years, and seen me daily during all that time, and must know me; and though I've bin working by his side all day, and drawn his attention pretty considerably on me during the last quarter-of-an-hour, I reckon, and yet he never lets out his grand knowledge until now!"

(To be continued.)

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Lardy Bill was too nearly gone with terror to be able to make any answer, but Fleecy Jim, with eyes aflame, even though his face was as blanched by terror as that of any corpse, hissed through his clenched teeth—

"If I have any wishes to give, it is that you may have a better place than in waiting for us two; and as for last messages, I'll haunt you waking and sleeping. I shall be with you night and day, and I'll never leave you more. Your run of luck is over, for the dying curse you, and the deed will be always with you—ay, when you are hunted like a wolf in the bush, when you see your daughter hung, when you are hung yourself, and all through the long days and nights you will pass in the stone jug. How like you the prospect?"

"So that your ghostly ghost hasn't got a tongue, I can't care very much where or how it haunts me," laughed Fleecy Jim.

"Up with them!" he then shouted to the men who were tailing on to the ropes. "I'll be more fun to see them dance upon nothing than to hear them speechify. Now, altogether with a yow, heave, ho!

The sheriffs required no second bidding.

Lardy Jim had just time to shrug forth his curses, when up went he and his companion, with a quick, jerky run.

It was an awful sight to witness the contortions of the pair, as they swung and wriggled and twisted about in mid-air, like hideous punchinelloes; their legs and arms working all at once, their tongues lolling out of their mouths even while they had their eyes-sockets almost out of their sockets, and a strange rattling issuing from their compressed throats.

But these struggles for breath and life did not continue for very long.

Lardy Bill was the first to stiffen out, being by far the heavier man; but Fleecy Jim was not long in following him, and the two wretches were dangling quietly enough when into the woolshed there suddenly came Mr. Fairfax, Andrew McPherson, and Shrasing Bill the shearer.
During the accusation he had sidled away to the base of the hill, where some young bullocks were grazing.

The identification of Kelly by Lardy and his mate occurred to the recollection of the shearsers, and, backed by M'Pherson’s earnest accusation, induced them, after a moment’s hesitation, to follow the rush made by M’Pherson to secure Ned.

M’Pherson was close on the bushranger, when the latter, with hate and rage in his face, thundered forth an oath and flung with all his force his shars at M’Pherson’s body, and struck him in the abdomen. The weapon penetrated the part, and the wounded man fell to the ground, while his assailant, turning rapidly to face the hill, knowing he was more active than those present, and that, therefore, he could “blow” the lot in the up-hill race, found himself among the frightened steers, who, of course, awaysly from the object of their fright.

Seizing one of them by the tail, the animal took fright, dashed up the hill, and drew Kelly up after him, with no effort on the part of the latter, who, by this novel locomotive, soon outstripped his pursuers, and was on the back of his horse and off like the wind before his enemies could catch horses to follow him.

He—like the gentleman—

"Upon the hill he turned
To take a last fond look;"

and, shaking his hand defiantly, roared out loud enough for all to hear:

"Nyet, I tell you! And look out, Sandy M’Pherson. You’ll swing before Ned Kelly." He then speedily galloped off like mad towards the spot where his police disguise was hidden.

CHAPTER LV.

HALF-AN-HOUR later the shearer was transmogrified into a trooper once more.

If Ned had been a prudent man he would at once have made the best of his way back to Melbourne, and have thought only of Rose’s safety, the quick getting at the treasure in the billion vault of the bank, and then as speedily a flight from the colony as possible.

But, unfortunately for Ned and for his adopted daughter, the wolf’s nature in the man was now thoroughly at work; the fierce lust for blood was upon him, and after a headstrong will had thrown itself into the scale against prudence for a few seconds, prudence kicked the beam, and the bushranger resolved to ride back to Tarramea, to find himself among the frightened steers, who, of course, awaysly from the object of their fright.

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"Indeed!" answered Ned. "And what does Mr. M’Pherson think about the matter?"

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Ned Kelly, the bushranger, has been executing wholesale murder amongst us. He is disguised as a flash shearer, and rides a brown horse not unlike yours, that he re-joined and rides boldly up to the spot where Mr. M’Pherson lay, surrounded by a sympathising crowd of shearsers and station hands.

During the accusation he had sidled away to the base of the hill, where some young bullocks were grazing.

The identification of Kelly by Lardy and his mate occurred to the recollection of the shearsers, and, backed by M’Pherson’s earnest accusation, induced them, after a moment’s hesitation, to follow the rush made by M’Pherson to secure Ned.

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There was something in the tone of his voice that instantly attracted every eye.

"'Tis him! He has come again! It's Kelly himself," moaned the doomed man.

The bushranger laughed, and with his brace of revolvers in his hand he felt that he didn't care a fig for the dozen unarmed men opposed to him.

"Yes, it is Kelly," said he; "and he has returned to do the job that some officious fools stopped him from completing an hour-and-a-half ago. Don't come near me any of you, for I've more than once life in these little herders' remember. Ten fifteen years ago, Andrew McPherson, since I swore that I would be the death of you; but vengeance postponed aren't vengeance abandoned. Come, you skunk, own that you deserve death."

"Spare me—for—for my child's sake!" murmured the wounded man, faintly.

"For which child's sake? The one that was born in the pitiless rain, and amid the thunder and the lightning, pressed to a dying mother's breast? The thing that would have perished but for me! Is that the child you allude to?"

"No—no—no! My daughter Lily."

"I have no time for further talk. You shall die. So take this from the girl you destroyed, and this from the man who, but for her loss and your villainy, might have been something better than he is!"

As he concluded, Ned Kelly fired both his pistols in rapid succession at the placid form of McPherson, and each bullet plunged into his withering body.

With a double scream he rolled right over, writhing and kicking, and plucking up handfuls of grass in his death-agony.

The spectators before the horse like a flock of timid sheep, and Ned was in the act of getting off, when there suddenly swooped around the northmost angle of the immense woodlands five mounted troopers, spread out like a fan, and coming straight down upon him.

Ned almost tumbled out of his saddle with half real and half superstitious terror, as he recognised in the foremost horseman of them all Corporal Conquest, with whom he had made so sure he had left dead in the scrub.

The shepherds and station-hands raised frantie cheers of joy and exultation at the sight of the five troopers, and Ned saw to his horror and despair that at all directions save one his retreat was entirely cut off.

"At him, lads! Show him no mercy! He is worth as much dead as alive!" yelled out Tom Conquest.

But Ned Kelly showed not defiantly.

"You haven't got me yet!" and whirling his horse round he rushed him at the Creek, and landed him safely on the opposite bank; though the leap was a clear twenty-three feet breadth of rolling yellow water.

CHAPTER LV.

A DUEL IN THE CREEK.—THE DESCENT OF A MOUNTAIN.

This daring and the success of the bushranger were cause of great joy and satisfaction to all who were present, and the spectators crowded around to watch the retreat of the troopers.

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when within a dozen feet, levelled his pistol afresh, resolved that his one remaining charge should not, at all events, prove a fluke.

In all probability it would not have done so, had not his horse, after standing as still as a marble one for a couple of minutes suddenly commenced to lump its back, and buck like the very devil, just as Ned's forefinger curled for the last time around the trigger.

How he regretted the noble steed that bore him seven hundred miles through the bush, and upon grass feed too, and never knew it.

The result was that the bushranger scored another wide, whilst a ball from Conquest's weapon at the same instant, flurrying up the grassy flank of Ned's stolen mount, the spirited animal left off dancing the " Cure " with all four feet off the ground at once, and its head stuck between its knees, and swerving to the left flashed off at a tangent across the plain, perfectly indifferent as to whether its rider coincided with its views or not.

Perhaps, however, 'twas fortunate for Ned that his steed did thus take the law into its own hands (or shall we say in the present instant, hands?), for Tom Conquest, having fired his last charge, drew his sabre with the amiable intention of exploring therewith the exact position of Kelly's visage, an investigation that he would have had considerable difficulty in preventing, with a weapon in his hand that he had never learned the use of.

So the object of the game was changed to a steetle-class once more, and Ned cursed his clumsy when, glancing back over his shoulder, he observed that two out of the four troopers had rejoined Conquest; so that now three horses were entered for the ten thousand pound prize at stake, whilst he had scaled his safety for a mere flash in the pan, and, by the act of rash and suicidal folly, considerably lessened his chances of coming off first chop.

Happily, his steed had still lots of strength and endurance left; its hurts were mere scratches, calculated rather to increase than diminish its speed, and Melbourne once reached, Ned congratulated himself that he would in comparative safety, at all events for the brief time that he intended to remain there, ere he quit the Australian Colonies for ever and a day.

How he wished that darkness was an hour nearer; but wishes were no good, and he had to make the best of circumstances as they were.

Death was most certainly behind him; and whatever chance to be in his front he must encounter and overcome, or else fall struggling to the last.

He now took closer and keener observation of the steed that bore him. His head was now to this what a stoutly-built bark is to its crew in a raging hurricane—the sole connecting link between life and eternity.

With thankful complacency he took in all its points one by one—its small square head, finely-arched neck all tra-

ers, and long oblique shoulders, great breadth of chest, ample quarters, well-built legs, and long elastic patterns.

Its muzzle was as soft and black as velvet; its eyes as brilliant as polished jet and its length of stride left one airy of the plaintiff had to be taken at a flying leap, or twisted round with a comet-like swiftness or light.

Then, in a twinkling perhaps, the fleeing bushranger had to throw himself straight along his horse's back, or to duck his head forward almost as low as its withers to save its brains from being dashed out against some low-hanging tree branch, that stretched like a white and ghastly skeleton arm right across his track.

Presently he came to a hill, upon which he had to go, although the ascent was nearly as steep as the roof of a house; and even as his horse dashed up it in a succession of goat-like springs, he could hear the resounding hoof-drope of one of his enemies at not a couple of hundred yards in his rear.

Was he now on an extensive table-land, or what? He could hardly tell where he was, for he had been headed away from the proper bush-track to Bacchus Marsh, and could not tell with any positive degree of certainty whether he was steering.

Presently, however, his doubts were set at rest by coming almost instantaneously upon a nearly precipitous slope, leading down into a deep, black, sombre valley at least two hundred feet below.

He tried to wheel round to the right, but was headed off by a trooper. To the left the same thing occurred.

He had no time to reload his pistols; his sword was a weapon he felt no confidence in, because he did not understand its use, and every trooper was carefully trained thereto so he felt that he must risk the descent at all hazards.

At it he went, therefore, speeding down the declivity at a pace that was truly terrific, for his horse soon lost all power of stopping itself, and Ned rightly yuessed that the effect of hauling on the curb would be to cause the creature to turn a complete somersault.

Reaching up his two feet in the stirrups; each moment the velocity of his progress increased, and he could hear the three troopers on the summit of the hill, laughing at his dilemma; which was presently increased by the sharp cracking of their pistols, and the buzzing of bullets past his ears that sounded like angry hornets on the wind.

At last there was a mighty crash, owing to his horse running full tilt against a tree-trunk, without the possibility of stopping short at the bottom of the descent; and down steered and rider went in a whirling heap.

Ned was on his feet in a twinkling, but saw, with a mingled horror and amazement, that it was impossible to describe, that his gallant steed's course was for ever over.

The near foreleg was broken, and the animal unable to raise himself.

What was to be done now?

Ned looked back, and saw his three foes cautiously descending the hill that had come down like a thunder-bolt.

Ah! he would reload his pistols and stand at bay! It was his only chance.

CHAPTER LVI.

A BATTLE WITH STONES—OFF AND AWAY AGAIN.

Ned felt a grim satisfaction in the thought that he might be able to settle two of his enemies, at all events, ere he
he can thread the leaves and thick patches of Septoria

How glad he feels when he gets clean out into the open, after some five minutes of the most difficult navigation conceivable.

The gloom of night is coming on now, and no mistake, but he sees a broad level valley lying before him, and in the distance a few lights, which he fancies are those of the township of Baccus Marsh.

Choosing them as a guiding star, though never for an instant intending to go near them, he starts off at an easy gallop, for he does not know what his new steed can do yet.

He hopes to get away unperceived by his foes, whom he imagines still to be on the other side of the timber; but he isn’t a clear five hundred yards out into the open, when a regular “View hallo!” sounds in his rear, and looking back he sees that now he has a score of enemies on his trail instead of three.

There are four troopers (he can make out their snow-white shako-covers plainly enough), and the rest of the pursuing force is composed of stockmen, boundary riders, and two or three young fellows whose superior style of get-up suggests to him the idea that they must be Mr. Fairfax’s sons.

What a formidable pack of hounds for the hunting down of one poor, badgered fox!” matters Ned to himself bitterly. “And they think it’s only a fox!” he adds. “By the Lord Harry! they shall find me considerably more of a wild boar when they come up with me—if they ever do!”

And he increased his speed by a sharp application of the spur, for a few seconds later being gratified to find that his new mount had both speed, wind, and military trappings. “Hi, ha!” thought Ned, “the race is not over yet, and perhaps midnight shall, after all, see me enter Melbourne town!”

CHAPTER LVII.

THE RACE FOR THE TEN THOUSAND POUND'S STAKES.

The “view” was breast high, the hounds were in full cry, and the stockmen rode lighter, at all events, than did Ned, for their costume was little more than Crimean shirt and madder trousers.

It was a second Dick Turpin kind of an affair.

A backward glance showed Ned all his foes, stringing out and urging their mettlesome steeds forward with crack of whip and dig of spur,—of kind from London to Yarrale, and a dead horse and half-dead man as a final tableau.

But there would be no alibi to save him, and there’s no turnpike-gate in Australia to stop him; and there was the difference.

He ripped off his coat and threw it away, his shako followed suit, and then his boots. How he wished that his new cap could be freed from its heavy hemp net and military trappings. Well, perhaps in time even that could be effected; but not yet just yet.

His best plan, he thought, after a minute or two’s reflection, would be to out-distance his foes as soon as possible, and then play some of Reynard’s many tricks in order to get rid of them.

Away, away with a sudden spurt darts Ned, his heels and his hands both at work. His horses shoot out like an arrow, it is a killing pace; but then, if he can’t get out of sight of his foes, how can he play them any such tricks as doubling on them, or otherwise throw them on the wrong scent? No; his present in the right dodge, it is convinced.

His horse begins to roar

Confusion! Is he a bron-winded beast? Anyhow, he goes on like the very devil, should he ever burst his gall. There’s another bolt of thick timber three miles ahead, opening out to the left, and Ned thinks he knows a short cut through this to a bush
shanty known as the "Bounding Kangaroo," kept by a
and shelter for a few hours at the least.
the many ruses he has read of in highwayman lales for
confusing and puzzling pursuers when hard run as he is
events out of sight of his foes, and given him at all events
he thought he should have done, and strikes straight
murra. 
will not be amiss.
pedestrians pass daily, and secondly, those that stand beside
The bush inn, then, is a peculiar characteristic of Aus­
au
It had evidently once upon a time been an important
The house, too, bore an aspect of age and neglect; feiie
No sooner, however, did he catch sight of Ned’s
On the other kind.
Far back in the grim and silent bush they stand, close
to dim and uncertain tracks that lead, at best, to some
miserable cluster of huts, rubbed a township, and very
probably miles distant therefrom. Be sure, however, that
there is a squatters’ station not very far away, for from the
squirrels, shepherds, stockmen, boundary-riders, and other
station hands does mine host derive four-fifths of his entire
profits.
These men are paid their wages half-yearly by cheques,
and being all of them single (squatters don’t often employ
married men) and there being no other way of spending
their money they resort singly and in couples to the Bush
Inn, hand Boniface their £20 cheques, and ask him to in­
form them when they have drank the value thereof, which
would amply cover the value of the entire stock-in-trade.
At the lonely and disreputable Bush Inn they often
feast and carouse with little fear of interruption, paying
for everything with gold and notes, and scorching, or, per­
haps, through motives of expediency declining, to accept
of change.
As he goes ahead like a very sky-rocket, Ned thinks of
As he goes ahead like a very sky-rocket, Ned thinks of
A sharp quarter of an hour’s burst has put him at all
events out of sight of his foes, and given him at all events
a chance of eluding them.
He knows his surroundings and his way far better that
he does all of them a half-don and strikes straight through the timber for the "Bounding Kangaroo," which
he recollects to stand on the sou'-south-west angle, and
close to the boundaries of a sheep-run called Coolo­

While he is thus leading, a dissertation on bush inns
will not be amiss.
The bush inn, then, is a peculiar characteristic of Aus­
tralian life, and there are two varieties, namely, those that
border on some track leading from one important town or
city to another, and which vehicles and horsemen and
pedestrians pass daily, and secondly, those that stand beside
the road that ran past the door had plainly been both a
coach and a wagon track, though that it was so long ago
was plainly evidenced by the way in which the grass and
flower-beds had grown in and filled up the wheel-ruts.
The house, too, bore an aspect of age and neglect; the
mural was blistered and burnt on the closed doors and
paint was blistered and burnt on the closed doors and
looking man of middle-age appeared in the doorway.
Looking up in the direction from whence it came, Ned be­
"A quart of ale for my nag, and a stiff glass of grog for
the landlord and his men, ay, even the landlord and his men, ay, even
the landlord and his men, ay, even his own kinfolk too, are at all times their most effectual
and efficient scouts, safeguards, and bush telegraphs.
The reader must imagine that this brief, but necessary,
digression has brought Ned Kelly up to the door of the
bush shanty, a long, rambling wooden structure, with an
old cracking signboard representing the festive kangaroo
afaraid swinging from the low-hanging branch of a
vegetable gum-tree that stood immediately across the way.
It had evidently once upon a time been an important
place, for it was surrounded by ranges of stabling, and the
road that ran past the door had plainly been both a
couch and a wagon track, though that it was so long ago
was plainly evidenced by the way in which the grass and
flower-beds had grown in and filled up the wheel-ruts.
"What’s that you say?” growled a rough voice; and,
"Show up again, and look lively about
ussmall a thimble of grog for myself, powder and lead for my pistols, and a consultation
by way of disguise."
"What’ll you stand if I do all this?"
"Good Lord! why, it’s ten thousand pounds Kelly!"
"All right, Ned, I’m your man. You stay there. I
meddle with you in a brace of
"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. His
talk about buried treasure may be all a yarn. When I went for it it might be gone. I'd sooner trust the Government of the two, and so with moderate blessings I think I'll be content. I can shoot him down from a window, as he's got a gun. He was a d— fool, sure enough, to admit that.

So the next salutation that the bushranger received from his friend and ally of years' standing was a shot from the window above the door, a shot that was quickly followed by another, and then by a third. "You carnal scoundrel!" roared the bushranger, who felt himself struck in two places. "You rascally Judas, I'll burn you out as I said I would. A single lucifer will set your tinder-dry crib alight!"

"Ay, cheer up, I've an old world blunderbuss here that'll lodge as many slugs in yer carcasse as there are to be found in the heart of a spring cabbage," retorted mine host of the bush shanty, half in fright and half in bluster, and rushing away from the window he, in a second or two, returned and thrust out through the rickety open casement a huge bell-mouthed weapon, that looked as though it once belonged to the guard of an English mail, which is indeed had, in the person of Jim Bent's grandfather.

"Now," said he, pot valiantly; "attempt to set fire to my crib, and I'll blow you to smithereens. You haven't got your iron pottemy on now, remember.

"Curse you!" yelled Ned. "Yes, curse you, you treacherous bound. By thunder, if I but live over tonight I'll do something more than threaten."

"But you won't, my tulip," retorted Jim Bent; and, as Ned Kelly wheeled his horse round to gallop away, the truant discharged the blunderbuss—at all events, attempted to discharge it—full at his back.

Luckily for Ned, the cap missed fire; and he would as surely have returned to the inn to carry out his threat had not the neighing and trampling of horses and the wild uproar of many voices informed him that the noise of the fire had served to lead his pursuers in the right direction.

The landlord of the shanty laughed aloud as he saw Kelly check up his horse, and then wheed it round once more, and, having by this time pressed down another cap on the nipple of his medieval-looking weapon, he treated himself to another portion at the bushranger's request, and, almost foamed at the mouth with fury as he discovered that he had scored another fluke, his amiability being by no means restored to him by Ned hurling back the bucket.

"The blood money's not for you, at all events!"

It looked very like as though it was for somebody else might have again changed into day, however, for Ned's wounds, though they were not severe, were at all events sufficient to confuse him and render him giddy.

In the moonlight, too, a full moon, which in Australia answers every purpose of daylight, so clear and effulgent is its silvery radiance, and, far as the eye could wend its way towards the great prison—one of the strongest in the world—a distant church clock could be heard tolling midnight.

But he still shook with apprehension, Ned would not suffer any more outward expressions of alarm to escape him, and so the cortège continued on its way until the prison gates were reached, which speedily rolled open to admit so illustrious a prisoner, and Ned soon found himself surrounded by all the gaud of those in a group, some of whom bore him a jeering welcome.

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"It don't require much pluck to laugh at a letlow when he's got his teeth drawn," said Ned Kelly, in low deep tones of concentrated passion. "But bear it in mind, you Pentridge fellows, that the tigers in a menagerie sometimes kill their keepers."

Ned didn't intend his words to be prophetic, nor, at the time, did he or either of the men who laughed at them guess how terribly the weird threat was destined ere long to be fulfilled.

"Where shall he be lodged, sir?" asked one of the warders of the governor.

"Give him number 18. His father tenanted it last-year."

The moon still shone brightly, and as the cortège slowly wound its way towards the great prison—one of the strongest in the world—a distant church clock could be heard tolling midnight.

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"Give him number 18. His father tenanted it last-
Laughing warders hastened to close, look, and bolt the
dreaded bushranger was pushed roughly inside, and the
But the despot could afford to smile at a glance.
Days would as plainly as words could have done, that
himself.
Pied by his late father before he was hanged.
IT was indeed a change for the hardy bushranger to find
reflection, Ned, and delightfully cool at all seasons of
not have been very long in the land had Kally senior's son
been futile, but, looking around upon those who had
by reason of his giant strength.
we've got fine stout walls to maintain the place select
the year. Added to all that, there's no fear of burglars.
straight forward.
and from the little tiny square iron grating let into the

took down in brief and wrote out."
which, if sincere, would procure him pardon in heaven if
but I'm blowed if you have yet scored
bitter sufferings he had endured.
He did not attempt to resist, for he knew it would have
been futile, but, looking around upon those who had
thudded upon him.
This hall was a kind of guard-room, and was hung
and left him.
This was Ned's parting greeting, and he said not a word
more.
Another minute and the inner prison walls encompassed
him round about.
He stood in the centre of a large paved hall, with a
skylight in the roof at least sixty feet overhead, through
which the white full face of the moon looked down as
with bitter mockery upon him.

CHAPTER LIX.
IN PENTRIDGE JAIL.
It was indeed a change for the hardy bushranger to find
himself—be, used to freedom in the bush—a prisoner in
Pentridge jail, in the same cell, they told him, once occu-
pied by his late father before he was hanged.
They were careful to tell him this ere they left him to

Ned bent upon the gaol governor a glance that intimated
wretched father," replied Ned Kelly, in a whining tone.
"I wish I could see her to ask her pardon." Kelly thanked him.
"One of my great sorrows is that I should have caused
an innocent girl like Miss Bellamy annoyance," he said.
Kelly began to laugh with purposely earnt tones.
He manufactured some story about his wrongs, and the
bitter sufferings he had endured.
Still he was rather glad that his career had been sud-

certainly—one. The worthy head of the prison was quite taken by sur-
prize. The man was a creature after all.
He promised him such extras as his situation required,
and left him.
Ned Kelly was apparently so weak that his irons were
actually removed.
He then asked to see the chaplain.
He came readily. He was an old man of most benevo-

tant, and from one of the two warders who guarded him taking down a bunch
of keys that hung in company with many others against the
yellow-washed walls, up one of these passages he was

and in such a place, and so he kept his eyes directed

and lou'd the door upon him.

And what was to become of Ross? If he could only see Rose! Of course she coming to the
prison could not implicate her, as she had already been
"had up" and discharged for want of criminating evidence.
Above all, he must put off being placed in the dock, as
there was abundance of witnesses to give evidence against
him, and ensure his conviction without loss of time.
To this end he must feign to be more ill than he really
was, and so gain time.
There was another scheme well known to all his frater-

ty—to pretend sincere repentance.
This would make the chaplain friendly and ensure him
comforts.
Still, he did not wish to overdo his sickness, as he might

at the Infirmary.
The sickness he was too clever an actor not to keep up
when visited some hours later with food.
The governor of the jail himself, curious to see this
notorious malcontent, came with the warders.
Kelly seemed utterly subdued, and spoke in a respectful
tone.
"The worthy head of the prison was quite taken by sur-
prise. The man was a creature after all.
He promised him such extras as his situation required,
and left him.
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Let us see, he could not be four by honours, but I'm blowed if you have yet scored
bitter sufferings he had endured.
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and left him.
II, or well, he would soon be taken up before the magistrates.

His dinner was brought, which he ate slowly. Then about an hour later came Rose, who looked her part well. She was grave, but pitiful in her manner.

“You want to speak to me?” she said, approaching where he lay on a rough couch.

The chaplain seated himself on the one stool in the cell.

“I have asked to see you,” he went on, “to express my deep sorrow that you should have been subjected to annoyance on my account—that, in fact, you should have been taken for the daughter of so notorious a malefactor as myself.”

“It is of no consequence now,” she replied—both were talking with their fingers all the time. “I have, with the very least sorrow, brought you this Bible; I hope you will study it well, and that it will profit you.”

“I will study it well,” responded the man with a wicked and cunning leer.

“Take the advice of the good chaplain,” she continued, and turned him what looked like a small thickly-bound Bible.

It was a box full of the very finest and best burglar’s instruments.

“Fairly well,” she now said, “and may you repent sincerely.”

“Amen,” responded the hypocrify.

And Rose went out. She knew at once why she had been sent for.

In case of accidents, Ned Kelly had long had this cunning contrivance prepared. It was devilish, but it was highly characteristic of the man.

Rose went out. The chaplain then approached the culprit.

“This is the MS. I spoke of,” he said, handing him a roll of paper, “you can read it at your leisure. I am going away to-morrow, you may consult it, you can then return it. I will see you before you go before the bench.”

Kelly could only bow his head. He was really too overwrought to speak.

Then he was alone. He opened his box. It contained saws of the finest tempered steel, which, though fine and small, would almost cut iron. There were also files and a chisel.

Rose had expected to find him ironed, and hence had forgotten nothing. Then concealing his precious instruments, Ned Kelly opened the roll of paper.

It was headed thus:

“THE DYING CONFESSION OF THOMAS KELLY, alias Red Kelly, No. 135, a lifer.”

It consisted of about 144 closely written sheets.

“I can read that at my leisure,” he remarked, “I have other fish to fry now. Who knows” (with a laugh), “you can read it at your leisure. I am going away unvil to-morrow,” he continued, “you can then read it at your leisure.”

Kelly could only bow his head. He was really too overcome to speak.

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And then he leaned back on his couch and relapsed into deep thought.

Should he escape?

That was the all-important question now. All was incomplete.

True Ned Kelly knew many men who had been confined in Pentridge prison, and they had given him a pretty good idea of the inside.

He had every reason to believe that this cell, which was separate from the others, and used as a condemned cell for dangerous prisoners, overlooked the governor’s garden.

If so, his chances were great indeed.

There never had been an escape from Wintle’s Hotel, and therefore no provision had been made for so remote and apparently impossible a contingency.

It was a matter not to be considered.

Ned Kelly, the more he reflected, the more hopeful he became.

What did he not owe to Rose?

He had ever loved her for her mother’s sake, how much more for her own?

She was really no relation to him, and already a finally-developed woman.

Why not marry her?

The idea flashed through his mind like a ray of sunshine, but he knew she regarded him as a child does a father.

At all events it would link her to him, and was at any rate a more sensible idea than that in relation to the countess.

The thought passed away never to return.

But Ned Kelly was down in the mouth now, and not inclined to be vainglorious.

Evening came, and with it the last meal of the day. A cursory examination of the prison was made, and then he was locked in for the night.

The condemned cell had no trap in the door, as when occupied by one about to die two warders watched him day and night.

Ned Kelly was glad to find it was not a truly Australian moonlight. It was rather dark than otherwise.

So much the better for him.

Placing his goal on the table, he was just able to reach to the four round holes twenty inches apart.

Kelly was not so stout as he was doomed to be afterwards, and it might be done.

The holes had an iron lining. These he easily removed with his chisel.

Then the saws began.

The planking was stout, and about an inch thick, stout and strong enough for any malefactor without superior tools.

But these tools were manufactured in London by a man who understood his business. Kelly knew that he must escape that night or not at all. A half-finished job would sure to be discovered by the keen eyes of the warders. Kelly worked with a will.

He found, to his rapture, the instruments worked admirably.

Rose had taken from her pocket—she had not been searched coming in with the chaplain—a flask of strong brandy and a phial of oil.

He drank the former, and used the latter freely when required.

He had begun at eight. He heard the clock strike twelve.

The square of wood was out.

He peered through, and saw that it did look over the private gardens.

But he saw another thing. There were grand goings-on at the governor’s house.

It was lit up, and soft music was heard. He had made this out before, but thought it afar off.

Now, to get out.

Below the orifice was a shed with a sloping roof.

Now Ned had to wriggle through the hole as best he might, his hands as it were pinioned behind him.

As soon as they were through he could help himself somewhat.

The house was some distance from this part of the prison, so that a slight noise would scarcely be noticed.

He stood on his stool and thrust his head and shoulders through with difficulty.

It was a tight fit.

Still, at last his arms were free, and he prepared for a fall.

It was only three feet, and he was not bruised, only a little shaken.

He then rose to his feet, and took a keen look around to examine the situation.

Then he came to the conclusion that his only chance of escape was through the governor’s house.

Here was a situation.

The garden was luxuriant, and he was able to approach the residence unseen.

The music still went on.
Soon he came upon two persons talking—a male and a female.

He peeped.

One was a footman in gorgeous array, the other a pretty parlour-maid.

The footman was a tall fellow, about the height of Ned Kelly himself.

"I can't stop no longer, Mary," he said, as he gave her a last kiss; "supper will be wanted."

Kelly couched.

The girl ran away, and the indignant flunkey, cockney and ex-convict, turned to see who had had the audacity to interrupt.

He saw a stranger before him.

"Who are you? You ain't no right here. I'll call the steward," said James.

Ned Kelly simply felled him to the ground like an ox.

He then carried him back to the foot-horse, where he found plenty of cord.

Wrapping off the man's clothes, he then secured him with a gag made from the end of a mop.

He then changed habiliments; but this was not all.

Must be careful.

Doubtless on such an occasion as this there were many extra waiters.

This was his safeguard.

Creeping up to the house, Ned, peering about, found a back kitchen, with soap, towels, and all requirements for the toilet of the attendants.

The clothes had not tittered the man he had felled to the ground. Hence he was certainly an extra.

Kelly examined himself keenly, and washed every sign of dust and heat off.

He then put on the podgy white gloves, and prepared to enter the house.

There was great confusion.

The servants were also hurrying in with the various dishes.

The guests were hurrying to the supper-room to the tune of the "Roast Beef of Old England."

To enter the house, one needed to knock in a peculiar way at the door.

The blinds were down, and not a sign of life was visible.

But the owner had contrived a very simple signal, known only to himself and daughter.

A simple-looking nail-head, pressed very hard, rang a bell in Rose's room.

"What news?" she then said. "Where are Carroty Larkins and Dick Dawson?"

The servant came in.

"At work in the cellar," she answered.

Ned Kelly simply nodded, rose, took up his pistols, and descended with a light step.

He was soon in the cellar, and was about to enter the tunnel, where he saw Larkins and Dick Dawson come out of it with scared faces.

"What's up?" cried Ned.

They started back with an astonished look.

"You here?" said Dick Dawson; "we thought you were in the jug—"

The pair had heard of Ned's capture, and had returned to Melbourne to carry out Ned's intended bank robbery.

"Escaped," he answered, in a dry tone; "but what's up? You seem frightened."

"Not a red cent in the bullion-room," was the reply; "all the red store has been shipped."

What Ned said need not be repeated. His words were not blessings.

They returned to the house, and plans were now laid for their dispersion.

Ned insisted that all should travel separately, as being safer.

He proposed that all should make for Adelaide, which is 600 miles from Melbourne, and in the scoundrels of Australia, where they were personally unknown.

Arrived there, he would propose a scheme. He would not even hint it now.

Ned Kelly gave the two men some money, and bade them lose no time in getting out of Melbourne.

"Don't go drinking, my lads," he said, significantly, "but get away straight."

They promised and went out.

"Now, Rose, get ready," the self-dubbed father said; "we must not delay. But that no one would believe in our coming here we should never be free to leave now."

Rose hurried at once to obey her father.

He knew many men in the back slums who were more to be trusted than one of his own gang.

They were receivers and worse, many of them ex-convicts, and not likely to split on the man who was locked upon more as a dead-gold than anything else.

He procured a disguise of an elaborate nature, and then, mounting a big cigar, sauntered along the streets of Melbourne with his hands in his pockets.

In this way he reached the house opposite the bank. The blinds were down, and not a sign of life was visible.

But the owner had contrived a very simple signal, known only to himself and daughter.

A simple-looking nail-head, pressed very hard, rang a bell in Rose's room.

She was too astounded to speak, but took him into a comfortable sitting-room.

There was a buffet near the drawing-room door. It was open.

"What news?" he then said. "Where are Carroty Larkins and Dick Dawson?"

He waited four minutes, and then knocked in a peculiar way at the door.

It opened at once, and Rose stood before him.

"I can't stop no longer, Mary," he said, as he gave her a last kiss; "supper will be wanted."

Now, of course, his wisest line of conduct would have been to obtain a horse and ride away.

But two reasons militated against this.

His love for Rose and his greed for gold led him towards his possible destruction.

But Ned Kelly was one of those kind of men who never diverge from a resolution.

He knew many men in the back slums who were more to be trusted than one of his own gang.

They were receivers and worse, many of them ex-convicts, and not likely to split on the man who was locked upon more as a dead-gold than anything else.

The man confessed afterwards that it was one of the victors, and not likely to split on the man who was looked upon more as a dead-gold than anything else.

Here he placed brandy before him. Evidently she knew well, and acted in accordance with his well-known tastes and instincts.

He drank a stiff draught.

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He knew many men in the back slums who were more to be trusted than one of his own gang.

They were receivers and worse, many of them ex-convicts, and not likely to split on the man who was locked upon more as a dead-gold than anything else.
Then they went out, and until they were at a consider­able distance from the house remained perfectly silent.

"Rose, my darling, I noticed as I passed along that a vessel will sail to-morrow for London," he said.

"Hence you can take the mail-boat for Adelaide. Go to the Ballarat Hotel, and enter your name as Mary Parsons."

"Yes, father," she answered. "I have always obeyed you, and always will as long as I live."

Poor girl!

And so they parted at a sailors' boarding-house, where the captain of the sailing vessel was staying previous to his departure.

Ned now, with a deep sigh, as if anticipating coming evil, advanced on his way.

He was so cunningly disguised with a wig worthy of the London stage that he did not in any way fear detection.

The bar of a celebrated hotel was open, though it was four o'clock, and Kelly sauntered in.

He had consumed a hasty supper which Rose had prepared for him.

But he was fevered from thirst.

Besides, the man was possessed of a devil. It was the love of notoriety.

Many of his most daring crimes were committed to be talked about.

He wanted to hear if his escape was as yet a matter of conversation.

The bar he entered was at the back of the hotel, and was kept by two men who were adepts at the knife and pistol.

They had a rough lot to deal with.

But they would stand no nonsense. If the man refused to pay they would leap across the bar, knock him down, and then with pistol and knife defend themselves against any confederates he might have.

Ned Kelly took a keen glance around. Loafers were the chief denizens.

Recollect the bar was behind the real hotel, and almost unknown to its regular customers.

It was kept by one of the most successful enterprisers in the world in that line.

Ned Kelly took a second glance.

There were some police off duty congregated in a group.

But it was clear that there was no one personally known to himself.

"Don't believe it," were the first words he heard as he entered within the unhallowed precincts.

"Don't believe what?" asked our hero with a rowdy shake of the head.

"Who's who?" was the response.

"That ain't any matter," answered the other. "I only wanted to know what it is you did not believe—that's all, my pippins."

"That Ned Kelly has escaped," the man continued in a musing kind of way.

"So you think that Ned Kelly has escaped?" he said, in an exultant foolish laugh.

The astonishment of all was great.

The police affected to disbelieve the statement of the drunken ruffian.

"That was Kelly himself," said a cool-looking loafer smoking a cigar of large dimensions the celebrated bush­ranger had given him.

"Knew him the minute he came in.

"Why did you not speak before?" irately cried one of the few police who remained.

"Causes such as me takes no share," was the grim answer, "in that there reward. The traps keeps it to theirselves.

"At which there was a general laugh on the part of the brotherhood.

Meanwhile, Ned Kelly, well aware that he had by his own vainglorious imprudence set a frightful nest of hornets at his heels, rode like a madman.

He slept that night in the hut of a shepherd, who, having an unlimited supply of whisky given him, was not cautious.

(To be continued.)

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His guest was very swarthy at night, in the morning he was ruddy and fair.

But he asked no questions.

Ned Kelly had, as the girls said, a way with him that was irresistible.

After a hearty meal, Ned thanked the man for his hospitality, and once more started on his road.

He was in high spirits, had a good horse, and congratulated himself on his wonderful escape from prison.

A few hours ago he had never expected to breathe the air of freedom, and he laughed to himself as he thought over the way he had outwitted the police and gaolers.

Not one feeling of regret or remorse entered his mind.

The outrages and crimes he had committed were, he considered, matters to exult over rather than regret.

He had always been a bad unscrupulous man, and gloated in it, deserved villain as he was.

The few had no terror for him; he was brave and feared nothing, and openly declared that he cared neither for God nor man.

Ned of course expected to be pursued, and knew there was every chance of being captured.

Yet he had been in so many dangers and desperate situations that he did not despair of eluding his pursuers, in fact, he had begun to believe that he was protected by Providence, forgetting that a man's crimes are not always punished swiftly, and justice if slow is nearly always sure.

The daring recklessness of his escape and the skill with which he had outwitted the police, would make it difficult for any man to find him again.

He had not proceeded far on his road along the rough highway, when he was startled to hear horses' hoofs behind him.

As they came nearer and nearer, Kelly glanced round as if seeking a hiding-place, but after a moment's hesitation decided to face it out whatever the danger might be.

Without once glancing back he continued to advance although he felt curious enough to know what the horsemen were.

At last they came up with him, and Ned Kelly saw that they were two young policemen evidently in pursuit of himself.

They pulled in their horses to give them breath, for they had been hardly ridden, judging by appearance.

"Good morning," said Kelly as he too reined in with a pleasant smile, as if highly delighted at the prospect of company for a few minutes.

"You seem in a hurry.

Goin' in search of sheep- stealers, I suppose?"

"We are going after bigger game than that," replied one of the policemen, "we are looking after Ned Kelly the bushranger."

"Ned Kelly," repeated our hero.

"I thought he was safe in prison. You don't mean to say he has escaped?"

This in a horrified tone.

"He ought to have been shot when first captured. The news you have just imparted to me will fill hundreds of people with alarm and dread."

"Yes," replied the young policeman who had spoken before and was evidently a more communicative man than the other; "but if I am not mistaken we shall soon capture him again."

"You think so?" casually remarked Ned.

"Yes," the other replied, "I am certain."

"He is very cunning and clever, from what I hear," responded Ned Kelly; "and, if what I hear is true, two men would stand a very poor chance with him. He can fight like the devil, and the knife and the pistol are weapons which he knows how to use better than any man in the colony."

"We know all about that," cried the policeman, rather angrily, for his pride was hurt at Kelly's insinuation that he was not a fool. "He was not a match for the ironclad bushranger," but we, have no reason to be afraid if he has come across him. We are well-armed and well-mounted, and besides have the feeling that we are in the right. Kelly figths with a rope round his neck. He is the biggest scoundrel that ever must be hunted down like a rat. The highwaymen in England in the old days were saints to the men who has made his name the terror of Australia."

"If every man got his deserts, few would go unpunished," said Kelly, with a laugh, turning away his face to hide the hideous look of rage that disfigured every feature.

For one moment he felt inclined to draw his pistol from his belt and shoot the policeman through the head; but he conquered the impulse, reflecting that it would do no good.

These two policemen might not be by themselves, others might be following his trail.

If Kelly was a bad man, he was not a fool. No one could accuse him of that. Besides, he was afraid that the report of his pistol might attract attention.

Nothing in his manner evinced that he had any hostile feelings against his companions.

He spoke craftily of his own escape, trying to find out how much they knew, and keeping a keen watch upon them without appearing to do so.

The police seemed in no hurry to part company with him, and presently Kelly fancied he saw them exchange significant glances as much as to say, "This is our man."

In fact, he had begun to believe that he was protected by Providence, forgetting that a man's crimes are not always punished swiftly, and justice if slow is nearly always sure.

But he had been in so many dangers and desperate situations that he did not despair of eluding his pursuers, in fact, he had begun to believe that he was protected by Providence, forgetting that a man's crimes are not always punished swiftly, and justice if slow is nearly always sure.

The daring recklessness of his escape and the skill with which he had outwitted the police, would make it difficult for any man to find him again.

"If I were you I should not like the job," he said, presently, "but perhaps after all folk exaggerate about Kelly's powers and pluck."

"We do not underestimate his powers," said the policeman, significantly, and then, as if by accident, he pulled his rein, and Kelly found himself between the two horsemen.

The race will not surrender without a desperate struggle," observed Kelly, with a look of menace in his eyes.

He saw that they were rapidly approaching a police-station, and there was no time to be lost, and suddenly pulling out a short black pipe asked one of his would-be captors in a nonchalant way for a light.

"Oh, I'll get you one close by," was the reply. "No. 1 went to the police-station, which just hose in sight, to get more than the light required."

No sooner had he disappeared than Ned, drawing a pistol from his pocket, swore he would scatter No. 2's limits if he did not at once dismount.

The persuasive eloquence of the muzzle of the pistol had the desired effect, and down jumped the lad (for he was nothing more), and allowed Kelly to take hold of the bridle.

"Good-bye, my friend," he coolly said. "The prison isn't made, or the traps born, that are a match for Ned Kelly."

With a loud laugh, he rides rapidly away, leading the trooper's horse with him, to "keep him," as he said, "in good company."

When No. 2 arrived at the police-station, the charge was the chagrin and rage at the success of the ruse. The police, on hearing of his escape, rose with loud yells of anger and disappointment, and, mounting their horses, started in pursuit.

They were not only eager to reap the great reward, but they now had a personal grievance against Ned Kelly, and wanted to be revenged upon him for the success of his dodge.

In fact, they were cruelly mortified.

Kelly, now perfectly calm and self-possessed, urged forward his horse as he heard the shouts of his pursuers behind him.

He necessarily rode blindly along the first path that presented itself.

It was a race for life and liberty once more, and pitilessly by his own folly.

The policemen fired more than once, but the bullets whizzed over Kelly's head, and he gave a shout of delight and laughing defiance as his horses dashed forward at headlong speed.

The men, as can be easily imagined, did not spare that
steeds, and Kelly, hearing another shout of triumph, looked back and saw that his pursuers were gaining upon him. He resolved to keep the second horse with him, and change steeds when his weight began to tell upon that he rode.

He made up his mind instantly that if they came much nearer he would turn and fight.

A sinister light glimmered in his eye as he listened to the yells and cries of the enraged bench, and Kelly, hearing another shout of triumph, felt that he was not being followed, until he was aware of the change of direction. He was not so sure of his safety after all, and he must turn and face the police men, or take this awful, this terrible leap.

The noise they had made should have warned him. Just in his path, just before him, was a wide gully, cutting off his retreat, and he must turn and face the policemen, or take this awful, this terrible leap.

In an instant his mind was made up.

There was only one thing to be done. He would not attempt the leap.

The pace that had been a killing one. His horse was distressed, and those of his followers were not much less so.

He resolved, as he said, to "burst the lot," and so pressed his animal still more with spur and hand. He had the satisfaction of gaining on his pursuers. He saw they were flagging, and that the men were somewhat done up from excitement.

He avoided the leap, and turned sharply towards the scrub, and for a few minutes was hidden from view. He rapidly changed horses, and mounting the led one, felt he now really had the foot of the field. The time occupied in the change had allowed his enemies to gain on him, and the next line of delight posted from their lips as they thought they had him at last.

They were quickly deceived, for they now felt he was leaving them at every stride.

Seeing further pursuit useless, they moderated their pace and turned away.

Kelly gave a deep sigh of relief, and laughed mockingly as he continued on his way.

At present, at least, he was out of danger—but for how long?

He did not allow his horse to relax its pace, but rode hard till night came on, looking back every now and then to convince himself that he was not being followed, until it was too dark for him to see any object distinctly, when he allowed his steed to take it easy.

He had entered the wild scrub, and was slowly moving through the long grass, when he suddenly saw a faint light in the distance, and knew that he was nearing some habitation.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE INN IN THE BUSH.

He soon found that the light proceeded from a lonely inn, one of those places frequented by roughs, ex-convicts, and shepherds, and Kelly's face brightened as he alighted from his horse, and, pushing open the door which happened to stand ajar, entered without ceremony.

"Supper and whisky," he said lassically, and the landlady, on hearing the order, hastened to set a good meal before him. He allowed his steed to take it easy.

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They were a well-matched couple—the man, a tall, handsome fellow of about thirty, and the woman a fine strapping wench of five and twenty.

"I thought it would be more comfortable for you here," observed the landlady, as she and her husband sat down at the same table to discuss their own evening meal.

"Thank you," said Kelly curtly, but against his will he had found himself drawn into conversation.

He did not wish to appear churlish, nor had he any desire to arouse the suspicions of the man and woman.

The name of the couple was Marsh, and they were evidently natives of the Emerald Isle.

It required little inducement to persuade them to speak of the country they had left.

The woman at first tried to ply Kelly with questions, but after briefly stating that his name was Jones, he changed the conversation, and began to talk of Ireland, a subject which appeared agreeable to his companions.

They appeared to be rather free and easy people, but they were none the worse for that in the eyes of the celebrated bushranger, who began to ask questions in his turn.

"Why did you leave Ireland?" he asked bluntly, as he refilled his glass.

"We were given a free passage by the Government," returned the man, with a wink. "A pig-headed jury found us guilty of participating in a murder that took place at Balla, near Castlebar, and we were shipped off for change of air. When we were discharged from the Tench by order of the same paternal Government, we settled down here to try and turn an honest penny."

"Balla, near Castlebar?" said Kelly, interrogatively, looking at the woman with new interest as he spoke; "is that where you came from?"

"That same," responded the man.

"Was your father named Kelly?" asked the bushranger, addressing Mrs. Marsh, who sat with her plump elbows resting on the table, and her eyes fixed upon his face.

"That was her father's name," interposed the husband, before she could speak; "and who might you be, to know so much about us?"

"I am Ned Kelly, your wife's brother," was the quiet reply.

"My brother!" cried the woman, in astonished surprise and delight, whilst her husband warmly grasped the bushranger's hand.

He was evidently regarded as a great hero by the interesting pair.

They had heard and gloated over the bloodthirsty and daring deeds of Ned Kelly, and were glad to welcome him to their shanty.

He felt now that he was indeed amongst friends, and could rely upon their truth and honesty as far as he was personally concerned.

They regarded him with undisguised admiration.

That which appeared revolting to other people became pleasant as well as profitable connection.

He was no longer compelled to behave with caution, and could show himself in his true colours.

That night was a jolly one indeed for the two, and long after the shanty was shut up they drank and talked and..."
laughed, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves; Marsh and his wife swearing that Kelly was the most wonderful fellow they had ever met or heard of.

"I have done many things that have astonished Australia," said Kelly, before retreating to rest, "but I am not your old, and intend to do many during deeds which will put my past exploits completely in the shade."

This was no idle boast; Ned Kelly meant to keep his word. The notorious bushranger was a man of iron resolution, and seldom made a promise that he did not carry out.

He had been in the saddle all day, and consequently soon fell into a sound sleep, his powerful frame stretched out to its full length, and his massive head resting on his unruly arm.

Sleep, which is often denied to the innocent, came always at his bidding, and he could have dreamed away till daylight had not the silences of the night been suddenly broken by an ominous sound—a loud knocking at the door.

In an instant Kelly was wide awake and on the alert, and lifting his head he listened intently. He was joined a few minutes later by his sister and her husband.

"Come," said the woman, anxiously, "there is no time to be lost. The policemen are at the door and must be admitted, but there is a hiding-place in which you will be quite secure from all fear of discovery. Come at once; Kelly unhesitatingly obeyed. He knew intuitively that he could trust these people, and his instinct seldom played him false.

"My house?" he said, anxiously.

"Has been hobbled out down in the gully. Have no fear," was the reassuring reply of the woman, who was in a curious state of deshabille.

The police impatient at being kept waiting, hammered ceaselessly at the door, swearing that if it was not at once opened they would break it in, and Kelly was hastily conducted to the hiding-place beneath the floor of the shanty.

It was a very awkward and cramped position, but anything was better than falling into the hands of the police—of the hated traps.

"What the devil is the matter? Has hell broke loose?" queried the landlord, in a sleepy voice, as he pushed him on one side they entered the shanty-inn.

The police waited to hear no more, but impatiently pushing him on one side they entered the shanty-inn.

"I have said so once," said the man, looking at him hospitably, "and now let us consult as to what is to be done."

"Do on the beach, and disturbing his well-earned repose?" queried Marsh, angrily. "But to show that I don't bear malice, I'll stand drinks all round."

This offer was well received by the police of course, who were tired and thirsty.

"Death and destruction to Ned Kelly," shouted the leader, and the bushranger smiled, as he heard the words in his secret hiding-place beneath.

"That's it," answered Marsh, "and what I say I wish you may get him."

A few minutes later the landlord had the supreme satisfaction of bolting the door on his unpleasant visitors.

He waited until the sound of their horses'hoofs had died away in the distance before he released Ned Kelly from his place of confinement.

Neil had great difficulty in rising from his place of concealment. His legs were cramped, and he almost gasped for breath as he stood upright.

"I could not have stood it much longer," he said, as he stretched himself. "I should have had to cry out if they had not taken their departure in the nick of time."

"It was the best we could do for you," returned Marsh, apologetically, "and now let us consult as to what is to be done. You can't leave the shanty too-right, it is not to be thought of for a moment. Although to all appearances the police have taken their departure, I know you are too old a bird to think of venturing out so soon."

"But Ned saw the wisdom of these words. He therefore decided to remain where he was until darkness should once more veil the earth.

He knew that it would be madness to think of remaining any longer than was absolutely necessary, for the police were up to some games, boys, and want to help yourselves.

"I will not stay another minute," he said, "and now let us consult as to what is to be done."

The police waited to hear no more, but impatiently pushing him on one side they entered the shanty-inn.

"Search my shanty?" cried Marsh, indignantly. "You are up to some games, boys, and want to help yourselves to my liquor."

The police waited to hear no more, but impatiently pushing him on one side they entered the shanty-inn.

"Search away as much as you like," cried Marsh, "as long as you keep out of my wife's bedroom I don't care."

Keep out of there, and I shan't make the least fuss if you pull the whole place about my ears."

"You have done me a good turn," he said, "and Ned Kelly won't forget it," and without another word he left Marsh where he stood, the echo of his horse's hoofs gradually dying away in the distance.

CHAPTER LXII

IN THE SCRUB.

Our into the darkness rode Ned Kelly, his heart swelling with a pleasant sense of freedom, in spite of the dangers which might encompass him on every side.
His talents and perseverance were indeed worthy of a better cause. Well directed, he might have been a hero, or what the world so calls. The bushranger did not keep the high-road more than he could help. He rode at some little distance from it, keeping it tolerably in view. All that day he travelled with few rests, nor halted until night fell on the scene. Then he halted round and saw a wood at a great distance. Towards this he made his way. Suddenly he became aware of a small crackling fire. Kelly at once approached and saw that a fellow-traveller had halted and made a fire. "Good night, mate," said Kelly in his most cordial manner, "making yourself comfortable?" "Yes, come in and join," replied the other. Kelly needed not twice telling. First seeing to his horse's wants he joined the other. He was a fine young fellow of about seven-and-twenty years of age, a gold digger, but of a superior sort. Kelly had cold meat, bread, and whisky, but no cooking utensils. The stranger was making water boil for tea, the universal drink of the Australian.

The two fraternised, and for some time nothing was thought of but eating. Then they filled their pannikins with whisky and water, loaded their pipes, and talked. John Morney had come out to seek his fortune, and, having succeeded tolerably, was going home. "I left a mother, a sister, and one dearer still, to seek my fortune," he said, with a pleasant smile, "and now am going home by way of Adelaide." "So am I, mate," replied Kelly, and told some story in vented on the spot. The other listened and believed. He was a straightforward young Englishman, without any guilt, and ready to believe any plausible tale that was told him. And so, with laughter and joke, the night passed until it was time to retire. They laid their blankets, and, each seeking his spot, wrapped themselves in them and sought refreshment in slumber. At least, John Morney did. But not so Kelly. An infant idea had entered his head. If this man was able to return to England he must have made a pile. "Sized his pils, I fancy," said Kelly to himself, "pretty well." Money, and the brutal gratification it procured him, was all he thought of. Why should he not take advantage of this windfall that had come in his way? So he lay under his blanket, watching for the unfortunate and trusting traveller to sleep. Kelly was armed with pistol and knife. The latter he carried in a sheath, and it was a bright and glittering blade. Presently the man whose evil genius had brought him in contact with Kelly, gave unmistakeable signs of being asleep. With the caution and cunning of a panther, Kelly put aside his blanket, and crept towards the poor young man. Relentless as the most ferocious of wild beasts, the bushranger raised his deadly weapon, and struck at the other's breast. A groan, a gurgling sound, and all was over. The blow was sudden, and well and surely struck. Then Kelly coolly proceeded to search the body of his victim. He found a rather heavy belt and a pocket-book which he appropriated without hesitation.

Then he caught his horse and rode off to some distance, until he reached a dense part of scrub and wood, where he again camped. He drained his whisky flask and then slept as soundly as any innocent child might have done. At early dawn he examined his plunder, found the belt full, while in the pocket-book was a draught given by the Union Bank of Melbourne on Adelaide, for £1,100. Any sense of remorse that might have arisen in the mind of Kelly was set at rest by this momentous discovery. Kelly put away his plunder, and then rode on until he came to a small shanty inn, where he procured breakfast. Then mounting, he once more started on his way, eager to accomplish his journey. Kelly took care to avoid all except solitary travellers, which, by keeping a good look-out, he easily did. He did this all the more that express messengers had pencilled a new reward for his own apprehension. That night he found himself near a small inn of the rougher kind. This he resolved to enter, though determined not to stay. If his hand was against every man, every man's hand was against him. The reward was stupendous. While he was eating his supper he suddenly heard horses' footsteps. His own steed was in a rude stable at the back. Quick as thought—he rolled his knife and pistol ready—he concealed himself behind a pile of cooking utensils. "House," said a familiar voice, appearing on the scene. "Here," replied a gaunt old woman, appearing on the scene; "what's your will?" At the same time there entered Dick Dawson and Curzzy Larkins, who at once ordered supper. The woman retired to obey orders. "So you've come along, my hearties?" said Kelly, with a gruff laugh. The men were delighted to see their chief. Questioned by him, they declared that they had had no adventures by the way. It was now resolved to travel together. Eating heartily, and securing tobacco and spirits, they once more started for the woods, where they passed the night. As they approached the seat of population they were very careful. Police stations were carefully avoided, as a matter of course, by these unparalleled ruffians. The troopers were keenly on the alert. The whole colony was ringing with the daring and impudent escape of the bushranger. Kelly's cool audacity was only equalled by his villainy and bloodthirsty recklessness.

They might be sure, therefore, that a good look-out would be kept. As, therefore, they approached the town, they were doubly cautious, and when in sight concealed themselves in a rather wild place, and waited for night. Then, after some arrangements as to meeting, they separated, each to take his solitary way into the town. Kelly looked around keenly, and at last, making a virtue of necessity, rode into the town. He had disguised himself admirably, and had little fear of being recognized, except by someone who had seen him. At all events he must risk something to carry out his plans.

CHAPTER LXIII.

ADELAIDE.

NED KELLY was not known in Adelaide, though he had a "mote" and correspondents there. The confederacy of crime was something marvellous all over the world. But among bushrangers and convicts it is a thing real, wonderful to contemplate.
asleep on the table. Newgate and the Tench. I know something about him. I've done a specimen of the low, loafing, idle English peasant—they are not known, at all events in the colonies. They betray one another every day openly and secretly, as is very well known.

But where an organisation is powerful, and those left behind are always ready to punish the betrayers, men think twice before they enter on a course of treachery. Ned Kelly knew this, but he was too much of a rascal to trust anyone other than he could help. He had had some experience of late. Ned Kelly went straight to a small inn and put up his horse. This inn was in the purview of the town, and was very quiet and tolerably respectable. He ordered a glass of whiskey, smoked a pipe, and then sauntered down the town.

First he went to the post office to ask for letters for James Fairfax. There were no letters. Then he sauntered to the Golden Nugget, a house of call for sailors. Here he had made an appointment with Dick Dawson and Carroty Larkins. He was roughly enough attired now, and not likely to excite suspicion. In these days the system of photographing prisoners was not known, at all events in the colonies. He was, therefore, in no immediate danger. He sauntered into the place, and looked around with his usual scrutinising eye.

It was a saloon such as has never been seen except at places possessed with the gold fever. The costume was rough, but the faces and the language was much rougher. Kelly sauntered through the group until he came to where a knot of men in a peculiar style of dress attracted his notice. They were half sailors, half diggers. Most had plenty of drink before them, which they tossed off freely, while their more unfortunate brethren came in for a share.

Kelly thought he had never seen such a villainous lot in his life. They were six in number, while he occupied a table to himself. Apparently they did not notice him.

"I hate work!" said a thin, mean-looking fellow, with a sallow complexion and pock-marked face; "I always did. How did you come out here then?" asked a burly ruffian, known as Salmon Roe.

"Well, you see, they sent me, and I got more work than I knew what to do with," was the disgusted answer; "go and dig in those gold mines!"

"Work!" laughed the leader of the sailor party. "Work for fools. I know trick worth two of them things."

"I should," grunted the man known as Poacher, a fair specimen of the low, loafing, idle English peasant—they are not many, but they beat anybody when you find them; "like to know what to do to keep from work."

"Dig for gold!" said Salmon Roe, amidst universal approval. "Boys! let's dig and wise men gain by it."

"How?" asked the Poacher.

"There must be no flies," answered the burly ruffian, "no we here. I'm up to a big thing, but no man joins me without I knows something about him. I've done Newgate and the Trench."

"I've been once in Clerkenwell, twice in Millbank, and ain't long kicked out of Pentridge," added the Poacher. Each of the men gave some such satisfactory answer. Carefully he went, seemingly, after a heavy drink, fallen asleep on the table.

"Listen," said Salmon Roe. Now we may as well promise that a large number of vessels were at this time lying at Adelaide waiting to go off the coast of South America. We man the long-boat, and don't take no provisions—oh, no! and no liquor of any kind, not a drop—or no, no brandy, no wine. We have our signs and passwords, which enable them behind are always ready to punish the betrayers, men think twice before they enter on a course of treachery. Ned Kelly knew this, but he was too much of a rascal to trust anyone other than he could help. He had had some experience of late. Ned Kelly went straight to a small inn and put up his horse. This inn was in the purview of the town, and was very quiet and tolerably respectable. He ordered a glass of whiskey, smoked a pipe, and then sauntered down the town.

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Next day Ned Kelly dressed as a respectable gold-digger presented himself at the bank, and, handing in the draft, was at once paid. The audacious bushranger had now a fund of nearly three thousand pounds. It struck him now that he had better go as a passenger, and thus be useful to his confederates. He waited until evening and then communicated his idea to Salmon Roe. That worthy highly approved of it. The good ship Lenore, a fine vessel, had a cargo and passengers, and was only awaiting a crew. Next morning Ned Kelly called upon the agent, Mr. Lawson, and booked a cabin passage in the Lenore as Mr. Henry Preston. The agent thought his client a very agreeable sort of man, and when he had paid his money readily went out to have a glass of champagne. He in this way came to notice the bushranger's face, and also that he had his left-hand glove on.

An hour later Salmon Roe, as Joe Perkins, very well made up as a mate. The agent, Mr. Lawson, received him very courteously, though him rather rough and peculiar-looking man. Mr. Lawson, he asserted in his last moments, that when he sat down to dinner with the passengers he shouldered at the sight of so much youth and beauty.

And so it was settled. The gang of murderers, plunderers, and robbers were all engaged as able seamen. Mr. Henry Preston that evening, dressed in swell style, with plenty of luggage—rather new, it is true—occupied a room in the Royal Sydney Hotel. He had dined elegantly and well. He was up to everything, and was doing the grand.

The waiter brought him the special evening paper. Ned Kelly leaped wildly to his feet. Then he sank into his chair and drank to the memory of Lucrezia Borgia, or any other feminine monster in his life. Ned Kelly was clever at that; even when it did not suit him to cheat, he played well.

He never made a mistake. He always played the right card in the right place. He won, but no one grumbled. He had good cards and good play on his side.

There was usually a light supper on board these ships—on those days it was Liberty Hall—and at the meal Colonel Taylor introduced Mr. Preston to his daughter Ellen. She was a worthy scion of her father, and society has no reason to regret the presence of Ned Kelly, the ironclad bushranger. 

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There was usually a light supper on board these ships—in those days it was Liberty Hall—and at the meal Colonel Taylor introduced Mr. Preston to his daughter Ellen. She was a most charming girl, fair, happy, and full of spirits, returning to beloved England. She felt interested in Mr. Henry Preston and chatted with him freely. His heart smote him. He was not a poor man, and he knew all about sheep, cattle, and so on, and was therefore in no danger on these topics.

He was excessively polite to the ladies, and they soon found out his game. Then came the card table. Ned Kelly was clever at that; even when it did not suit him to cheat, he played well. "I have been up in the bush," he said, modestly, "and know a thing or two about cards. It would not be wise for anyone to play against me who was not sure of himself."

"We'll risk it," cried Colonel Taylor, laughing. "Here we are, three good hands. Let us try." And they did try.

All saw at once that Mr. Henry Preston was a dabster. He never made a mistake. He always played the right card in the right place. He won, but no one grumbled. He had good cards and good play on his side.

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His heart smote him. He was not a poor man, and then came qualms of conscience. Why should he not expose the whole conspiracy, and throw himself on the mercy of all? No! He must die if he declared who he was, and death was not a pleasant prospect for Ned. Matters must take their chance. After they had been out some days, Mr. Preston used
to take a fancy to go and smoke a cigar at night near the
bogey.
He would walk carelessly on until he met Joe Perkins,
the second mate.
Then they had frequent talks.
Ned Kelly knew that to talk to any of these men of
forgoing their purpose was impossible.
Ned had no wish to be the only passenger saved, so he
joined them.
They were entertained at their own expense at a large
wine-shop, where the leading inhabitants condescended to
join them.
Before the meal was over it was hot enough to take a
ci squared, and so they arranged to stop until evening,
dine, have a dance, and start at early dawn.
Before they laid down Salmon Roe made a short but
expressive speech.
"Messmates, at this here dance be careful about the
girls," he said, impressively; "no nonsense and no knives.
It was indeed terribly hard lines; but the men knew
that it was wise advice, and resolved to abide by it as far
as possible.

Then they slept.
After which they dined in the best way they could on
fruits, vegetables, and a suet supply of meat, such as a
true Briton very properly turns his nose up at.
Then they smoked and waited until the music began,
which announced the tertulia or ball.

The Brazilian women are half Spanish, half savage
looking, with fine eyes, but sallow complexions and heavy
figures.

This is usually derived from the circumstance that they
do the hard work.

But there were lots of young girls not yet spoiled; and
then sailors are not very particular.

Knowing the fierce jealousy of the race, Salmon Roe
was careful to warn his men again.

Then he left them to their chance.
The native women who know the white men, as they

approach land without being seen by any of the inhabi­tants.

They were about thirty miles below Rio de Janeiro,
the capital of the Empire of Brazil.

The coast was high, rocky, and wooded.
Salmon Roe carried the vessels into a small land-locked
harbour, where there was at the bottom of the bay a
cave.

"I fancy, my friend, said Ned Kelly, in a low aside to
the mate, "you've been here before." 

The other winked, that was all, but it was a very
meaning and voluminous wink.

He said a great deal.

It was decided on landing to hide away the treasures in
the cave, to conceal also the long boat and launch, and
start on a walk.

Every man was to secure a certain amount of money in
his belt. Their destination was to be Rio.

What they were to do there was a question. The solution
was left to the two captains.

The idea was to run away with some tact and safe
vessel, and make for England.

It would be just as easy with care to land on the English
coast as on that of South America, and dispose, each man
with his pile.

The Lonore was reported in due time as lost with all
passengers, and Captain and crew.

There followed an orgie of the most fearful kind, and then
the noise excited the alarm of all on board. The
announcement of the treasure being stopped up carefully
afterwards.

The plan was this.

While the cabin passengers were at breakfast, the
honest crew were to be secured.

Then the mutineers were to rush in to kill and slay all
who resisted.

The treasure was then to be captured.

The launch and jolly-boat would carry all they required,
for deck, men fought desperately, girls tried to leap over­
everal of the elder men.

And the low brutal ruffian would say no more in
answer to the other's proposition.

And so time passed on.

At table the captain often spoke of their course, and
gave reasons for their approaching the coast of Brazil.

One day he indicated that they were not more than
three hundred miles off the coast of South America.

"We shall go no nearer," he said, "and if the winds
keep as they are we shall get a better offing!"

That night Ned Kelly and Salmon Roe came to an
understanding.

The ship had been riddled all along the garboard strake
and elsewhere, the holes being stopped up carefully after­
wards.

The native women who knew tho white men, a» i/tiey
expressive speech.

"Messmates, at this here dance be careful about the
girls," he said, impressively; "no nonsense and no knives.
If we rouse suspicion before we reach Rio it is all UP
with us. Drink as little as you can help.

Salmon Roe was a good sailor even to being a navigator,
and he and Ned studied the map.

He would walk, carelessly on until he met Joe Perkins,
looking, with fine eyes, but sallow complexions and heavy
figures.

This is usually derived from the circumstance that they
do the hard work.

But there were lots of young girls not yet spoiled; and
then sailors are not very particular.

Knowing the fierce jealousy of the race, Salmon Roe
was careful to warn his men again.

Then he left them to their chance.
The native women who know the white men, as they

approach land without being seen by any of the inhabi­tants.

They were about thirty miles below Rio de Janeiro,
the capital of the Empire of Brazil.

The coast was high, rocky, and wooded.
Salmon Roe carried the vessels into a small land-locked
harbour, where there was at the bottom of the bay a
cave.

"I fancy, my friend, said Ned Kelly, in a low aside to
the mate, "you've been here before." 

The other winked, that was all, but it was a very
meaning and voluminous wink.

It said a great deal.

"Dead men tell no tales," was the brutal answer; "we
don't mean to kill the young females—till we're tired of
them.
And the low brutal ruffian would say no more in
answer to the other's proposition.

And so time passed on.

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gave reasons for their approaching the coast of Brazil.

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"We shall go no nearer," he said, "and if the winds
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understanding.

The ship had been riddled all along the garboard strake
and elsewhere, the holes being stopped up carefully after­
wards.

The plan was this.

While the cabin passengers were at breakfast, the
honest crew were to be secured.

Then the mutineers were to rush in to kill and slay all
who resisted.

The treasure was then to be captured.

The launch and jolly-boat would carry all they required,
for deck, men fought desperately, girls tried to leap over­
everal of the elder men.

All knew at once what would happen—a rush was made
for deck, men fought desperately, girls tried to keep over­
board, and lovers even shot them down, rather than leave
them to the awful fate which awaited them.

What followed it is utterly impossible to describe in
these pages.

There followed an orgie of the most fearful kind, and then
some hours later, the Lonore went down with her dead
and living freight, while the mad and drunken crew started
and lovers even shot them down, rather than leave
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What followed it is utterly impossible to describe in
these pages.
called them, had plenty of money, were very gay, pleasant, and cordial.

Several dollars with jewellery accidentally came in, and Jack was very ready to buy anything that a sow嘹na desired.

They were liberal too in the way of cool and pleasant drinks. For themselves they chiefly stuck to aguardiente, a vile strong kind of liquor which poisons more than it intoxicates.

Soon the fun became fast and furious, and the shouting and laughing were tremendous.

Some of the younger Brazilians began presently to look ominously dark. They didn't mind the girls accepting presents, dancing, and consuming cool drinks. They objected to the English sailors being too demonstrative.

Arms round the waist they did not care for, but when kisses were ravished there was a row.

Irishman, with a handsome but villainous countenance, jealous of a tall young Brazilian.

A moment's reflection, however, must have satisfied the passengers, with arrangements as to meetings.

Mr. Henry Preston and Mr. Joe Perkins, second officer and mate, went to an hotel of the kind frequented by persons of their rank.

They scattered themselves over several sailors' boarding-houses, with arrangements for communication.

Next morning after breakfast they went out to see about passages for England.

In consequence of the gold fever, the shipping interest was affected even at Rio.

Most ships had gone to Australia in search of freight and passengers. It would not be easy to find a passage for three-and-twenty men.

“Jack Mulligan, one of the younger of the sailors, a hot Irishman, with a handsome but villainous countenance, was dancing with a superb girl.

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Irishman, with a handsome but villainous countenance, jealous of a tall young Brazilian.
The first was that John Jones, of the yacht Lightwing, was very fond of his glass and very proud of his master and his yacht.

Salmon Roe had found Mr. John Jones' favourite house, and had met him several times.

Salmon Roe pretended to admire his master very much, having heard of him everywhere.

"Tell you what I'll do," said the supposed Joe Perkins; "show us over the yacht, and I'll stand the biggest supper as ten pounds will fetch."

John Jones had agreed; and when he did so, signed his death-warrant.

Salmon Roe had given him money to find all necessaries for a feast.

It was to be indeed a grand one.

In due time the two villains went on board, and, eating themselves in the owner's cabin, began the evening.

It was uproarious.

At length the steward and slip-keeper were helplessly drunk.

The villains had heavily drugged their liquor, and now proceeded to gag them.

Then they were pinioned, heavy weights tied to their legs, and silently they were dropped overboard.

Then a signal was made, and like shadows in the night, the rest came on board, all provided with seamen's bags and other requisites in which to conceal their treasure.

Then the yacht was quietly hauled out of the harbour, no sails being hoisted until they were a good distance off.

"We must keep out of the regular track of vessels," said Ned to Salmon Roe, "as we dare not go into harbour."

"Just so," answered the mate.

"We must scuttle her off the coast," continued Ned, "some dark night, and land on boats. Then each man with his plunder will make for Liverpool."

"Yes," continued Salmon Roe, smacking his lips with anticipated glee.

"My friend," said Kelly—they were alone—"take my word for it, and do as I shall do. I mean to give all save you, Larkey, and Dick Dawson the slip."

"The traps don't seem up to much, except cold meat and gags."

"Still one might do a stroke of business even here," he said. "The coastguard was less vigilant than usual."

"It's too blessed slow for me," replied Ned. "The coastguard was less vigilant than usual."

They thus reached the junction, and shortly after took the train for Liverpool.

Ned Kelly agreed to be guided in all things by his companion who knew the country.

They started across the fields and soon gained the highway and the inn.

"Disperse," had said Ned; "we shall meet in Liverpool."

With a smile, the crew of the Lenore would be connected with it.

Ned had a good lookout kept aloft, and whenever a train passed this inn twice a day for the station. They would have to reach the inn about an hour before daybreak.

Ned and Salmon Roe played the part of masters, Dick Dawson and Larkey of men.

Supper was ordered, and the two heads seated themselves in the parlour to enjoy it.

Fresh meat and vegetables were a rare treat to these long-voyage mariners.

Then they lighted up their pipes and joined in the general conversation.

Both were careful to eschew any topic connected with the sea and the colonies.

At last the coach came, and four places were found, two outside and two in.

They thus reached the junction, and shortly after took the train for Liverpool.

Three men, who kept quite aloof, went to a small inn while the other two established themselves at an hotel.

He determined therefore to avoid those quarters frequented by sailors.

Then they roused in under bare poles, put out the boats, and silently they were dropped overboard.

A smart young seaman was dressed up as valet, the steward and ship-keeper were helpless, and the owners of the yacht were still more helpless.

At length the steward and ship-keeper were helplessly drunk.

The villains had heavily drugged their liquor, and now proceeded to gag them.

Then they were pinioned, heavy weights tied to their legs, and silently they were dropped overboard.

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They thus reached the junction, and shortly after took the train for Liverpool.

Ned Kelly agreed to be guided in all things by his companion who knew the country.

They started across the fields and soon gained the highway and the inn.

No questions were asked.

Customers were tolerably scarce in those parts, and only too welcome to the Dun Cow.

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Fresh meat and vegetables were a rare treat to these long-voyage mariners.

Then they lighted up their pipes and joined in the general conversation.

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He determined therefore to avoid those quarters frequented by sailors.

When in their cups, the crew of the Lenore would be as likely as not to speak of Australia and the bush-ranger herd.

He and Salmon Roe, now assuming the names of Parker and Grey, took the character of captain and mate, which they could very well keep up.

Of course, they could not keep from drink and some mild sort of dissipation, but they were very careful.

"I don't think," said Ned Kelly to the next day, "I can put up with the old country much."

"Why?" asked Roe.

"It's too blessed slow for me," replied Ned. "The bush for me, my boy."

The other laughed.

"Still one might do a stroke of business even here," he said. "The traps don't seem up to much, except cold meat and gab."

Ned grinned.

He did not, indeed, think much of the poles, who really do seem, in too many instances, to be more for ornament than use.

"We'll try the old park for a week or two," continued
Ned, "and then I shall hark away for the diggings once more."

After a late breakfast the two chums went out, seeking the dear park of the town. They were not far from the customs-house when they suddenly came upon two gentlemen.

"Come out to Bellevue to-morrow, Lawson," said one.

"Dinner at two sharp. I want to talk more about this affair."

If he will come," replied the other. "Something must be done to check this fearful state of things."

Ned and Roe both recognized the man. It was the shipping-agent of the Lenore, with whom one had engaged himself as an A.B., the other as a passenger.

Mr. Lawson gave a start as he came face to face with them.

He evidently recognised the men as having shipped at his office in Adelaide — one as seaman, the other as passenger — on board the Lenore. He looked thunder-struck.

If the Lenore was lost, how did these men survive? They passed on, however, without moving a muscle. But Roe looked back presently. The shipping-agent was pointing at them.

"He either knows us or suspects us," remarked Salmon Roe; "you'd better move on."

"We'll spoil his game first. He spotted us certain. If he has time he'll put the police on our track, and then it's all up, and nothing is pretty sure here."

He turned down a side street, round through certain passages, and entered a rough but busy public-house.

They ordered refreshment.

"There's a pretty game," said Roe, speaking in a kind of slang unintelligible except to their own lot; "what's brought him over?"

"Our business, I fear," replied Ned Kelly, with a self-satisfied grunt, "you heard what he said?"

"Yes," replied Roe.

"Well, we'll find out where Bellevue is," growthled Ned, "and we'll silence a man who is so very clever."

Salmon Roe perked up all over his face.

That evening they spent in a music-hall, to them a kind of earthly paradise.

They took an omnibus to the extremity of the town, then walked.

"By Jingo, that's the Adelaide fellow, agent for the Lenore," said Ned.

Ned Kelly contrived to head him. The shipping-agent stood back astounded.

"Good morning, Mr. Lawson," said the bushranger, in a mocking tone.

The shipping-agent stood back astounded.

"You know me!" he gasped.

"Yes; and seems to me you know me," was the sarcastic reply.

"I'll take care the police do," was the angry and very inquisitive answer.

"It is rather unfortunate to have a good memory," said the bushranger quietly; "one more word with you and I have done."

"Say the word, you fearful ruffian," retaliated Lawson; "I have no time to waste on such as you."

"Indeed!" replied the other; "I think your time is limited indeed, in this world; for when I tell you I am Ned Kelly you know your fate."

The agent made a dash at the audacious outlaw, who, with a mocking laugh disappeared.

Then the villainous comeliness of Salmon Roe might have been seen from behind a tree, taking aim.

With a wild despairing cry the shipping-agent fell to the ground.

The assassins moved away as soon as they became convinced that the man must die.

He, however, lived long enough to speak a few words to those who found him.

Next day the ruffians read the following in the Liverpool Evening Post:

EXTRAORDINARY MURDER—Mr. John Lawson, who was sent to England to investigate the loss of the gold-ship Lenore, was yesterday murdered at Elton, near Liverpool."

[Here followed details.]

"Before dying he made the following extraordinary and almost incredible statement:

"The assassin I know not, but he was one of the men, I believe, who shipped as A.B. on the Lenore."

"The instigator, who shipped as a passenger under the name of Harry Preston, declared himself just before the shot was fired to be Ned Kelly."

"The deceased was able to say no more, and so we are in this position:

"We have the notorious and bloodthirsty bushranger in our midst with no clue to his identity."

"Mr. Compton, however, states, that did he see them and could identify the two men who had been pointed out to him by Lawson."

"This won't do," observed Kelly bitterly.

"No, it won't," replied Salmon Roe. "It's my idea, Lunn's the place for us."

"Just so," continued Ned, "and we'll start by the middle express."

Orders were given to that effect.

So cautious, quiet, and circumspect had been their co-
...that no one suspected them, except perhaps the Hebrew dealer in old clothes. But it did not suit him to put the bloodhounds on the law on the track of any of his customers. It would have ruined him in the opinion of a very large class of the floating population of Liverpool.

The two men drove off to the station after a copious breakfast, and secured seats. They sent an enigmatic message to Dick Dawson and Ned Larkins.

They were not particularly anxious about them, but it was necessary to be cautious with regard to those who knew too much.

CHAPTER LXVI.

LONDON-TOWN.

Ned Kelly and Salmon Roe arrived in London in good health and spirits. They had plenty of money, and meant to enjoy themselves in their own peculiar way—with caution.

Parker—as Kelly now called himself—was so well disguised that it would have been almost impossible for anyone to recognize him, however familiar with his appearance under ordinary circumstances, and Salmon Roe had also made a complete change in his office.

Ned had now a good opportunity of beginning a new life in England; if he had had to look adventure for it, but he was such an unmitigated scoundrel that he enjoyed and gloried in his bloody and immoral deeds. Murder, robbery, and all kinds of wickedness were his delight. He was evil to the very core.

There are some natures so evil and depraved that not one redeeming quality can be found; conscience is deadened by a long course of crime, and the power of discriminating between right and wrong no longer exists. Romantic writers will doubtless describe Ned Kelly as a brave, noble-minded, chivalrous man, driven to his evil courses by the force of circumstances; but we, who have promised to make a plain statement of facts, according to the best of our ability, cannot disguise the truth that he was one of the most unblushing villains in existence and a disgrace to humanity. Despising danger, defying the written and unwritten laws of God and man, he has made an unenviable name which will be remembered for many generations to come.

Of course Kelly's gigantic stature and broad shoulders attracted universal attention, as he swaggered along the London streets with his congenial companion by his side.

People constantly turned to stare after him in the crowded streets, little thinking that they were gazing at a murderer whose hand was against every man.

Mr. Parker gave out that he and his friend had determined to make London their headquarters for a time at all events. The busherman made up his mind to continue his old life, and he wanted to give the great city a turn.

"My name will be as notorious here as it is in Australia," he had said to his friend Salmon Roe, or Grey, as he now called himself; and, needless to say, he meant to keep his word.

At the present moment they were indulging in the harmless amusement of looking for lodgings.

"It must be in a respectable neighbourhood," said Kelly, with a grin. "Near church and rail. They shall have money down instead of references."

The neighbourhood they had chosen for their temporary abode was St. John's Wood.

Grey would have preferred a less respectable locality, but Parker had spoken and he must obey.

He was not quite so reckless and brave as the so-called Mr. Parker, and thought, not unnaturally, that they might attract attention in that quiet and respectable locality.

"Here we are," said Parker, at last stopping before a house with a small garden in front. "Looks the kind of crib that will suit us. A trifle dull, perhaps, but then you know we can always go out in search of amusement."

Grey muttered something under his breath as he followed Parker up the gravel path.

On knocking at the door it was opened by a trim servant-girl who looked at the two men with considerable surprise.

"You have apartments to let," said Parker. "Can I see the mistress of the house?"

The servant was about to comply with his request, when a lady, evidently a widow, came forward with a smile.

"Yes, I have apartments, sir," she said. "Do you want them for yourself and friend?"

She instinctively guessed that the men before her had money; at the same time she instinctively knew they were not gentlemen.

"We should like to take them at once if they are suitable," said Parker; and the genial landlady led the way into the parlour.

Parker was not the kind of man to be long about making up his mind.

"These will do," he said, addressing the landlady; "I'll take them for a month."

"What about references?" said the landlady, in a half-surprised tone.

"References?" cried Parker. "Unfortunately, I am a stranger to London, and can give no references. But I'll give you a month in advance, money down. Will that suit you?"

And he took out his purse, which was literally packed with gold.

"This is very unusual," said the landlady; looking, however, with longing eyes at the money in the purse: "I am always very particular."

(To be continued.)
"Take it or leave it," replied Parker, rudely, "I have no time to waste. We are both tired, and have no desire to stop where we are not wanted. There are plenty of other people who will be glad to receive us. Come on, Grey."

Grey without a word, followed Parker out into the passage.

They had got to the front door and had just opened it, when the landlady, having recovered from the surprise Parker's eccentric conduct had caused her, came after them.

"You are too hasty, sir," she said, "I shall be very happy to take you as lodgers if you will pay a month in advance."

"I thought you would alter your mind," said Parker, with a loud coarse laugh, as he walked back to the parlour. "Now take your money and go, we want to be alone," and he threw some sovereigns on the table, which the landlady was not slow to pick up.

Then with a curious glance at her new lodgers she withdrew, leaving the two men alone, Parker comfortably seated in a large arm chair.

"Here we are in comfortable quarters," he said. "You see what you can do with money. No enquiry as to character as long as the tin is forthcoming."

"I wish you hadn't settled down in such a respectable place," said Grey, gloomily. "I don't like it. We can't do what we like here. It may suit you, but it doesn't suit me."

"I've an object in what I have done," replied Mr. Parker, with an unpleasing, sneering smile. "We can live like gentlemen here without attracting the least suspicion. The landlady seems a very respectable woman, and, of course, the neighbours will think that she had reference with us."

"Perhaps you know best," said Grey, still keeping to his own opinion, but not wishing to arouse Parker's fiendish temper.

"Of course I do," said Parker; "we will stop here until London gets too hot for us. This is the richest capital in the world, and I mean to share in its prosperity."

"Most men would be satisfied with what we have got," said Grey, "and retire from business before it is too late."

"I never could settle down," said Parker snappishly; "I must have excitement at any price. You ought to make you all right again."

"Don't run away," cried Parker, with a fat chuckle, "Don't be afraid of good company."

"Mr. Parker," cried the landlady, "your conduct is most disgraceful.

"The two men only gave a horsem laugh in return, and compelled them to follow them to the parlour.

Mrs. Daniel began to see that it was no use to resist the two lodgers, and resolved to submit to them. Drunk as Parker was, he had no intention of doing the same thing for the servant girl was pretty and young.

Mr. Parker did not wish to be driven from London until he had done something which should make his adopted name known throughout the great city.

The lodger was forced to sit down before the piano and play a lively dance-tune, Grey holding a red-hot poker over her head, threatening to do for her if she stopped playing.

Then the gallant Mr. Parker seized the servant girl round the waist and danced about the room, his ferocious face red with excitement, and perspiration standing out on his brow in big drops.

He was, as we know, far from an agreeable object, and the girl shrank and shuddered in his close embrace.

The furniture had been piled up in one corner of the parlour and many articles were broken, but Mrs. Daniel did not venture to utter a word of remonstrance or complaint.

"Why faster," cried Parker, whirling the girl round the room as if she had been a feather, and the exhausted landlady fearing violence did her utmost to comply with this request.

It seemed to the two women that he would never stop; and the girl would have sunk exhausted on the floor if Parker had not held her up with his strong arm.

But all things must come to an end at last, and Parker released the girl and allowed her to sit down.

"You both look hot and tired from your exertions," said Mr. Parker. "I'll give you something which will make you all right again."
The two women, terror-stricken by the fearsome appearance of the two drunken men, offered no objection when a huge tumbler of whisky and water was placed before them. It was nearly boiling and the two poor women drank it down with tears in their eyes, much to the enjoyment of the two men, who were only too happy to see the comical mien of the others. Then they were allowed to leave the room, Mr. Parker having pressed half-a-dozen kisses on the unwilling lips of the servant-girl, who would have slapped his face had she dared to have done so. The skin was taken off the roof of her mouth, and she felt scorched all down with the fiery liquor, and her heart beat painfully with the fatigue she had undergone. Parker, fearing they might go and alarm the neighbours, took the precaution to lock them in their room. Then he returned to the parlour, and threw himself on the floor, not taking the trouble to go up to his bedroom, and in a few minutes the two men were fast asleep, and their loud mores resounded through the house. They had left the lamp burning on the table, and it cast its subdued light on the disordered room, and on the faces of the two men who lay in a drunken slumber on the floor.

CHAPTER LXVII

SEEING LIFE.

In the morning Parker and Grey felt very much annoyed with themselves for having been so imprudent on the previous night.

"It is all up with us now," cried Grey; "they will split us directly they get out of the house.

"No they won't," replied Parker, coolly: "I am going to talk to them. If they do not swear to keep still I will cut their throats, make them swear to hold their tongues.

"You have seen how frightened they were or they would have thrown up the windows and called for help when I locked them in their rooms."

"Won't they swear anything, and then, directly our backs are turned, go and split?" said Grey, rather doubtfully.

"What a fool you are," cried Parker, impatiently. "We haven't done any great harm to them. If you like, I'll set fire to the house and burn them alive. That will put them to some satisfaction."

"But did not ask questions.

The women looked at him in speechless terror and were not taking the trouble to go up to his bedroom, and in a few minutes the two men were fast asleep, and their loud mores resounded through the house. They had left the lamp burning on the table, and it cast its subdued light on the disordered room, and on the faces of the two men who lay in a drunken slumber on the floor.

"I'll out your throats," he said, looking at them with his bloodshot eyes. "It isn't the first time I have cut a throat, made them swear to hold their tongues, and in a few minutes the two men were fast asleep, and their loud mores resounded through the house. They had left the lamp burning on the table, and it cast its subdued light on the disordered room, and on the faces of the two men who lay in a drunken slumber on the floor.

He would find out soon enough, he thought.

Birds of a feather flock together, and Parker, who had heard a good deal of London, instinctively made for a part where he was sure to find men who were answerable to the law for many evil deeds.

But he knew that night was the time to see the worst characters, for as a rule your true criminals avoids the light of day.

He comes out in the night like an unhallow reptile.

Parker was unlike most criminals, who are very often cowards and cowards. He shouldered his way through the crowded streets in the broad daylight, without the slightest fear.

How they amused themselves in the course of the day is of no importance; suffice it to say that when night came on they found themselves in one of the lowest slums in London, a place avoided by respectable people; the streets and courts were dimly lighted, and evil odours came from the gutters.

The place is bad enough now—for improvements are made every year in London—but it is a thousand times better lighted, and smells a thousand times sweeter than it did a few years back.

There were gin-palaces with wide-open doors, and women with solemn, expressionless faces drunk at the bar, some of whom had babies in their arms.

Ridiculous songs were sung, and the language was simply disgusting.

The drink in these bright gas-lit places was poison for both body and mind.

And the landlords of these horrible places could laugh and smile as they took the poor deluded wretches' money and dispensed their filthy thire-producing liquor, and could go to church on Sunday with a calm conscience.

If the drink were pure and wholesome it would not be bad enough now—for improvements are made very slowly in London—but it is a thousand times better lighted, and smells a thousand times sweeter than it did a few years back.

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If the drink were pure and wholesome it would not be

The money that is spent in African missions might save many poor English children from worse than death.

At last Mr. Parker arrived at the entrance of a court and turned down under the narrow archway, still followed by his friend.

This place had such an evil reputation that the police gave it a wide berth, only venturing up it when obliged.

"I suppose you wonder how I knew of this place when I have never been here before?" said Parker to his friend.

"I must confess it puzzled me slightly," replied Grey in his usual dry manner.

"Well, the fact is, I was told of this crib when I was in Australia," said Parker, stopping before the door of a very old and dilapidated house, which looked as if it would topple down at any moment. It was shored up by two stout beams which appeared very inefficient props to keep up the building.

"How will you get in? Do you know the signal?"

"Let them—that's all," said Parker significantly. "I don't know a trick or two!"

"I know a slang or two!" said Grey curiously to know where Parker was going to, but did not ask questions.

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The air was foul and accursed, and the candle burnt dimly, casting but a faint light along the close, vault-like passage. They followed the man in silence, and soon came to a steep flight of stairs, rotten and worm-eaten. The light was greatly needed now, for the banisters had gone, and one false step would mean death or deformity. The old man, in spite of his advanced age, displayed great agility in ascending the rickety stairs, and the two men cautiously followed in his footsteps until they arrived on the landing. Here the old man stopped to take breath, and gave vent to a hollow cough which echoed through the house. "You are strangers to the place," he said, speaking to Parker, suspiciously. "How came you to know the sign? Are you one of us?"

"How should I know the sign if I were not one of you?" said Parker, impatiently showing the clenched foot as usual. "One of our ships might have split," replied the old man speaking almost as if he regretted having admitted them. "I am afraid I have done wrong in admitting you without the chief's order."

"You have done quite right," said Parker, slapping him on the back. "I am not a detective," said the old fellow. "If you are, I warn you it will be certain death."

"I am not a detective," said Parker. "I will undertake to say that I have done as many jobs as any man living in this country."

He said this proudly, for he was, as we have remarked before, proud of his crimes. Some; what reassured by Parker's words, the old man opened a double door, one of oak and the other of green baize. A flood of light shot out on the landing and almost blinded the two visitors. A moment ago all had been as still as death, but now the door was opened the noises that sounded their ears are almost indescribable.

Before Parker and Grey had time to look about, they were hurried into the crowded room. "Who have we here?" cried a burly sandy-whiskered man who was seated on a small barrel which was placed on a后来 one. "How dare you bring strangers here, Grassy, without consulting me?"

"They gave the right signal," replied Grassy, looking frightened. "What was I to do?"

"What was you to do?" cried Bob Lively, the captain of the gang. "If you ought to have announced newcomers, much the more for bringing in strangers on your own responsibility."

"I didn't mean any harm," said the miserable old man, looking frightened, while Parker stood in the centre of the room, an amused spectator of the scene. "You didn't mean any harm," said Bob Lively, sarcastically. "You're getting in your doatage, Grassy, and the sooner the dainties grow over you the better. You ought to have been in your wooden surtout long ago; you ain't no use in this here world, and ought to be under lock and key. Let the newcomers come forward and explain themselves."

Parker stepped before the captain. "What do you want me to explain?" he asked, with insolent politeness. "You speak as if you had a right to bounce everyone here, and I for one won't put up with it." "I'm boss here, I'll have you to know," cried the man who sat on top of the barrel, with an air of great importance. "And I'll have you to know, also, that I am the swell bushranger."

"That will bring him to," he said, coolly, as the beaten Lively saw at once that his reign was over, and raised his voice. "And I'll have you to know, also, that I am the swell bushranger."


"Drinks round," yelled Kelly, who was now in his element. The suggestion was received with acclamation, and he was already as popular as he had been unpopular five minutes ago. The nobblers were soon brought in, and everyone drunk health and long life to the new captain, who held his glass on high and drank to their better acquaintance.

"Now bring in a pail of water," said Ned, with a grim smile, and his order was unquestioningly obeyed. "Now bring in a pail of water," said Ned, with a grim smile, and his order was unquestioningly obeyed. When it came he threw the contents over the prostrate Lively, who still lay on the ground stunned and bleeding. "That will bring him to," he said, coolly, as the beaten Lively picked himself up, and looked wildly around.

Lively saw at once that his reign was over, and referred to eat humble pie for the present. When the opportunity came he intended to revenge himself upon the man who had achieved his downfall. The uproarious roar of laughter that rang through the room did not abate his wrath, and he resolved to keep his word at any cost. Ned Kelly had made an enemy, and he knew it; but with his usual recklessness he despised the danger. "You own that I am the best man?" he said, looking insolently into the face of the man he had punished so severely.

"Yes," said Lively, sullenly, who was drenched to the skin, and whose face still bore marks of the bushranger's sledge-hammer blows. "Yes," said Lively, sullenly, who was drenched to the skin, and whose face still bore marks of the bushranger's sledge-hammer blows. "Then down on your knees," said Lively. "Then down on your knees," said Lively. "Down with the man who has floored the captain."

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Still the man hesitated, while the brutal crew looked on with unalloyed satisfaction, delighted at the degradation of the man who had been their leader. "Down or die!" cried Kelly, pointing his pistol at the man's head. "Down or die!"

The man, seeing no alternative, complied. The rough and brutal men laughed and jeered as they beheld the discomfiture of the man who knelt at the feet of Kelly, thoroughly cowed. He had lorded it over them too long, and they were glad to witness his debasement. However bad an Englishman may be, he likes to witness a display of courage, and the gang rallied round Kelly to a man.

They felt annoyed and mortified, when they found out what a craven Lively was, that they had submitted to his rule so long. Had he showed one spark of manhood they might have pitied him; but as it was, they regarded their late leader with utter contempt. He had lost all claim to their respect.

Kelly now had time to look about him. The room was lighted by a large oil-lamp which hung from the ceiling, and cast a yellow gleam over the surrounding objects. There were cunning faces, stupid faces, repulsive faces; the pickpocket, with his narrow forehead; the professional burglar, with his thick-set figure and beetling brow. Every man in that room was ready to do anything but earn an honest living.

The yellow light made the faces look even more repulsive than they were; and Kelly saw that he had fallen in with a set of pickpockets and burglars, who, obedient to the sign, came forward and shook hands with blank looks on their faces.

"The police are upon us," said Kelly, looking at the excited crowd. Some were pale with fear, others seemed almost indifferent, while a few boasted loudly that they feared not the police. "Is there no way of escape?" asked Kelly.

"Yes," whispered Joss, "I know a way. Leave the others to their fate. We must look after ourselves. Follow me. In this case every man must take care of himself."

All was confusion now.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

THE BURGLARY.

Ned Kelly and Salmon Roe followed Joss without a word. The others might fight it out as long as they escaped.

Joss led them into a room adjoining the apartment in which they had spent the evening, and, throwing open the window, jumped out upon the leads, still followed by Kelly and Gray.

"I was determined that if danger ever threatened I should not have my retreat cut off," cried Joss, pointing to a plank which was put across from the leads to an opposite window.

A very wise precaution," observed Kelly. Greatly complimented by these words, Joss began to cross the frail plank, which shook violently with the weight of the three men.

Joss tapped at the window, and, receiving no answer, dashed his fist through the pane of glass, and, putting aside the catch, opened it himself.

They now found themselves in a room which was in complete darkness. At this moment they heard loud shouts, and saw a number of men swarming on the leads.

They were all shrieking with terror, and the three men saw to their surprise that the opposite house was in flames, and that the poor wretches were trying to escape.

With a loud derisive shout Kelly seized the plank and prevented the miserable crew from escaping. Rather than jeopardise his own safety he would leave them to perish in the flames.
It was a grand but awful sight. The house was old and burnt like tinder, and the flames seemed to lick the sky. Some of the men desperately flung themselves from the roof, alighting with a dull, sickening sound on the flags below.

Kelly and his two friends waited to see no more. They had no time to lose if they wished to get away in safety; there was no pity in their hearts for the poor crime-stained witches who had met with such a terrible and unexpected fate.

Groping his way to the door, Joss found it locked; but Kelly, flinging his broad shoulders against it, exerted all his strength and hurled it open, and they all rushed headlong down the stairs.

They then entered another room, and found half-a-dozen painted and bedecked females, who manifested not the least surprise at their intrusion.

Joss explained in a few words what had happened, and Kelly threw them a sovereign or two, which were accepted with the greatest show of gratitude.

They left the house, and found themselves on the banks of a canal, and coming to a bridge they crossed it, and Joss, knowing the neighbourhood well, led them down divers streets and turnings.

Kelly and Salmon Roe, feeling every confidence in Joss, asked no questions, but trusted implicitly to him.

After a time they slackened speed, and, looking back, saw that the sky was red with the reflection of the fire they had just left.

"We are safe now," said Joss, with a sigh of relief. "I am sorry for the poor devils, but we must look after ourselves.

"We had a narrow let off," said Kelly. "Had it not been for your having that board placed across from the leads to the window we should have perished in the flames.

"It struck me that it might come in handy," said Joss, with a smile. "We never know what may happen, you know, and it is better that you should be prepared. I took that advice from a clergyman, 'be prepared, and have no fear,' he said, and he was quite right. I have never had reason to repent of the advice he gave me. He was the prison chaplain, and a nice young man he was; you had only to pretend to be converted, and you got off very easy indeed. Be converted first, and then pretend to be ill. Win the chaplain's good opinions, and then have the doctor to see you. Give two or three heavy groans and express your pain in your left side, and you'll find yourself rich. But don't half so bad as some people think, if you only do the artificial. Cry and whine, and you have no reason to complain. I believe I should have died long ago if I hadn't a been locked up. My liver was that swollen and my heart that bad that I didn't give myself three months to live, but when I was in prison my grog was stopped, and I was compelled to live a very regular life, which was very unpleasant, but very conclusive to long-life and good health.

"You don't seem in a hurry to get back to quod," said Salmon Roe. "Yes, exactly; I like my liberty," said Joss. "Them officials with their brass buttons and tight coasts are so conceited and overbearing, and the oaken-picking is such an uninteresting pursuit, and besides, no man likes to be under lock and key. It isn't natural a bird should like being shut up in a cage, even if it is made of gold. A lark will sing himself a song bare and nearly always dies, and the wild animals in the Zoo look restless and dissatisfied as they walk up and down a-grumbling and a-growling.

Ned Kelly did not take much interest in the long-winded speech of Joss; but, not observing the disapproval with which his words were received, he continued—

"The job is to come off very soon. All my plans are made; it is at the West-end. I ain't got to rob a duke or a lord only a plain wretch who is worth about two millions of money, who has got a large place with I don't know how many rooms.

"Can we do it to-night?" asked Kelly.

"There is nothing to hinder us.

"Then it shall be done."

"It shall!" cried Joss excitedly. "I have got a kind of partner who takes all the goods I bring him and keeps them snug enough. He is considered to be a respectable chap, but that is only a blind. He has a back entrance to his house, and a lot of very convenient outbuildings. We can take his pony chaise and drive to our place in quick time. I am in with the butler, and we shall have no difficulty in entering the house."

Kelly was agreeable. The idea of the adventure pleased him greatly.

Salmon Roe had a presentiment that they had been through enough of late, and would have liked to retire to rest, but he never said a word. He was not quite so strong as his leader, but was afraid to aver that he was thoroughly dead beat and fired out.

They walked along at a rapid rate, and soon came upon a more salubrious neighbourhood, with rows of shops on one side and private houses on the other.

Joss pointed to a green lamp, and signified that they had arrived at their destination.

"I'm glad of it," said Salmon Roe. "I never did like walking. I'd sooner ride than trot on my legs any day."

They stopped before the door, the green light from the lamp casting a ghastly tinge upon their upturned faces.

Joss rang the night-bell, and then hollered through the tube.

The door opened in a very short time by a tall thin man with red hair, whose face was white and death-like.

He appeared rather startled on seeing three men. He had evidently only expected one.

Joss observing that he looked uneasy hastened to explain that they were friends of his who had offered to assist him in his little undertaking.

Somewhat reassured by Joss's statement he allowed them to enter the house, and, leading them through the passage, took them to a stable in a back-yard, where they found a horse ready harnessed to a light trap.

"You see I am all ready for you," said the chemist with a sly smile.

"Yes, I see that," said Joss, somewhat impatiently.

"Are the tools in the cart?"

"Yes."

"You think that butler is to be trusted?"

"Yes, I see that," replied the chemist. "You have nothing to fear. If we get a good haul this time I shall retire from the business. It is too dangerous to please me. Every time anyone enters my shop I look up and expect to see a policeman."

"Your nerves is in a bad state," replied Joss, as he climbed into the cart and seized the reins. "You have plenty of doctor's stuff about. Why don't you strengthen your nerves by taking a gorge of quinine every now and then?"

And, having delivered this elaborate pleasantry, he drove off with his two friends, all ducking down their heads to avoid the top beam of the stable door.

The yard gate was opened and they left the place noiselessly enough.

Before they had proceeded a hundred yards the rain began to pour down in torrents, soaking the men to the skin.

But they were inured to hardship, and were no notice of the heavy rain which beat down upon them, making it difficult to drive safely.

It was just the night a burglar would have chosen—dark and threatening, the lamps hardly having power to light up the streets even for a few yards round the lamp-post.

Very few people were about at that hour, and the cart continued on its way, passing every now and then a policeman who had found shelter under some doorway.
But the police did not look upon the three men in the car with suspicion, or, if they did so, were unwilling to leave the friendly shelter and venture out into the driving rain.

And therefore the three strange companions drove along unmolested until they reached their destination.

Salmon Roe was left with the vehicle, which had been driven on some rough building ground, and was sheltered a little from the inclemency of the weather by a newly-erected house and a high wall.

"Follow me," said Joss, laconically, and Kelly obeyed unquestioningly, never doubting the honesty of his friend, so far as he was concerned.

They cautiously made their way along a narrow lane, which was so dark that they had to advance with great care.

Joss had not exaggerated in describing the house he was about to rob as a mansion.

Not a light was to be seen in any of the numerous windows, and, after looking up and down the lane, Joss knocked at a side door.

They had not long to wait, for the door was opened almost immediately, and they found themselves standing in the carriages of the house.

"You are late," said the butler, who appeared to be in a great state of trepidation as he led them towards the house. "I have been waiting here so long that I had given you up.

"Better late than never," muttered Joss. "Is everything quiet?"

"As the grave," said the butler, with a shiver. He was evidently a weak-minded man, and half repeated of his compact with the burglar.

They were now inside the house, and Kelly looked about him curiously.

"What next?" he whispered, as they passed on the landing.

They shall have to hear the lion in his den," observed Joss, with a grin. "The master of the house sleeps with the keys under his pillow.

"I'm game," said Kelly, coolly; and kicking off his boots he quietly opened the door of the richly-furnished apartment, in which an old man lay calmly sleeping, with a shaded lamp burning on the table near the bed.

Kelly advanced with extreme caution, and thrust his hand under the pillow.

"Curse you!" hissed Kelly, and he struck the old man a heavy blow with the butt end of his pistol.

It descended with a terrible crashing noise, and all was silent in the chamber from that moment.

The wretched butler, who stood outside the door, shivered in his shoes.

The old man, though rather harsh in his way of speaking, was a very good master.

He knew that if the scene of the other evening were too often repeated it would be talked about.

He therefore agreed with his companion that they should at home lead as quiet a life as possible.

Joss came about twelve o'clock to see them. He had disposed of all the plunder, and brought the results.

He was dressed as quietly as was consistent with his nature. He, however, was too cunning and cautious to do anything to attract attention.

"What would you like to do to-night?" he said. "We have settled down to a smoke and a drink."

"Don't know," answered Kelly. "What's slap?"

"Care about theatres?" asked Joss.

"Not much."

"Try Cremorne," suggested Joss.

Joss gave a servile and rather eloquent description of the place, and it was agreed that they should go after a late and sumptuous dinner.

They then hired a vehicle and drove far away into the country.

To men of Ned Kelly's calibre quiet is almost impossible. They must be doing.

After the drive came the dinner. It was the best that to their ideas could be got for money.

After this the three started for the well-known gardens, then about in the height of their popularity.

We presume that few of our readers require to be told what Cremorne was like.

A nobleman's park and mansion had been turned into an hotel and gardens.

There was a large ball-room, open-air dancing places, refreshment bars.

The company was usually more numerous than select, though many persons were in the habit of going solely for the fun of the thing.

To Ned Kelly it was simply paradise.

Though his coarse nature was not susceptible of enjoying high-class music, he was sexual enough to appreciate the sort that was played at the gardens.

Joss led them to the high-class refreshment bar, and there induced Kelly to spend money.

This Kelly was quite ready to do. There was nothing the man liked so much as to be admired and talked about.

They then adjourned to the ball-room.

Here a difficulty arose. Except a rough kind of jive—such as is often danced in the diggings—Ned Kelly knew nothing about dancing.
The supper over, the whole party, now increased to over a dozen, began to play cards. Here Kelly was as a rule at home. Few men could beat him. Whist was one of the games which required too much from him. It demands highly superior faculties and memory, of fitness, judgment of character, rapid calculation, and the strategy of combined movements.

Cora Grant placed them all at a table and herself sat behind Ned Kelly. He was doubly intoxicated with drink and passion. She looked over his cards. They were playing one of those games that depend perhaps more on luck than skill, but where sometimes a card, properly selected, may influence the game. Kelly sipping his wine from the hand of his charmer, took her advice, and the money began to flow. Ned Kelly did not care.

With the death of Rose the last manly relic of good feeling had died out. Had that strange but eccentric girl lived, he might like many another, have been saved by a woman. Perhaps had the bushranger have noticed the way in which Joss played, after looking at Cora Grant, he might have been aware how he was being cheated. But like Samson he was in the hand of a Delilah and he succumbed. At last Ned Kelly got raszy. "I have lost twenty quid," he said, "and a little over; now come let us have a drink and a smoke." And all present took the hint. Ned Kelly was free and easy enough, but he did not like being cheated. And he had a very strong conviction that he had got into a rather hot trap. Green indeed is the man who thinks he can cope with London rogues and vagabonds. We need go no further into the details of that specimen of London life.

Kelly felt the loss of his twenty "quid," as his funds had been much reduced owing to his reckless extravagance. He must soon replenish his purse somehow or other. So he tried his luck at the concert of the opera, which he found coolness.

He must soon replenish his purse somehow or other. So he tried his luck at the concert of the opera, which he found coolness.

Ned Kelly, like very many other clever men, was easily led away by a woman. About an hour before the closing of the gardens, a party of about nine started for South Hampstead, calling on their way at a celebrated hotel and restaurant, where a most extravagant supper was ordered. The little house at Hampstead was of the usual style, glaring shyness, but no real comfort, but quite good enough for the Red Bushranger. Only from hearsay had he known anything of such places, he was used to the bush. Now, wary and cunning as Ned Kelly was, he had on this occasion over-stepped the bounds of prudence.

"Have a little bottle of South Hampstead," she said, "and should be pleased to see you and your friends to supper. It is rather late to get it ready." "Well order it as we go along," replied Kelly, in his rough way. "I suppose money will do anything, even in this stupid old country?"

"Yes," she answered, with a great affection of indignation. "What do you mean?"

"In my country the gentlemen always treat the ladies," answered Ned Kelly with a laugh. And Mrs. Cora Grant condescended to accept the candid and easy explanation.

Ned Kelly, like very many other clever men, was easily led away by a woman. About an hour before the closing of the gardens, a party of about nine started for South Hampstead, calling on their way at a celebrated hotel and restaurant, where a most extravagant supper was ordered. The little house at Hampstead was of the usual style, glaring shyness, but no real comfort, but quite good enough for the Red Bushranger.

Only from hearsay had he known anything of such places, he was used to the bush. Now, wary and cunning as Ned Kelly was, he had on this occasion over-stepped the bounds of prudence. The bushranger had drunk too much.

This may happen to any man, but let the evil-minded and wicked beware most.

Then is the old proverb realised, and the nature of the human being revealed in all its nakedness.

Ned Kelly, the daring bushranger, the man of many crimes, the hero of the last, the third, succumbed.

The supper was something wonderful. The Australian said no expense was to be spared.
the movement with his thick clumped boots. He is generally a stupid individual, very often a mere boy, with no more intelligence in his head than a Dutch doll. He principally distinguishes himself by arresting drunken people, and never on any occasion except when obliged does he attack a desperate ruffian.

There are exceptions, but they all serve to prove the rule.

Our detectives are a very intelligent body of men, but recent events and disclosures present to us that they can be, and are often, bribed, and go with them seems to cover a multitude of sins.

"I propose to take you to a gambling shop," said Joss to Kelly; "they are supposed to be shut up in this here moral city, but I can show you a place where lots of the stuff changes hands in a night."

"Go ahead," said Kelly, "let's have a go at 'em."

And so it was agreed that they should venture into the gambling house that night.

English people are very often too fond of holding up our country as the place which is most purely governed in the world. To hear them talk you would think that English prisons were empty,—that men never kicked their wives and starved their children, and that the workhouse in the world.

To hear them talk you would think that English prisons were empty,—that men never kicked their wives and starved their children, and that the workhouse was a very comfortable place indeed, where you dined off marble pillars.

He made up his mind that the fellow was an idiot, as he saw the dull eyes carelessly resting on the glittering gold before him.

"Perhaps they find it worth their while to hold their tongues. The police are very obliging of such a place," said Kelly.

The man was not such a fool as he looked. "There was a lantern-jawed, unwholesome-looking man at the table who seemed to be making a pile of money, and this individual attracted Kelly's attention. The bushranger gave him a keen glance and mentally set him down as a flat who had had a sudden run of luck.

The game played gave him no mental occupation, and he had, therefore, plenty of time to watch the man by his side, and to observe how his winnings increased.

When the stranger won, the only man there who did not appear to be the least excited by what was going on. He played calmly unconscious of the envious eyes fixed upon his lean face. His features never brightened, nor did he appear in any way moved by his wonderful good fortune.

He seemed to take everything as a matter of course, and Kelly, rummaging over his losses, could not help feeling amused at his behaviour.

He made up his mind that the fellow was an idiot, as he saw the dull eyes carelessly resting on the glittering gold before him.

"He is an innocent as a baby," thought the bushranger, and then turning to the stranger, he said aloud, "You seem to be in luck's way."

"I calculate I have made my pile," returned the Yankee, fixing his light, thin lashed eyes upon Kelly's face, and softly rubbing his bony hands together as he spoke.

"You don't seem, however, very pleased over your success," said Kelly, feeling puzzled.

"I came here to be amused," replied the Yankee. "It don't matter to me a red cent, if I lose or win. I only want to pass the time, and mean to give all I win to charity. I win money from the bad and give it to the good."

"You don't keep a penny for yourself?"

"Oh, dear, no," replied the American stranger. "I don't touch a farthing of the money that I win; it is all for the poor."

Kelly looked at the man again, and a new light broke in on him.

The man was not such a fool as he looked. There was more in him than met the eye.

He was the grumbler for some purpose or other—that was what Kelly believed.

The man's luck now attracted universal attention, and everybody gave him threatening glances.

But the man was blind to the rage that was manifested against him.

At last Kelly was compelled to give up the game. He had no more money in his pockets, and left the place with his friends.

"Cheer up!" said Salmon Roe.

"That there tallow-faced Yankee was a'cute sort of chap, I should venture to say," remarked Joss. "Never saw such a run of luck in my life."

"You are right," said Kelly; "but before long he will not have a farthing left. I'll have all the money he has won, if I have to put him in the hole."

"You can't do that in the London streets," said Joss.

"Forget that, you are not in the bush."

"I forget nothing," replied Kelly. "I have sold you my intention, and mean to keep my word."

And he abruptly left his companions, and retired in the direction of the gambling house.
He concealed himself in a doorway and waited. He
was not kept long.
"The successful gamester presently came out and walked
away.
He took a keen look around, and then moved off rapidly
towards the city.
The night was quiet, and the hour one at which few
people were about.
Kelly glided after him until he entered a narrow street.
The hour was late, and the street as silent as a grave-yard.
Putting on a false noise, which he always carried for the
purpose of disguise, he crept up stealthily to the Yankee,
and, plunging his knee suddenly into his victor's back,
proceeded to stand him on his knees, exerting great strength and great
brutality in carrying out his purpose. The wrench he
administered was so powerful, and the pain inflicted so
severe, that the man fainted, upon which Kelly robbed
him of every shilling, and left him apparently lifeless on
the pavement.
Kelly slipped away just in time to avoid being seen by
a policeman.
He walked some distance, and then calling a cab was
driven to the hotel.
Joss and Salmon Roe asked no questions, but when they
reached the robbery they asked what they had encountered in the pappers they were what
they called in as a " blue funk."
Both began to think their comme had rather a dangerous
character to associate with.
" Ain't pleased," said Kelly, with a loud laugh, as he
watched their countenances.
" Dangerous," replied Joss; "we'd better keep close
for a day or two!"
" Let's try Wapping," suggested Kelly.
But Joss would go nowhere until they had shifted their
lodgings and changed their dress.
The robbery had excited much excitement in London
and a large reward was offered.
" Better get back to the diggins," observed Salmon
Roe in a growling tone, "you'll make it too hot for us
here."
Kelly laughed, but he had no desire to alight his com­
rades, as they might prove dangerous.
They intimated to their landlady that in consequence of
important news they had to start at once for America, and
taking their belongings easily found quiet lodgings in the
City-road.
All agreed to be very careful and do nothing to attract
particular attention.
The mate, however, secretly determined to seek a ship,
as he was afraid of the wild ruffianism of Kelly getting
them into trouble.
But at all events he determined to stick to him while
he could.

CHAPTER LXXI.
WAPPING.

That night the three friends started to the rough part of
London frequented by seamen of all classes.
The two men Joss and Roe begged Kelly to be careful
and to avoid exciting any undue attention, as there were
many persons who would be looking for the robber of
the Yankee gambler.
They went down to Thames-street in a cab and walked
the rest of the way.
Their destination was one of those free-and-easy dancing
houses where the returned sailor spends his heavily-earned
wages in drink and dissipation.
Coped up in a ship's company for perhaps many months, limited
in his drink, and never seeing one of the other sex, it can
scarcely be wondered at that the Jack Tar should, once he
puts his foot on terra firma, launch out wildly.
The public-house they entered was a very low one.
Passing through the bar they entered a long low room,
where to the sound of a scraping fiddle dancing was
going on.

The trio were dressed in a half-and-half sea fancy
dress, so that they looked like merchant captains in their
beardings.
As all classes are in the habit of frequenting these orts
and the appearance excited neither surprise nor astonish­
ment.
They went to a table in a corner and at once ordered
slices and tobacco.
The attendance was motley indeed. In addition to the
English sailors present there were French, Italians,
Lascars and others, while the feminine gender was repre­
sented by a very mixed collection of gaudily dressed
females, who had a free run of the premises in considera­
tion of their inducing " Jack ashore " to squander his
wages in poisonous spirits and adulterated drinks of every
description, which were so manufactured as to create the
thirst they were purchased to slake.
Ned Kelly was in his glory.
He at once invited several to drink, and soon his table
was crowded by guests as well as covered by bottles of
drink.
Kelly as a rule was boisterous in his mirth and made
very coarse jokes.
Both Joss and Roe were excessively nervous, as their
comrade's loud talk attracted attention.
Besides, his allusions were so very colonial that any
keen-witted man must have noticed them.
Fortunately the great majority were too much occupied
with their own affairs to take much notice.
Suddenl-y, however, a man pushed through the crowd
and sat down.
He was a queer-looking fellow, with a bony form and
merry head and countenance.
" May I drink, boss?" he said, looking Ned Kelly full
in the face.
" Fire away," replied the bushranger, recognising one of
his own gang, Stingo Bill.
The man did not require second telling, but poured him­
self out a full glass.
Ned Kelly was luckily sober, or he might have done
something rash in his temper.
As it was he was cool and collected, and, while the man
was drinking, exchanged a meaning glance with his
friends.
They knew at once that danger was in the wind.
Kelly now bustled about with the drink, and then sent
a few shillings to the musicians with orders to strike up
an extra lively tune.
Kelly then selected a partner. As he did so he made a
sign to Roe, who followed him.
" Keep your eye on that fellow," he whispered to the
other; "he's a drunk, and will betray us if he can."
" What will you do?" asked Roe.
" Be off as soon as I can," was the answer; "he don't
know you, so get him in tow as soon as you can, and I
will give him the slip."
Roe nodded his head, and Kelly joined the dancing
mob.
Then began talking to Stingo Bill, whom he at once at­
tached about Australia.
This was a subject on which the man was at once ready
and willing to talk.
Still his eyes fixed on the bushranger,
been interested in that fellow," observed Salmon Roe,
in a smirking tone.
" Yes," said the other, " know'd him in the diggins; his
mag is worth money."
" Who is he?" asked Roe.
" That's tellings," was the man's answer.
And Roe at once knew that he intended to act upon his old
associate.
He looked around in search of Ned Kelly. He was no­
where to be seen.
Stingo Bill himself seemed engaged in the same keen
examination, for suddenly missing the bushranger he darted
for the door.
But Ned was nowhere to be seen. With a loud imprecation Stingo rushed into the street, and the phlegmatic told his story.

It was not believed, and only considered the yarn of a drunken sailor.

Meanwhile Ned Kelly had left the neighbourhood and gone to some other place of the same kind lower down the river. He began to find that he had to pay the penalty of his duplicity.

Even in London he was known, and his presence could not be kept much longer concealed from the police. Once it was believed in he would not be safe a moment. The evading over supper a long consultation was held, and the trio came to a decided conclusion.

To leave England as soon as possible was the decision come to.

"We won't go direct to the Colony," said Kelly, who could be cunning as he could be reckless, "but ship as A.B. on an Indiana. We can then work back to the diggins."

His friends agreed with him, and next day they went straight off to the docks and made enquiries about a ship. They were decently dressed, and, though their countenances were not very favourable to their beholders, they seemed fit subjects, and all three were successful in obtaining places on board the Revolta East Indiana, bound for Bombay.

She would sail in a fortnight.

For the present she was in the hands of the stevedores, and the actual seamen were not required.

Joss proposed a visit to the little house at South Hampstead. Ned Kelly was quite willing, but he was determined not to be taken in again by Mrs. Cora Grant.

Meanwhile, the police, putting one thing and another together, began to believe that the notorious criminal was in England.

The loss of the Lenore, the audacious carrying off of the yacht, the murder of the agent, Mr. Lawson, were things which seemed to coincide rather strangely.

Besides, Kelly was missed from his old haunts in Australia.

Still his presence in England was so stupendous a fact that few cared to believe it.

The colonial authorities had communicated to the British Government the fact of Kelly's absence from Australia, and their suspicions that the notorious outlaw was in the Old Country. The English police duly received this information.

Kelly; "the police are clearly on the track."

She would sail in a fortnight.

"It was close to the towing path, and next door to the public-house," said the pressman.

"It was quite a new life and a new experience of existence for Ned Kelly."

As soon as the three had made an appointment they went out, agreeing to meet in the evening.

"Nothing for a quiet life," dryly replied Ned Kelly; "your Mr. Limber is not the sort of man for me to make acquaintance.""Well the quarters what some folks calls is poor but honest," continued Joss; "brickeys and bargees—and that sort."

"We'd better look out," observed Salmon Roe to Ned Kelly.

"Anything for a quiet life," dryly replied Ned Kelly. "It is likely to be hot enough to roast us."

"I leave it all to you, Joss," said Kelly; "but mind and be careful."

"Well the quarters what some folks calls is poor but honest," continued Joss; "brickeys and bargees—and that sort."

As Joss was personally known in London, he was the first to clear out of the apartments.

After all, the life of a criminal is but a hunted life—hardly worth living.

As soon as the three had made an appointment they went out, agreeing to meet in the evening.

Ned Kelly was very careful to avoid any places where suspicion might be aroused.

In the evening he started off to the rendezvous which Joss had made with him.

It was truly in a strange district where the poor rather than criminal class lived.

Ned Kelly was a young man, handsome, as strong as lions, and very fond of showing off their strength.

In such a human beehive as that selected by Joss, it was possible for them to hide. It was quite a new life and a new experience of existence for Ned Kelly.

CHAPTER LXXII.

PRICE OF A WIFE.

The White Elephant was a large old-fashioned public-house situated near the banks of a canal, and was frequented by bargees, and a very rough lot they were. It was close to the towing path, and next door to the dirty-looking inn was a general shop which sold everything, from a pair of braces to an ounce of shag, and it was at this store the men held in provisions for their journeys.

They were a sturdy lot were these bargees, ruddy-faced athletic men, as strong as lions, and very fond of showing off their strength.

The public-house was kept by a retired prize-fighter, whose nose was broken, and whose face was battered in such a hideous way that it was painful to look at him.

He was regarded as a wonderful man by his customers, and they worshipped him as a great hero.

Bargees are as a rule not a very select class, although there are among their number many decent fellows enough.

The three men drank in every word, though all the time appearing to be wholly engaged in card-playing.

Kelly made up his mind that he would get out of England as soon as possible. He did not feel quite so safe as in the bush.

But he was careful to show no interest in the matter, though at supper he got into conversation with the literary gentleman, who thought him a fine specimen of the lucky gold-digging class.

It was late when the party adjourned, and the three men went home.

"We'd better look out," observed Salmon Roe to Ned Kelly; "the police are clearly on the track."

"Yes, but before I've done with them," retorted the bushranger, sneeringly, "I will teach them a thing or two."

Joss and Roe exchanged glances.

They were terribly afraid of Kelly doing something rash and foolish which would bring them into serious trouble.

Next day, while seated at breakfast near an open window, Joss suddenly drew back.

"There goes Limber, the detective," he said; "he seems to be very intent on business. He's a dangerous character, and, if he is on our track, will find us."

"What's to be done?" asked Kelly, who had no desire to have anything to do with a first-class English detective if he could help it.

"Get out of this," replied Joss; "I tell you what, we'd better clear out and get in a poor quarter. This is likely to be hot enough to roast us.

"I leave it all to you, Joss," said Kelly; "but mind and be careful."

As Joss was personally known in London, he was the first to clear out of the apartments.

They were a sturdy lot were these bargees, ruddy-faced athletic men, as strong as lions, and very fond of showing off their strength.

The public-house was kept by a retired prize-fighter, whose nose was broken, and whose face was battered in such a hideous way that it was painful to look at him.

He was regarded as a wonderful man by his customers, and they worshipped him as a great hero.

Bargees are as a rule not a very select class, although there are among their number many decent fellows enough.
They are not much given to conversation, and as a rule only open their mouths to eat or drink or give vent to some blood-curdling oath.

Brant, the boxer, the landlord of the White Elephant, was a middle-sized man, with a broad chest and a width of shoulder which would have been ample for a man six feet two high.

He served at the counter, with his shirt-sleeves tucked up to his shoulders and displayed a pair of arms which a blacksmith would have been proud of.

It was his delight to tell of his fights and adventures over again, and the buyers found great amusement in listening to him.

He had been a soldier, and served in the fore and aft regiment, and of course had much to talk about. His adventures were all the more remarkable, perhaps, because half of them were not exactly true. He invented them on the spot, and, having a ready wit, always managed to get up a hearty laugh.

Brant with a dash of gin in it was the favourite drink at this establishment, and the men seemed to thrive on it, for they were a robust set of fellows, and when they got drunk they slept themselves sober again, the only ill effect being a splitting headache.

Sometimes they would be in a playful humour and kick their wives and thrash their children, but, as a general rule, they liked to fight among themselves.

The reason we have been at such pains to describe this house and the landlord and the customers is, because Kelly is about to appear there.

He had made a solemn promise to Joss, who was beginning to get frightened that his recklessness would get him all into trouble, that he would be very careful in future, but he had made this promise so many times before that Joss felt very doubtful about his really keeping it.

The three men entered the place dressed in a very rough style, for had they been attired in better clothes than the other customers they would have instantly attracted too much attention, and would have been regarded with distrust.

As it was they did not attract much notice, for the men who were at the bar were listening to one of the landlord's everlasting yarns.

The place was usually crowded on that evening, and loud shouts of laughter were heard on all sides.

As usual, the landlord's story was well received. Kelly, having called for drinks, seated himself on a bench with his two companions, their drinks standing before them on a barrel.

Yes, I hit out with all my force, catching Jim a little in the face which broke his jaw. He fell to the ground covered with blood, and I declared the winner. You goes about now with his mouth on one side, and speaks so insistently as you can hardly understand, and he actually bears malice again me, when it was done in a fair stand-up fight."

Kelly and his friends liked the game for they punched in the laugh with the others, and Kelly pulling out a sovereign offered to stand drink all round.

They were too proud to accept the offer, and Kelly was as popular as a man could be.

It is extraordinary how a man is looked up to among a certain class, if he only stands treat freely in a public house.

The landlord was not left out, and related many more tales, the one that gave the most amusement was that of a native who for treachery to the English had been blown to pieces at the cannon's mouth.

Kelly's liberality increased as the drink went round, and he ended by making everyone in the place tolerably intoxicated, landlord and all.

Then the landlord got quarrelsome and wanted to fight, as he always did when he was in liquor, but the barges treated it all as a joke, for they did not like the risk of an encounter with him.

"Ain't one of you got pluck enough to come forward and have a round," cried the landlord presently, "are you all a set of ears and cowards?"

No one responded, but Kelly's eyes flashed and he would have rushed upon the man had it not been for Salmon Roe, who begged him to come away and be quiet. Brant caught sight of his enraged face, and coming forward asked Kelly if he was a man, and had pluck enough to have a fight with him, just, you know, to see which is the best man.

Kelly made no reply, but with a growl like a wild beast seized the landlord round the waist and lifting him up, he high hurled him out of the open window with such force that he lay upon the flags almost stunned. True, the window was not very high as it was on the ground floor.

When he entered his house again there was a subdued, melancholy air, and he did not offer to have another friendly round with Kelly.

He had met his match for the first time in his life, and stared in wonder at the man who had so easily beaten him.

(The end.)

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BY W. STEPHENS HAYWARD.

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The Cloud King.
Peter's Cross, or the High Road to Ruin.
One in a Thousand. Andrew Lovemore.
Robert the Rover.
The Martyr of the "Thunder."
"You are the first man that ever served me in that way," he said, as he wiped his face. "I didn't seem to have no chance with you at all."

The barges were delighted with Kelly's feat of strength, and crowded round to shake hands with and congratulate him.

At this moment a very poorly clad woman entered the public-house looking about her timidly. She was a healthy, hand-some young person with a fine complexion and a bright pair of eyes. Her figure was very well proportioned.

Kelly eyed her with sudden admiration. She was just the sort of woman he liked. "Halloa, here's Bill's wife," they all cried, "she's come to fetch her old man," and she was offered drink, which she refused.

"Bill," said the woman, pleasantly addressing one of the men who were more intoxicated than any of the others, "do come home, I am sure you have had quite enough to do you good. Don't waste all your money."

"Go away," cried Bill. "I don't want you to come after me. Get back, or it will be the worse for you if you don't obey me!"

But the woman still begged of him to leave the drunken crew and come home.

"Get home," cried the man, clutching his fist. "Get home, or I will strike thee."

The woman hesitated, but, glancing up in his face, she saw that he meant to keep his word, and so she left him with a deep sigh.

"I wish I could get rid of her," muttered the man to Kelly. "I'd sell her for half a sovereign, and think it a good riddance."

"Do you really mean that?" said Kelly, looking at the man in a strange sort of way.

"I do," said the drunken bargee, with a stupid look.

"Why should you doubt me, mate?"

"I do," said the drunken bargee, with a stupid look.

"You see that your husband is tired of you," said the woman, smiling at him.

Kelly recognised him at once, and uttered an exclamation of surprise when he saw the man, without a moment's hesitation, plunge in to the rescue of his wife. And he put his arm round her waist, and lifting her in his arms, carried her along, taking the precaution to place his hand on her mouth.

She struggled and kicked but all in vain. She was a strong and spirited woman, but Kelly only laughed when she tried to escape.

The place was totally deserted, and Kelly had no fear of being molested as he walked along the towing path. He soon reached the barge where he had left Salmon Roe and Joss. They were greatly surprised when they saw him with the woman.

Everyone laughed when he related what had happened to him—buying a wife.

"You are my wife now, so come along," said the brutal ruffian, dragging her along by the hair of the head in his rage, for she had dared to resist him, which with Kelly was unpardonable.

"Never!" cried the woman, and rage giving her strength, she struck Kelly with her fist.

With a savage oath the ruffian lifted the woman in his arms, and, mad with rage and disappointment, hurled her over the side of the barge; and the next moment she was struggling in the water.

No one in the barge offered to give her any assistance. Had they wished it they would not have been able for they were too intoxicated.

Kelly looked on at the drowning woman with a cruel smile as she glided up to him impudently. But Kelly did not notice, and stood there with folded arms. At this moment a dark figure came rushing along the towing path.

It was Bill, who had waked up and remembered that he had sold his wife.

Regretting that he had done such a foolish thing, he was now in a rage with her; half mad with fear that something awful had happened.

Kelly recognised him at once, and uttered an exclamation of surprise when he saw the man, without a moment's hesitation, plunge in to the rescue of his wife.

He was always at home in the water, and was soon by the woman's side, and, being an expert swimmer, brought her to the bank. Then seizing himself like a dog, he manoeuvred Kelly with his fist, and Kelly only returned a shout of defiance.

The man would have rushed upon Kelly, but his wife, fearing for his safety, persuaded him to go away, and the man took her advice, feeling very much ashamed of himself for the way he had acted, and vowing that he would never again take too much drink as long as he lived.

After a good sleep Kelly and his friends left the barge, and two barges left the public-house.

Kelly followed him.

The woman was seated in a corner, and rose and thanked him. "I wish I could get rid of her," muttered the man to Kelly. "I'd sell her for half a sovereign, and think it a good riddance."
It was the end of May, and England was at its brightest. The great racing carnival of the year approached nearer and nearer every hour.

It was not likely that Ned Kelly would miss seeing the Derby, as he happened to be in England. He had heard so much about it that he felt curious to see the sport, and had arranged to go down in a wagonette with Josie and Salmon Rose and a few men he had picked up God knows how.

The wagonette was punctually waiting at the Spotted Dog in the Strand, at the appointed time, and Kelly, who had made up his mind to enjoy himself, was seated beside the driver.

Everything being ready the wagonette started and soon joined the crowd of vehicles all going in one direction.

Kelly gave a sinister smile as he reflected that he was running a great risk. He was riding through the streets of London in the broad daylight after perpetrating so many hideous crimes.

The man was perfectly reckless, and the thought of the risk he was running gave him unalloyed satisfaction. It added to the luxury of the hour.

He did not really know what fear meant, and, having no considerable feeling as happy and light-hearted as any one of the thousands who were going to the Derby.

Kelly had not forgotten his crimes, but they did not interfere with his selfish enjoyment.

The day was a hot one, and the dust blew in heavy, choking clouds.

The road to Epsom has been so often described by so many able pens we have no desire to go over the beaten track, and will simply say that they arrived safely at the race-course.

They took up a position not far from the grand stand. Ned Kelly was a matter of course, fond of the good things of this life, and had taken care to bring down a large hamper full of eatables and drinkables.

He had an Australian appetite, and could always do justice to a good meal.

The party laughed and talked, and ate and drank, and enjoyed themselves to the utmost.

The bushranger was an inveterate gambler, and although he did not understand horse-racing, determined to have something on the race.

He was guided by chance, and selected a horse haphazard, not caring much whether he won or lost.

His first impulse was to draw a pistol and shoot among the crowd, but he was not a fool, far from it. No, he would only fire when obliged; he had no desire to be arrested at that moment, so he resolved to run for it, and took to his heels followed by the mob.

A welcher! a welcher! they cried, and stones were thrown after him. His friends thought him a fool for risking so much when he did not understand horse-racing.

Kelly was a good runner, and bounded along at the top of his speed.

He returned to his friends, who could not understand his actions either.

One of the "dodges" of the blacklegs and blackguards who frequent race-courses is rather a remarkable one and not generally known. These ruffians watch some unknown respectable or disreputable party who wins from the bookmakers who swarm in the ring. When the lucky individual gets his money he is immediately spotted by the sharks who surround him, and, shouting "A welcher! a welcher!" proceed to hustle and otherwise attack the astonished stranger, who immediately becomes an object of hatred and contempt to the sympathising crowd, who join the pack that seems ready to tear the unfortunate man limb from limb. The noise and shouting effectually drown the frightened wretch's remonstrances and in the end he finds himself bruised and stripped of his money and perhaps his coat and hat into the bargain. His watch most certainly is lost.

Under the welching accusation which finds universal credence he becomes the typical dog on the race-course, and every hand is against him. Lucky if he makes his escape with sound limbs.

Kelly was singled out by the fraternity, who had seen him win a pot of money, and nearly came to grief.

"A welcher! a welcher!" they cried, and stones were hurled at the astonished Kelly, and he was struck with sticks.

His first impulse was to draw a pistol and shoot among the crowd, but he was not a fool, far from it. No, he would only fire when obliged; he had no desire to be arrested at that moment, so he resolved to run for it, and took to his heels followed by the mob.

"A welcher! a welcher!" they cried, following close on his heels, and throwing all kinds of missiles after him.

Kelly was a good runner, and bounded along at the top of his speed.

He rather enjoyed the chase than otherwise. On, on he flew, never once looking behind him at the mob, which yelled and howled, panting for his blood.

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They were all innately coarse and low, and even people with low notions of morality and probity must have seemed to them to be the brutes whom they abhorred in their brutal faces, seared with evil passions and unrestrained indulgence in all the wild excesses which made up their daily life, and rendering the shortcomings and delinquencies of ordinary trifles light as air in comparison.

Kelly was in high spirits, as long ribald songs as they rode through the gathering dusk, the air sweet with perfume, and the stars twinkling in the pale blue sky.

Surely such an evening might have suggested solemn thoughts even in the minds of the most hardened offenders; but Kelly sang on untroubled by the still small voice of conscience.

He was utterly degraded—a disgrace to the human species.

His almost Herculean proportions loomed up against the clear sky, and his companions looked at him with the admiration which brute courage and brute strength almost invariably create in the vulgar mind.

Kelly was worthless, base; but in the eye of his boon companions he was a hero.

It was seldom indeed that he was in such a sociable mood, and they were delighted to find him so complaisant.

His songs were applauded to the echo as he drove along, not unmoved by the flattery—men of his culture seldom are—and his stentorian voice once more rang out in some rude ditty, more lively than select.

The driver, who had been well primed, lashed up his horses, making them dashed forward at their utmost speed; but Kelly sung on, unheeding the warning even of many rheas. He drove them on, with a teleport and a nervous twisting of his head.

He knew that this wild ride must end in a spill, and as he rode, he exclaimed to his companion, "I'm an idiot. If you think you can save me, by all means save me; but don't let's save one another.

"Villain!" exclaimed the bushranger, "where the deuce are you going? Stop, I say!"

More easily said than done. The horses had their bits torn out and left him for dead.

It was to be regretted that Kelly had not been killed.

The driver made no reply. All his attention was centred on his horses; and perhaps in that moment of peril he evidently remembered seeing Joss before. In fact, he had reason to remember, for that gentleman had committed a burglary in his house, and had struck him down and left him for dead.

"Villain!" again exclaimed the doctor. "You are the man who tried to murder me. I will send for the police and give you into custody."

And he went towards the ball with the intention of ringing it.

But Kelly laid a detaining hand upon his arm. "You must be mistaken, my dear sir," he said. "That man whom you accuse of such an awful crime is a pal of mine, and I'll swear would be incapable of hurting a child."

"If he is a friend of yours, I am sorry to see you in such company," said the doctor drily.

"If it is a case of mistaken identity."

"If it is a case of mistaken identity, it can be easily proved," said the doctor, and he would have rung the bell.

But Kelly hit him behind the ear with all his might, and the doctor fell without a groan.

"Come away," said Kelly, "while there is yet time."

Joss still felt weak, exhausted, and ill, but he managed to follow Kelly and Salmon Roe out of the room, and nearly opening the front door, they walked softly down the carriage drive.

"A narrow escape," he remarked, when they arrived at the nearest railway station. "A very narrow squeak, indeed."

They took the first train back to London, and arrived there without further adventures by the way.
The Frenchman gave one of those inimitable shrugs of a gentleman. He heeks, one might read in his countenance recklessness and you vins. He was right. He bore the unmistakable signs of having been a mysterious adviser. The Frenchman was shabbily dressed, but he wore his clothes with a grace that was wonderful. He had never tasted such supper before. It was almost a ghoul-like glance he gave at the waiter, and crime. Ned Kelly had a vague idea that every Frenchman was a professed cook. The Frenchman's face was a study. He had been literally starving for nearly two days, a crust or two excepted. He had spent money in the Rereder, and of course was admitted. But genuine food and he had been strangers for some time. It was almost a ghoul-like glance he gave at the waiter as he ordered the supper. It was what Kelly called "gollipotions." Even the rude buschunger recognized the superiority of the Gaal. He had never tasted such supper before. "Down on your luck, mounseer?" he said, when the waiter was cleared away, and they were smoking and drinking punch. "Down on your luck," was the response of the Frenchman: "And you no know me Count Anatole Riche, von of ze von of ze biggest families in France." "Oh," said Ned Kelly, slightly taken aback, "a real coun?" "I inherit von big fortune," the man went on: "I go ze way you say. I go at last to Homburg, and I lose all—every Napoleon I have. I come to Londres, but my manasse fortune come vid me. I am ruin." "Sorry for you," said Kelly. "A few weeks ago I was flush, and could have helped you; now money is getting low. I should like to earn some." "Hein?" cried the Frenchman, "we are alone. If you see von safe there full of ze gold and ze argint, you no turn your—vats you call it—back to it." "Count," said Kelly, "I'll trust you. I'm game for anything to make money."...
His assassin hastily plunges his hand in the dead man's pockets, which are rifled of their contents, and the whole affair kept a profound secret by the Administration, as if it transpired the scandale would be prejudicial to the tables, and to the Principality of Hesse Homburg, which drew an enormous revenue from the tables.

Another favourite way of replenishing the purse was to "stalk" a winner in the aforesaid woods, put him through the head, and leave a pistol in his hand or just within reach of it on the ground, suggesting that deceased had committed suicide.

Whose name was wrong that might he took Count Anatole Riche with him.

His companions were rather surprised to be introduced to a "furriner," but they were well aware that Kelly always had a motive for what he did.

They thought they knew a thing or two about cards, but the Frenchman astonished them.

It was agreed that they should travel comparatively as strangers.

Next day Count Anatole Riche went to a swell West-end tailor, and rigged out in first-rate style.

It was arranged beforehand that he was to be the big-wig of the party, the others to play just rough but honest citizens.

That evening they went to the opera, the most novel sensation in which Kelly had ever indulged.

Next day they started for Homburg.

No one who has not been on the Continent can realize, even in the faintest form, the beauty of those places of resort.

They are now suppressed by the Prussians, and the passion for public fair and open gambling has relegated itself to private (plundering) circles.

Hundreds of men and women, too, who have succumbed to the attractions of what are popularly called halls—casinos in polite parlance—have been drawn into the net itself to private (plundering) circles.

The attraction of what are popularly called hells—casinos in polite parlance—have been drawn into the net to private (plundering) circles.

The house itself was a wonder, but the gardens were simply unique.

Well might an enthusiast have cried with the poet Moore—

"Oh, if there be an Elfinland on earth, is it this? is it this?"

Nothing, perhaps, was ever done more correctly to imitate Paradise than was done at grounds at Homburg, Wiesbaden, and Baden attractive.

As a matter of course, everything eatable and drinkable was of the most exquisite quality.

"Jawais!" said the Frenchman, as he introduced his friend, "have you regarded a jardiniere like this?"

"It's pretty jam," observed Jos, who was one of those men who never appear astonished. "I likes Cremorne better."

"Ze Jardin," exclaimed the count, folding up his hands.

Of course our Englishmen knew nothing of the games played at the tables of Homburg.

The first evening, therefore, in accordance with the plan of the Frenchman's campaign.

The entire stranger was winning at a great rate.

The bank contained a large amount of money always ready for distribution amongst the winners.

This had happened that afternoon.

"Kelly looked, and saw before him the man he thought he had killed in London streets.

"He shivered all over, but made no sign.

In these places there are four rooms—blue and gold, the other the silver.

Our adventurers had selected, as a matter of course, the golden room.

Billion and bank-notes were scattered in rich profusion on the table—coins enough to tempt a saint.

The entire stranger was winning at a great rate.

But to return to the plan of the Frenchman's campaign.

The rooms, brilliantly lighted with gas, were always crowded with company.

The bank was always at the centre of one of the long sides of a parallelogram-shaped table—a mahogany dining-table in fact. This bank was administered by a "pay-master."

"Who taught you English?" suddenly asked Kelly.

The Frenchman—scoundrel, gambler, robber, thief—turned pale and shivered.

"No ask me ez question again," he growled. "My sisters English wen drawn in. She dead now—jama! I won't be asked questions."

All guessed his meaning, and the subject was never alluded to again.

It was seven o'clock in the evening when they started for the gambling-horse.

The count took his boon companions out for a drive next day.

They were to assemble in the rooms on a given night, and on each side of the said paymaster, croupiers and all, and on each side of the said paymaster sat an assistant croupier to rake in lost and pay out won money.

On the opposite side to the chef de parti sat another chef doing exactly the same thing, and flanked by similar assistants.

Every employé was watching every other employé.

The bank was always at the centre of one of the long sides of a parallelogram-shaped table—a mahogany dining-table in fact. This bank was administered by a "pay-master."

Behind him, perched on a high stool, sat a chef de parti, watching the paymaster and overlooking the whole table, croupiers and all, and on each side of the said paymaster sat an assistant croupier to rake in lost and pay out won money.

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tinguished, and the contents of the bank grabbed and
pocketed. Kelly stood sentinel behind one chef de parti
and the Frenchman over the other.

Jose was to be seized with a violent fit of sneezing as
the signal for operations.

All were at their posts. Ruffians and hardened villains
as they were, the moment was a trying one; something
like that felt on the battle-field before the first shot is
discharged to open the battle.

The coin had vanished, and so had a good many of the
habitue's.

As soon as the

**coup**

They were five thousand pounds richer for their little
game, but Kelly was not satisfied.

**CHAPTER LXXV.**

**THE ROBBERY AND ITS RESULT.**

Fortunately for Kelly and his friends, a good many
others took advantage of the darkness to take their de­
parture richer than they came.

As soon as the coup was over the conspirators went
quietly away to the hotel.

They were five thousand pounds richer for their little
game, but Kelly was not satisfied.

"Count," he said, "I know a thing or two."

"What is von?" asked the Frenchman.

"That infam­
ey Yankee has sized his pile pretty big," was the answer.

"I think we might believe him."

"Ma'fil!" remarked the Frenchman, "I fancy zat he
have too much money."

"Well, we'll put an end to that," answered Ned Kelly.

The excitement was great.

Meanwhile the French count and his comrades kept
the appearance of his face.

Kelly opened his portmanteau and took from it a
bunch of keys.

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bunch of keys.
CHAPTER LXXVI. AGAIN AT SEA.

At last the time came when they were to join their ship. To this Kelly was a matter of rejoicing. He had had quite enough of England by this time, and would only feel too glad to be on the high seas once more. His scheme was to get to India and thus put the limits of the law off his track. As soon as he got to Bombay or Calcutta he would lie quiet for a short time, and then make his way again to Australia, where at all events he knew what to do for a living.

The vessel they had found berths on board was the Earl Russell East Indiana. She was a fine large sailing vessel, roomy and well provided. Her crew was numerous and of a mixed order, good, bad, and indifferent. Some of them were excellent sailors and trustworthy men.

The cargo was of great value. The crew men joined in the docks the day the Earl Russell dropped into the tides. The passengers were numerous, and usual with vessels of her calibre, of high character, all eras and cullum, ladies and gentlemen. Some were returning to their posts, others going out for the first time.

There was a mighty amount of confusion at first starting on board ship, but soon all settled down into regularity. The three men easily contrived to be in the same watch. They could thus keep together, and enjoy the amusement of conversation.

One evening—they had been about a week or more—Kelly—the men seated around in the bows, the sky clear and the wind fair—told them some rattling adventures in the gold fields. "I should like to try," said one of the men, "to go and pick up the chips."

"It's fine," retorted Kelly. "Better than working," he added, with a grin.

"Why did you leave it?" asked the other, a fellow known as Sandy Sam.

"Cos I had made a lot," continued Kelly, "so came to England to spend it. Mean to go back some time."

"I should like to try," the sailor remarked with something of a sigh.

"We could run away with the ship, sell her, and then make for Australia," observed Kelly, with a bantering laugh.

Several men looked at him with something of surprise in the expression of their countenances.

"It's not wise talking mutiny," said one, drily.

"Only joking, mate," laughed Kelly.

"That's bad joking," the other continued.

Kelly made no response. He was satisfied. He had held the train.

Time would show if it would come to anything.

The three men had determined, if they could get ad­herents enough, to mutiny and seize the ship. There were many places where they could run in and sell the cargo.

Piracy is not quite so extinct as many people imagine and many vessels never heard of are captured and des­troyed by these pests of the ocean.

There was the usual flirtation, card-playing, and amusement. People become intimate under such circumstances, and many vessels never heard of are captured and destroyed by these pests of the ocean.

They lurk about certain obscure islands, and hide in places almost unknown to ordinary cruisers. Meanwhile, all went merry as a marriage-bell in the cabin.

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There were several young ladies, but the belle of the whole party was a Miss Liston. She was about eighteen, and all the young men were in ecstasies about her.

Among her most devoted admirers was Captain Frank Armstrong, with good connections and a fine position. Miss Liston was going out to join an aunt, she herself being the lost child of her parents at an early age.

She was under the chaperonage of a Mrs. Colonel Warden, who, however, was not very severe in her style of government.

So that the young lady behaved with propriety she had no wish to interfere.
So before the voyage was a third over, it became clear Captain Frank Armstrong would be the winner.

On one or two occasions when Kelly was at the wheel— he was not at all a bad sailor— he had seen the beauty, and admired her in his course way.

That evening he again broached the subject of running away with the ship.

He, Jess, and Roe had sounded a good many men and found them not at all unwilling to join in.

During his campaign on board while beating up for recruits, one of the sailors confided to him the plot, and he had it from the third mate, that there was a quantity of dynamite on board which was labelled “hardware” and not declared or entered at the Custom House when shipped, which rendered the captain and owners liable to a heavy fine. As he heard the news Kelly’s eyes brightened with a fiendish glare. Here was a chance of sending the whole “boiling” as he styled it “up in a balloon” whenever he chose it. He induced the man to show him where it was stored. This was easily done, as the casks of “hardware” were piled just close to the foot of the mainmast and covered with a tarpaulin. All right, thought Kelly, who determined to murder every “human,” as the Yankees say, if necessary, lower a boat well provisioned, place a good fuse in the “hardware,” and haul off.

Satisfied at this safe conclusion to the enterprise, he became not only contented in mind, but positively jocund. The man at the wheel was a steady-going fellow, and he was well aware that there was a good ass below, who would use great caution and discretion, as some of the men were good and true—right loyal British sailors, who would not be tempted to commit any act of treachery or murder.

Still incited by the cunning ringleaders, a very powerful body of men who had made a grand and successful “soup” in the Stock Exchange, he felt a placid content and feeling of certainty. But they had to use great caution and discretion, as some of the men were good and true—right loyal British sailors, who would not be tempted to commit any act of treachery or murder.

The men who could not be induced even to listen to such a proposition, would have to be secured and put out of the way.

The mutiny must take place at night, when the passengers would be asleep.

Even if the cargo was not available, the goods belonging to the passengers would be something, while they were well aware that there was a good assignment of bullion on board.

It was determined by those in the scheme to wait until they were in the neighbourhood of some islands, said by the surgeon.

A splendid night, and the passengers were chiefly on deck, ready to give orders. Half a dozen, ready to give orders.

The sailors swarmed up the rigging as the orders were obeyed.

But they had to use great caution and discretion, as some of the men were good and true—right loyal British sailors, who would not be tempted to commit any act of treachery or murder.

The two men were unable to speak.

No, answered the captain, rather harshly.

The two men were unable to speak.

“Man overboard!”

On board a ship there is no more horrible cry than this.

The head of the sailor who was overboard was just above the water.

Captain Frank Armstrong made for him, shouting aloud all the time—which was scarcely audible—and caught hold of him by the hair just as he was sinking.

He held him off, aware how dangerous it was to allow a drowning man to clutch you.

The sea surged with awful violence. The young officer scarcely hoped to live through it.

Ned Kelly’s mouth watered with the thought of the mutiny. It was a heroic act, but little did Captain Armstrong guess the result it would have.

The two were soon on deck, and the sailor being much worse than the captain, was attended to, first, in the cabin by the surgeon.

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“Narrow escape, my lad,” said the surgeon, when the seaman, a good-looking grave-clothesman of nineteen, “very sharp squawk.”

“Who saved me?” asked Jack Mathers, in a sharp, hurried tone.

The young officer was pointed out.

“The fact of the mutiny is enough. Now, Captain Frank,” whispered, “twenty of the men are in it and Ned Kelly is the leader, so you know what you have to expect.”

The two men were unable to speak.

The two men were unable to speak.

“Sir,” was the reply, “may I ask as a favour to speak to you and the captain alone? I have a terrible secret to reveal.”

All thought the youth mad, but his wish was gratified at once.

He looked carefully around.

“Nobody can ever hear?” he asked.

“No,” answered the captain, rather harily.

“Two o’clock, sir, there will be a mutiny,” he whispered. “Twenty of the men are in it and Ned Kelly is the leader, so you know what you have to expect.”

The two men were unable to speak.

“I am one of the mutineers, and we have spoken not this gentleman here have acted as he has. I was led into it, sir, from no wish of mine.”

“Boy,” said the captain, “you shall be rewarded, not punished; but really you must be mistaken—Ned Kelly is in Australia.”

“He, Jess, and Roe had sounded a good many men and found them not at all unwilling to join in.

They have every requisites for enjoyment, as it is understood by sailors.

Dutchmen from Batavia have houses there supplied with luxuries, they make enormous fortunes.

Salmon Roe made Ned Kelly’s mouth water with the description of these islands.

At last the time approached.

Ned, as a matter of course, was to be the ringleader and give the signal.

The crew were not very far from forty in number, and twenty were in the swim.

He held him off, aware how dangerous it was to allow a drowning man to clutch you.

The two men were unable to speak.

A fearful crime was being as coolly concocted as any.

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“Boy,” said the captain, “you shall be rewarded, not punished; but really you must be mistaken—Ned Kelly is in Australia.”

“It is true, sir, continued the young man very earnestly, “I am one of the mutineers, and we have spoken not this gentleman here have acted as he has. I was led into it, sir, from no wish of mine.”

“No, sir, there are several who know him by sight,” was the answer.

“That will do,” continued the captain in a firm tone. “the fact of the mutiny is enough. Now, Captain Frank, get all the passengers ready. Can I trust you?” to the half-drowned sailor, whose name was Jack Palmer.

“Sir,” was the astonished reply, “did not that gentleman save my life?”

“Yes, at the peril of his own,” responded the captain earnestly, “it was a brave deed.”
“It was a very lucky one for him and you sir,” continued the man, who was tolerably fairly educated.

“How so?” asked the captain.

“It will save all your lives, if you believe,” responded Jack, “the men mean to mutiny to-night at twelve—you know what will follow.”

“Great heavens!” cried the captain, “are they all in it?”

“No, sir; about twenty are in it; I am lost. I swear I was over-persuaded, threatened like—” he went on.

“How to get at the men who are not in it?” said the captain, turning to the cavalry officer.

“Sir,” put in Jack Palmer, unnecessarily, “that I am alive is thanks to his gentleman. I will risk my life freely to save you—let me go aft and I will speak to the boatswain. He will speak to the men, whose names I will give him, or you can send for him here.”

“All right my lad,” replied the captain, “you shall go scot-free.”

And he passed the word for boatswain and carpenter to come aft. Of course this excited no suspicion.

Jack Palmer fully explained matters to the boatswain, and gave him the names of all the good men and true.

This was rather a hard nut to crack, but somehow Jack was able to impress their names and characteristics on the minds of the boatswain and carpenter.

The mutiny was to take place at eight bells, when the watch was changed.

The mutineers were on a rule, only armed with knives, and few only with pistols.

They depended wholly on a surprise.

This matter settled, the boatswain and carpenter returned forward.

The captain now contrived to summon all the male passengers under some pretence or other, and let them know what they had to expect.

It was settled that the ladies should receive a hint that some of the crew were inclined to be rebellious, and be advised to retire to their state rooms at eleven.

The men would then arm themselves and be ready for immediate action.

The loyal crew would come aft and be armed to resist the others.

Meanwhile the wind continued.

The vessel even under bare poles was managed with difficulty.

There were two men at the wheel, and two spare men waiting to relieve them.

The captain scarcely ever left the deck. Dinner was very nearly a farce.

It was not only the storm that affected everybody, but the anticipation of what was to come.

A long discussion ensued between the captain and some of the passengers as to the best course of action.

Some were in favour of letting the mutineers know what their intention was known. But the majority thought it wise to reserve their state rooms at eleven.

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When the man who had been spokesman approached, they let him back.

“Lower a boat and set us adrift,” said Kelly, “with what grub you can find and some water, then make your own terms.”

The storm was abating rapidly, and the men thought that perhaps this would be the best plan.

There was a boat outside the bows.

The men returned to their ditto.

These chiefly consisted of bottles of spirits.

A deadly volley repelled them.

“Sold!” shouted Ned Kelly, with a fearful imprecation.

“Somebody shall suffer.”

“What will follow?” asked the captain.

“A deadly volley repelled them. “Sold!” shouted Ned Kelly, with a fearful imprecation.

“Somebody shall suffer.”

“What will follow?” asked the captain.

“Death to the mutineers!” was the cry which met the ears of Ned Kelly and his followers as they made a rush for the cabin.
The three men who launched themselves, as it were, in a cockle boat, at the mercy of the waves, must, of course, have been desperate.

To Ned Kelly and Salmon Roe it was not so much; they were used to the sea.

But to Joss it was intolerable.

He was a very poor seaman at the best, and in such weather it was awful and terrible.

"I wish I'd never seen the sea," he groaned, as they pitched and tossed on the top of the waves. "We shall all be drowned to-morrow."

"Not if we're born to be hanged," said Ned Kelly, with grim prophetic humour.

Joss made no reply, but sunk his head between his knees and groaned.

It was not a pleasant position.

The boat was both for sailing and rowing, but at present all they could do was to ship the mast and bide their time.

The wind had expended its force. Clearly they had only had the tail of the cyclone.

But the waves were very high.

Presently, however, Salmon Roe intimated that it would be better to hoist a sail.

This was done, and the boat did not pitch and toss nearly so much.

But the three men were very wary. They took care to do nothing to excite suspicion.

They were very free in their talk about ordinary matters, but very reticent as to their antecedents.

The vessel, the Prince Albert, on board which they were bound for Calcutta,

This was awkward, as their own vessel was the same.

They must contrive to get on shore as soon as possible after their arrival, as, if the captain who had saved them once learned that their own vessel was safe, explanations must follow.

They were all of them tolerably flush of money, so that they cared nothing for their pay.

At last the time came when they were in sight of Calcutta, which, as everyone knows, is situated on the Hooghly, a branch of the Ganges, about a hundred miles from the sea.

From a small fishing village it has in about a century, under British sway, grown into one of the greatest and most flourishing cities in the world.

The minute the vessel came alongside, Salmon Roe went on shore without drawing much attention.

The minute the vessel cast anchor, Salmon Roe went aft and spoke to the second officer.

"We want to go ashore," he said, gravely.

"When there is leisure," was the answer.

"And don't want no pay. Stop us, if you dare!"

The second officer shrugged his shoulders, called them idle skulkers, and bade them to a very warm region, but not to bother him.

The men were in mortal fear, for not a hundred yards off they had recognised the vessel from which they had deserted.

There was too much bustle and excitement for them to be noticed, so they got a boat and went on shore without drawing much attention.

Salmon Roe was an old salt, and had been in Calcutta before.

He no sooner was on terra firma than, handing their packages to the native porters, he bade them head on.

He at once avoided the English town, which consists of houses built of brick in a handsome style, and covered with white plaster which takes a fine polish, and made for the black town, on the borders of which the sailors' boarding-houses were situated.

Ned Kelly and Joss had perforce to trust to Salmon Roe.

They knew nothing whatever of the place.

Every temptation that a sailor can dream of temptations of the so-called boarding-houses kept them up late.

The place was crowded with men belonging to ships in the harbour, amusing themselves as best they might—dancing, smoking, and drinking.

Suddenly Salmon Roe gave a great start as he saw several sailors come in at the door.

They were men belonging to the crew of the Earl Russell Indiaman from which they had escaped.

Ned Kelly sighted a sail.

As a matter of course they were taken on board, and their story listened to.

They were also admitted as supernumeraries with the crew.

"Roberts," said Captain Hammond to his first officer,

"I don't like the look of those fellows. Odd lot—very.

"Well, sir," replied the other, "I am very much of your opinion. I will keep my eye on them."
Four more would make things look ship-shape."

"Close handy—a dhow they call it—and pretty spicy crew.

"Be no nonsense about them. I've got a native vessel ones quite ready."

"Stand!"

"Use. I want men who will side up to a gold-ship and what I want is real good fellows, these Arabs ain't much."

"To-morrow, if I live my complement," returned the other.

"We're ready," said Salmon. "When do you sail?"

"That's your sort," observed Zeph; "but there must be no nonsense about them. I've got a native vessel close handy—a dhow they call it—and pretty spicy crew. Four more would make things look ship-shape."

"We'll ship," returned Salmon. "Where are you hanging out?"

"Grogan's, in the Black Town," answered Captain Zeph, as he was called.

"So are we," exclaimed Sal; "dine with me and my pals?"

"Done," said Zeph.

And a rendezvous was appointed for the afternoon, where in the cooler part of the day men could venture to alay the pangs of hunger.

They then separated. Among the many islands inhabited by Orientals of various heads, pirates have existed from time immemorial. They are sometimes designated by the names of slavers, but in reality they are sea-thieves. They are gradually being extirpated, since swift, small steam cruisers are able to hunt them up, but many mysterious disappearances can only be accounted for in this way.

By open violence or cunning they surprise ships and leave no clue to their foul deeds.

About the time of which we speak, several underwriters were convinced that many of the missing vessels they had to pay for were the victims of foul play.

On the voyage home from India the vessel had passed near so many uncivilised and savage places, where small vessels could be persuaded that it was not easy to obtain a clue.

When Salmon Roe informed his companions of the singular adventure he had, they were delighted. It was just the thing for them.

The greater part of the visitors to the place they resided at, were sailors belonging to the ships in harbour. A great many did not live there, and for money they could be as private as they liked.

Ned ordered a dinner regardless of expense. He intended to impress Captain Zeph as well as he could.

He was just the sort of man after his own heart he expected.

Certainly in addition to his Herculean proportions, Captain Zeph had the quality of ugliness to a most marvellous extent.

Course features, huge sandy whiskers, a nose flattened to his face, and little pigkish eyes, did not make an attractive-looking man.

But there was an affectation of frankness about his manner which some would pass for blunt honesty.

(The to be continued.)
But Ned never believed in a man's honesty. It was not a commodity he gave any one man credit for. Still he thought this specimen of the human race would stand his book very well.

When dinner was over, and they were smoking and drinking, their plans were talked over.

The great majority of the crew were Arabs, with enough Europeans to command them.

I hint particulator fond of playing second fiddle," said our hero, "but I don't mind shipping." "The whisky will share and share alike," replied Captain Zeph. "Yes, I know," continued the other. "I suppose you've heard tell of Ned Kelly?" "Yes," answered the other. "Well, when I tell you I'm that cove," the bushranger responded, "you'll think I deserve to be toasted." Captain Zeph stared at Salmon Rose. "It's a fact," said that worthy. "My hand on it then," cried Zeph, "then we'll be the best of friends.

And so the unholy compact was made. It was at a late hour when, accompanied by beavers with their luggage, the four men went to a landing place, and were taken on board a native boat, which before daybreak glided down the river.

Late the same night, they were on board of the pirate. It was a well-built brigantine with every requisite for speed. It was made more for running than fighting, as it could not venture to contend even against the smallest man of war. But still it carried one heavy gun carefully concealed from observation, and a crew very disproportionate to its size.

The plan of Captain Zeph was to sail up to some unsuspecting vessel, with a very small crew to be seen, ask some question as to longitude and latitude, and then contrive to run aboard.

Sometimes he had been bunted off, at others he had triumphed. Australians on the voyage home were not tempting enough prey now. The gold ships of Australia were the great temptation, and on their track they agreed to go.

Captain Zeph saw at once that Ned Kelly was a master mind and at once promoted him to be his equal. The lieutenant nominally was an Arab named Ali, but to that character such as was of no use to him.

The European crew—English and Dutch—were seven in number, and when an attack was to be made were the only ones who were seen on deck.

The first immense excitement of gold-diggings was going down a little, but still large fortunes were being made. As in everything else, there will always be discontented people; and a good many men who had not found their expectations answered began to leave for home.

The suspicious losses of so many vessels—far beyond the usual average—had made owners and captains more careful in selecting crews.

The James Stiton was rather fortunate in this respect, and had a crew that could be depended on. There were, of course, some scarcely worth their salt; but still, as a rule, they were better than usual. The captain was named Lasalles, and his mate Newton.

The passengers were not very numerous—about twenty—but the cargo was valuable. It consisted of gold and wool.

It was midday, and most of the passengers were on deck, merchants, travellers bent on easing Europe, and a few ladies.

The captain is standing near the bulwarks, looking through his glass. "What do you make of her, Newton?" he suddenly asked, after a good look at the Arab Chief. "She looks a rakish kind of craft," responded Newton. "Can't make her out." "We'd better be careful," the captain continued. "A pirate in those parts is not a very likely event, but some mysterious disappearances have taken place which I really cannot account for." "Yes," said the mate, gravely, "something must be wrong somewhere. That letting loose such a lot of vagabonds on the colony, has a deal to answer for." "No—what with bushrangers and sham sailors, one does not know what to do," said the captain, in a menacing tone. "Good job the Rosario has come on the coast." "The Rosario was a very sharp sailing ship of war, which had been sent to cruise about and try and solve the mysterious disappearance of so many ships. "In my opinion," said the skipper, "she won't do much good, the missing ships have been scuttled and destroyed by their crews. Look what a lot of duties have been shipped." "True," responded the mate, "but still I believe there has been other foul play too." The captain nodded, and then turned to answer questions put by some of the passengers.

Still both he and his officer kept a sharp lookout on the other vessel, which was apparently going in the same direction.

Night came on.

The sky was very cloudy, and it was quite likely that the weather would be nasty.

A sharp lookout was kept, and the strange vessel was almost forgotten.

Soon the wind rose, and they were compelled to make all even slow and aloft.

Not a sign of moon or stars was to be seen. This continued until about midnight, when there was a break in the sky and light fell on the face of the deep.

The strange vessel was close on board of them and hailed as if angrily.
"Ship ahoy!" shouted a scornful voice in rather an an­noyed tone. "We want some water, and want you to spare us a little. We'll round to under the forecastle and jump on board to lend a hand!"

This was a proposal that embodied some danger to the smaller vessel, as a collision in the then state of the sea would have been dangerous to the pirates' craft.

The weather lulled and the wind fell with the sudden­ness that it rose.

The captain of the homeward-bound gave the chief mate to order the water supply wanted, whereon the latter shouted to his new friends to "come aboard" and lend a hand to transfer a couple of water-casks.

The pirate stood off, lowered a boat, filled with a demon crew, armed to the teeth, who were soon seen swarming up the sides of the ship.

Springing on to the maindeck, they quickly rushed into the poop where the captain and chief officer were standing.

Zeph and Kelly, leading, presented their resolvers at the heads of these two men, and swore a blasphemous oath that they would "end their souls to the shades below if they didn't order all hands below and allow themselves to be secured.

Stunned by the suddenness of the attack, and seeing how utterly the ship was in the hands of the numerous marauders, they stood paralysed, but eventually passed the word to go below, which, indeed, was not very easy, as most of the Jack Tars (who on these Colonial lines are anything but the heroes of romance they are popularly represented to be) had already "made tracks" into the forecastle, not caring much what became of the ship and cargo so long as they were pretty safe themselves, while some of them had sudden thoughts of joining the piratical band.

Amongst the passengers great consternation prevailed, and the ladies were almost in a state of catalepsy from fear.

Still the Rosario was, it was well-known, a vessel mean3 a craft to be despised.

The first thought of the pirates was, of course, the gold, which Ned Kelly and Salmon Roe knew was always secured in certain lockers.

Of course no difficulty was found in securing it and conveying it on board the Arab Chief.

"Now my friend," began Captain Zeph, "what passengers have you on board?"

"A sail close at hand," cried one of the pirates.

"The Rosario slop of war," shouted Newton. "Up, lads, and at them!"

A blow from the butt end of Kelly's revolver floored him; but all saw a smart-looking vessel, evidently a cruiser, at no great distance, and no time was lost in getting on board their own vessel and steering off.

"We must run for it," said Captain Zeph, who was not at all pleased with the turn affairs had taken.

"The Rosario is a fast sloop." Every stitch of canvas the vessel could carry. Whoever had built the Arab Chief had thought before about a port, and there enjoy themselves while their money lasted, when they could make for the diggings or get a ship.

Meanwhile everyone was preparing on board the Arab Chief for the finale.

All secured their share of the plunder, weapons, and ammunition.

None sought to overload themselves.

It was three in the afternoon when they approached the shore.

The vessel was directed into a small bay, surrounded by low land, grass, and trees. All sail was taken in, and the boats put out in haste. Not a moment was lost.

The Rosario was coming up hand-over-hand, and they all knew it.

As soon as a landing was effected, everybody dashed into the bush.

It was not their plan to keep together. Most would strive to reach a port, and there enjoy themselves while their money lasted, when they could make for the diggings or get a ship.

But Ned Kelly knew they would not travel many days in the direction of Port Adelaide without falling across a bush inn. They dropped it at many a solitary shepherd's hut, who was but too glad to share his mutton damper and tea with his visitors, who gave him the news, or what he thought to be such.

As to danger from any quarter, he never dreamt of it, as he had nothing to lose, and thus realised the Horatian lines of the insuperable traveller laughing before the robber.
The variety of costume adopted at will by the denizens of Australia is so common that if one were to appear in the dress of Elbogo, or Somnamboolo, or Robert the Devil in the opera of that name, it would scarcely excite a passing remark.

So our vagabond party, though dressed half-and-half sea and land costume, attracted no attention on that head, except that "some fellows passed here in rumpy togs," and there the matter ended.

The Kellys, Zeth, and Ros steadily progressed towards the capital of South Australia, and were not displeased to hear that "diggings" had recently been discovered in that colony as well as in Victoria, which adjoins it.

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

THE TEMPLE STATION.

The three "pals" journeyed for some hours, guided by landmarks known to Ned.

His eye was keen and unerring, and he never was known to miss his way.

It was quite evening when they reached an inn, which was nothing but a one-storied rambling building, with deal counter and seats.

All men were tired, thirsty, and hungry, so that their first task was to obtain refreshments, which, though coarse, were abundant.

They enjoyed themselves heartily, and then found an outhouse where they could rest.

They were asleep in a very few minutes, and did not wake until late in the morning.

After breakfast the four held a conference as to future proceedings.

They had money and could afford to enjoy themselves.

Ned Kelly had disappeared altogether from the ken of colonial people, and might have been killed in some obscure quarter for what people knew.

The question arose—should they venture into a town or proceed to the diggings.

The ex-convicts decided on the latter, as they were asleep in a very few minutes, and did not wake until late in the morning.

After breakfast the four held a conference as to future proceedings.

They had money and could afford to enjoy themselves.

Ned Kelly had disappeared altogether from the ken of colonial people, and might have been killed in some obscure quarter for what people knew.

The question arose—should they venture into a town or proceed to the diggings.

The ex-convicts decided on the latter, as they had been recently to the Temple Station, when they mounted and away as fast as they could make the animals go.

The angels of the defrauded squatter may be imagined when the morning revealed his loss.

Still, he sent word to the nearest police-station and described the three men.

At all events they should be hunted out of the locality.

No doubt they were bushrangers.

By this time the news of the outrages at these diggings was circulated through the colonies, and reached Melbourne.

They were quite of the "Ned Kelly" series, and the moment Conquest read of them he shouted out—"By heavens! it is that unhanged rascal Ned Kelly."

"By heavens!" he cried, "it is that unhanged rascal Ned Kelly."

"By heavens!" he cried, "it is that unhanged rascal Ned Kelly."

Mr Temple was terrified.

He had particularly noticed the scar on his hand by which Kelly was known far and wide.

Hope resumes its sway in Tom Conquest's breast. He will yet win the reward.

He at once rides off, and again is the patient and energetic officer on the track of the renowned bushranger.

Ignorant that his presence is known in the colony, the man goes forward for the diggings.

He has been there before, but people come and people go, so that he is sure to find no one who would know him personally.

He and his companions do not ride into the diggings; they got rid of their horses before, as they might excite suspicion.

The diggers are very much scattered, some claims being rich, others poor.

Just to do as every one else does, the men take up a deserted claim.

They selected one out of sight of others, and then pretended to work.

But it is all pretence, an excuse for being in possession of gold which they freely spend in the evening in the grog saloons.

Here they find plenty of ready gamblers, and pass many a night in the wild excitement of cards and dice.

Ned Kelly is fortunate enough to meet no one whom he has ever seen before.

The three men declared themselves bound for the diggings.

They had concealed their wallets with their plunder in a thicket at some distance from the house. They did not care to excite suspicion.

Mr Temple asked no questions, but gave them the usual companionship.

This they frankly accepted, and after a rest they went off, but concealed themselves in the thicket, where they could see all that went on.

At various times during the day men came riding in and put their horses in the paddock, going to different work on the establishment.

But it was not until quite evening that all labour ceased.

Then they all went to the final evening meal.

The paddock was quite away from any of the occupied buildings, and this the villains had noted.

Two kept watch while one went in and selected three animals, the best of course.

They took some apples and cooledly went forth.

The saddles and bridles, when taken off the horses, are usually thrown into a wooden shed near the paddock, and often left in the woolshed.

Kelly and his fellows waited, of course, for night before starting.

All walked quietly until they were a good distance from the station, when they mounted and away as fast as they could make the animals go.

The anger of the defrauded squatter may be imagined when the morning revealed his loss.

Still, he sent word to the nearest police-station and described the three men.

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He at once rides off, and again is the patient and energetic officer on the track of the renowned bushranger.

Ignorant that his presence is known in the colony, the man goes forward for the diggings.
He finds himself, in fact, strangely forgotten. His absence of nearly a year has brought other names into action. He cannot expect to keep very quiet and are careful not to drink and be quarrelsome.

Ned Kelly is delighted for the time, but he soon determines that the colony shall ring with his name once more. His egregious vanity cannot let him rest. But he will have his fling first.

There is a police-station at this place, but Ned Kelly and his companions are careful not to go near it. They keep very quiet and are careful not to drink and be quarrelsome.

The police are careful not to interfere with those who keep themselves quiet. The same men live in a hut alone, where, unless someone comes in sight accidentally, they smoke, and play, or sleep.

Should a stray passer-by appear they at once appear to be very busy.

Their gold they have found a snug hiding-place for. Occasionally they take a stroll round and look at the others washing.

Strange enough, they are unfortunate at cards. Cheating is too dangerous with men of the class of the gold-miners, and their luck is very much against them.

What with their extravagant expenditure, champagne and other luxuries, their ill-gotten gold is disappearing rapidly.

One of their favourite resorts is a sort of low music hall, where white men drink, smoke, and play, dances and songs amuse them.

The songs and dancing are not of a very refined character it will be imagined staidly, but with rough natures it is sufficient.

At the same time, none of the diggers are highly educated and refined gentlemen.

The society they move in just rolls off a little of the finer edge, that is all.

One night at the grog saloon, Kelly is playing for self and partners against a man whose luck has been extraordinary.

Kelly’s dander is up.

He will break this lucky gambler or he will lose his whole pile.

His companions back him up in his opinion and agree to make any amount.

The stranger is a cool and collected Yankee who is imperturbable.

Kelly loses his temper, and the game goes very much against them.

He cannot quarrel, as the man makes no bragging or boasting, but simply wins.

“Can’t understand it, hanged if I can,” pressily says Kelly.

“You do mean to say I ain’t straight?” asks the Yankee, coolly.

“No,” replied Kelly, dashing down the cards, “but I risk no more.”

And he and his companions moved away. They could not play any more.

They were very nearly ruined, and something must be done to replenish their exchequer.

Should they work?

“Work be blown! It’s only chicken-hearted ruffians that work.”

No, they would see if something else could not be done here or elsewhere.

CHAPTER LXXX.

HOW TO KEEP IT DARK.

Fortunes are made and lost at the gold diggings, but the best paying game is that of store-keeper.

John Abrahams’ store was one of the most extensive. He sold everything, and turned his money over and over again.

Money was plentiful and people did not object to pay through the nose.

Abrahams had a daughter, whom he loved very dearly and it was for her that he worked so sacrificially. He had made up his mind that if he should, when he died, be left with a large fortune, and worked ceaselessly to carry out this idea.

He was never satisfied with his game, went on accumulating wealth at a surprising and rapid rate.

The old fellow scorned to ever set his store. Things didn’t go so well when he was away, he would often say, “I must be there to see after my interests.”

His daughter often begged of him to take life more easy. They had money enough, why not retire from business and spend his declining years in comfort and quietness?

But the father only shook his head and said—“If I left off business I should die. Some people are content to be idle, but I am not one of them. Without work I should be the most miserable man in the world. I should rust, and the rust would eat into my life as it does into metal, until it cuts it in two.”

The mind ought to be employed and not allowed to rest.

Abrahams’ daughter had many admirers—a few for her beauty, a few because she was good-natured and pleasant, and a great many because of her money.

But the man who had succeeded in making an impression on her heart and winning her father’s good opinion was a young German of the name of Fritz.

Sober, hard-working, plodding, and industrious, he saved what he earned, while the other miners as a rule spent their hard-earned gold in dissipation.

He had been as successful as he deserved to be, and left what he saved in the hands of Abrahams for safety.

The old man was very glad to see that Rachel’s future husband was steady and saving, for he knew he would not squander the money he had served to.

Ned Kelly, Captain Zeph, and Salmon Roe were out of luck, and hearing of the old man’s wealth determined to rob the shanty.

“It’s better than digging for gold,” said Kelly. “It will be easy enough to break into the store and carry off the money.”

“Serve him right,” growled Salmon Roe. “Why does the old fool tempt one like that? A man that keeps his money hid away like he does deserves to lose it.”

Ned Kelly, having once come to the determination of relieving the old man of his gold, made up his mind to carry out his intention at once.

Nothing could be gained by delay.

He might get frightened and hide his money in a safe place.

So the first dark night was taken advantage of, and the four bandits made their way to the store.

All was still.

Unsuspicous of danger the old man slept soundly, tired out by his day’s work.

It was a long rambling building, not very strongly built.

After some time and trouble the bushranger succeeded in forcing open the door, making some noise over the jam, but not enough to attract notice.

The tents of the miners were a little distance off.

After some time and trouble the bushranger succeeded in forcing open the door, making some noise over the jam, but not enough to attract notice.

The tents of the miners were a little distance off.

They all entered the store after looking about them to see that all was right.

They had their reasons for not wishing to be interrupted by the miners, who would have shown them scant mercy.

The store was crowded with goods, and Kelly, stumbling over something, awoke the old man, who slept under the counter.

“Thieves!” he shouted.

The next moment Kelly’s hand was on his throat.

“Tell me where your gold is hid and your life shall be spared,” said Kelly, who was not actuated by humanity, but wanted to know where the old man kept his money.

If they killed him they might earn the last of the concealed gold.
To allow the old man to answer he loosened his hold on his throat.

"Never!" said the old man: "you shall not rob my son!"

"Do you not value life?" cried Kelly, mad with passion.

"I swear that I won't harm a hair of your head if you are not a fool!"

You shall never know from my lips where it is concealed," said Abrahams.

When suddenly releasing himself from Kelly's hold, he cried out desperately—

"Murder! murder! Help! help! help!"

the hut, when a door of the closet in which Rachel slept opened, and the breast of the unfortunate man by one blow from his powerful arm.

The corpse fell without a groan to the ground.

Kelly had added another murder to the list of his crimes.

"Now for the gold, boys," he cried. "We must find it, if we pull the old hut down.

They were with them and began the search.

The man cursed and swore as they looked about, turning over boxes and packets.

"It will be daylight if we don't find it soon," said Kelly.

"Look alive, or we shall have come here for no purpose."

The amount left has died with the secret, and the game will be lost.

And in his hideous rage he kicked the corpse again and again.

"Hush!" said Zeph. "You'll wake the girl."

"Perhaps she knows where the gold is," said Kelly.

"Let's wake her up and compel her to reveal the secret."

"Women shriek so," replied Captain Zeph. "It would be safer to leave her alone.

She might alarm the diggers, and I don't want to dance upon a tight rope yet a bit. Then miners are up to lyathing as if they were born to it."

"How she has slept through all the racket!" remarked Salmon. "It would be rather awkward if she came from a neighbouring store."

The villains approached the dead man's residence, and saw by the light reflected through the window that someone was up. Then suddenly releasing himself from Kelly's hold, he cried out desperately—

"Murder! murder! Help! help! help!"

diluted.

"My father has been foully and cruelly murdered," she said, her voice clear and distinct; and many a rough digger turned away to hide a tear, affected by the sight of the poor orphan kneeling beside the remains of her father.

He had been mean and avaricious, and had cheated and lied to get his money, but he had always been good to her.

"And I swear by heaven and earth to seek out the murderer until I do. I will not rest till he is punished."

She knelt beside her father in her grief, with one hand pressed up to heaven, unconscious of her agony of sorrow, that she was only clad in her night-gown, and that the rude eyes of the diggers were upon her.

They left her to her sorrow, not wishing to intrude longer upon the young and beautiful girl who had forgotten everything in her wild, ungovernable grief.

The diggers were rough men, but such a scene could not but touch a soft place in their hearts, and they swore to assist the girl in her just vengeance.

On the following day the murder was the talk of the place, and the news was known for miles around.

It was not that murders were uncommon in those parts, but it was the brutality of the crime that aroused general indignation.

Rachel was known and liked, and it seemed a foul deed to rob her of her father.

"That wench means mischief," said Salmon Roe, with vague uneasiness. "It is astonishing how these women will flock to an idea when it once enters their head. She swears to avenge her father's death, and it's my belief that she will keep her word."

"Will she though!" cried Kelly, with an inexpressible emotion of rage and menace in his voice, while his thick lips parted in an evil smile. "The girl is playing with our lives and liberties, whose fault will that be d'ye think, pals, eh?" grinning a devilish and meaning smile, while he drew his hand significantly across his throat.

Any other man than his boon companion might have looked at the bushranger with repulsion at that moment, but his threats and menacing gesture seemed to inspire the diggers with fresh ardour, and they began to drive and swear as they prepared to make away with Rachel.

They determined to remove all trace of evidence against them, and to rob her of her father.

They left her to her sorrow, not wishing to intrude.

Their very temerity in lingering so near the scene of their crime had averted all suspicion, and it seemed only natural to the diggers that these men should have established themselves in the forsaken shanty of an abandoned mine.

They had something important to communicate to her.

"You mean that she must be put out of the way somehow, do you?" asked Salmon.

"Yes, that's it," replied Zeph.

"I'll go in and wake her up and compel her to reveal the secret."

"You shall never know from my lips where it is concealed, if you are not a fool."
trembled with nervousness and admiration.

out when he gets there, mark my words. But, come on;

•can truly be so described.

with fortune was anxiously looked forward to by many a

thirty years ago, Mrs. Manning, who murdered her visitor,

On the second evening after the murder they were leaving

the saloon, when passing round at the back they heard a

to th« cart, and, with his brother fiends, sprang in and was

He explained the character of the man to his companions,

He spotted where the saddles

the yellow tarabul" was coming up from Melbourne. He

He pushed the door and listened

He was very careful, they knew.

They left without beat of drum and moved as rapidly as possible.

After going some distance they heard horse's foot-steps, and,

Sure enough they were headed by Tom Conquest.

They now had time to look around them and to calculate

He explained the character of the man to his companions,

But that must not be too soon, or it might set the dreaded

it was easy to procure food from the shepherds scattered

The men agreed. They had no desire to be caught by

He was very careful, they knew.

He explained the character of the man to his companions,

He explained the character of the man to his companions,

They easily obtained fitting disguises, after that they

They now hurried to put a long distance between them­

The moon shine serenely upon the resolute but mur­

The moon shine serenely upon the resolute but mur­

She explained the character of the man to her companions,

He explained the character of the man to his companions,

He explained the character of the man to his companions,
There was a dim light from the window. Ned Kelly approached the bed and placing a slip-knot quietly and cautiously round his neck, coolly strangled him. He then lifted the body out of bed, and tying the rope to the headrail of the iron bedstead, threw the body forward on its face, to make it appear a case of suicide.

Scarcely a gasp was heard, scarcely a sound, and there he lay dead.

Of course these men found no difficulty in remembering his boxes, the contents of which they transfered to their own.

Then they left the wretched corpse and returned to their own rooms.

They were to leave next day very early, so they were surprised when they came down to breakfast, and hastily going in, went out with each a heavy carpet bag.

Going some distance in a car they hired another vehicle to drive them to a given point. The man had good horses and drove them rapidly.

Suddenly he received a severe blow on the head, was startled into the road, and Kelly took the reins. Some distance off they left the carriage, and made off by devious ways known to Kelly.

Avoiding all habitations, they travelled incessantly until they were a considerable distance from the seat of their crime.

They obtained food at out-of-the-way places, nor stopped much until they were in a wild and almost inaccessible country.

After leaving the haunts of civilisation and entering the woods, they determined to be hidden some time before they ventured to do anything to throw the police upon their track.

They selected a hiding-place at a great distance from a shanty inn, where they ventured to procure food and drink, but always took care to visit it when it was untenanted by others.

But happening to fall over, in the person of stock-smoker, one of his old associates, Kelly let him know that he was about to do a daring exploit and wanted a dozen well-armed and mounted men to join.

The whole country was now in a state of terror and alarm.

These atrocious crimes, attributed by public opinion to one man, caused a universal feeling of dread, and people asked themselves—what next?

The police were urged by the Government to find the wretch, but its cunning was too great.

Besides, in those days there was such extent of bush, that, with a population scattered about sympathising with crime, it had many accomplices.

Still Kelly, on this occasion, determined to be quiet for a little while.

When he had accomplished his next raid he would go off to a distance and where he was not known at all, and contemplated removing depredations to the colony of North Australia, and its capital—Queensland.

To do this he must abstain from crime, so as to attract no attention to himself.

Ned Kelly, in the district where he had concealed himself with his associates, had made himself a rough hut.

It was so situated that anyone could be seen at a quarter of a mile off, where liquor was sold as well.

But his comrades were always ready to give him warning, and the owner of the hut where liquor was sold was not one to betray a customer.

The time fixed on for the attack on London, as the spot where the bank was situated was called, rapidly approached.

Kelly had made an appointment with his men at a point six miles from the place.

It was a very wooded spot on the banks of a small river.

It was in the centre of a number of sheep runs, and was accounted rather a populated place.

Kelly had provided himself with a wig of grey hair.

No one who did not know him would have for one moment believed the deception.

One young man had gone forward as soon, and when they got within a short distance from the spot, came and told them that the coast was clear.

In a few minutes more sixteen heavily armed men surrounded the bank, Kelly and five others alighting from a car, and driven rapidly.

A country town in the colonies is not unlike the same place in remote districts in England.

Being Britons, it is only natural the colonists should reproduce the localities they left in the old country.

The bank in both places is a quiet, private-looking house, and, with the exception of the word "bank," might be taken for the village doctor's residence.

A few loiterers are always at the cottage doors; and the apothecary's is always full of gossip.

The arrival of anyone is an event. His appearance and business are soon ferreted out, and form interesting topics of discussion for days.

The locality is generally characterised by a stagnant calm, and generally remains in profound repose.

About mid-day several horsemen were seen quietly riding down the high street, smoking short pipes, and quietly regarding the inhabitants.

They passed the bank and approached the police station, where two of the mounted force were also engaged in the arduous duty of "blowing a cloud."

Suddenly pulling up in front of the officers they suddenly presented their revolvers at their heads, desired them to remain still, sent Salmon inside for the arms, desired the men to retire inside the station, and left one of their gang to mount guard over the prisoners.

This operation was performed very quietly, and the horses' heads turned towards the bank.

Kelly, Zeph, and Salmon dismounted at the door. Kelly entered first, and, presenting a piece of paper which the clerk took for a cheque, suddenly drew his six-shooter— an operation initiated by his assistants—and swore, if the astonished clerk did not deliver up his cash, the keys of the safe, his passage from this world would be more speedy than he would desire. The manager at this moment came out from the inner office, upon which Zeph presented his revolver at the manager of the electrical bank, and desired him to "look sharp and cash up" without delay.

Binding the clerk and the manager and placing them in different rooms, the doors of which they locked, the band rode off quietly with their booty.

In course of time, a short while, the victims made known the robbery, when the consternation was at fever height.

"It's Kelly; no one but Kelly would chance it," was the universal cry.

The police, who had also been similarly locked up, looked very small and very vexed.

The instant they were gone the terrified wife and daughter of the manager appeared and liberated the two unfortunate men, one of whom, the clerk, rode off to the police station, where he learned how the occupants of that building had been treated.

Returning to the rendezvous for plunder was divided, and the band broke up.

Kelly returned to his place of concealment, and making appointments with his immediate companions, and returning at night started along to a shanty inn kept by his sister and Joe Marsh.

Kelly's sister had been some time in the Colony of Victoria, and married to an ex-convict who was doing a business in a bush "pull." Here he knew he could be quiet for some time.

He was doubly cautious now, as he had a good bit of gold with him.

He travelled at night, resting in the day, and going by devious ways.

He at length reached his sister's home but before he
entered he concealed the greater part of his treasure in
the hollow of a tree.

He would not even trust his relations too implicitly.

Still he was very liberal with his money, and expressed
a wish to stay a few days. He had resolved to return for
some time to Adelaide.

This they readily agreed to, and then he requested Marsh
to go to the nearest store and buy certain things for
him.

There were a complete suit of clothes of the well-to-do
upper class, a square portmanteau, and some clean
linen.

Also a pair of spectacles.

Marsh laughed, but next day rode off to the store, a
considerable distance, to make these purchases.

He was further to buy a good stout horse that would
carry a good weight.

It was only the next day that Marsh returned with the
requisites.

Marsh had been very careful, and the things were a
fairish fit.

Next day, after a copious breakfast, Ned Kelly, present­
ing a very respectable appearance, started on his way.

He had no hesitation in recking the high road. He had
got rid of the carpet-bag and put his things in a large rug,
which was strapped behind him on his horse, a powerful
big-boned thing which could bear even a greater weight
than Kelly.

He did not, on reaching the highway, show any hurry.

He was satisfied that his disguise would defy detection.

On the other side, the change in his dress was quite
noticeable.

The police were very careful not to trust their eyes.

One of these Kelly knew by sight.

In business this was very well, but he carried his con­

sternation was among themselves.

All the others were very inferior in intellect.

"Boys," he said one day when they were having a
rather rich and copious breakfast at some restaurant of
repute, "whatever your little game may be, don't take
too much drink, except at night."

"I can't turn sniveller all at once," replied Captain
Zeph; "it ain't salubrious."

"No more can I," added the other.

"Well," continued Kelly in a stern and commanding
way, "the first time I catch you drunk I'm off. My
neck is my own property."

Who talks about getting drunk?" was the answer of
Captain Zeph.

"Can't a fellow enjoy himself?"

"Yes, in reason," was the dry reply, and the breakfast
proceeded and the subject dropped.

In these days, when money was so rife, of course every
annamnt that could be thought of was provided.

Dancing saloons, gambling houses, theatres, and ques­
tionable music-halls were established and tolerated.

After breakfast the four men adjourned to a billiard-
room kept by one of their own kind, though lie never
suspected that these three gentlemen who spent their
money so freely were of the fraternity.

The man had seen too much of colonial life not to be
aware of the fact that they were "swells," but not gentle­
men.

Australian men of the educated classes are as refined
and polished as anyone.

Still, the anxiety of the conduct of this trio was of
lifelong effort to throw people off the scent.

Over the fireside in the billiard-room was the usual
police bill offering the £10,000 reward for Kelly.

James O'Connor was too anxious to be on good terms
with the police to decline putting up such a poster.

The three men were too used to this sort of thing even
to notice it.

They selected a table and called for champagne, after
which they began playing.

The game was of no particular interest to them because
the betting was among themselves.

Money was pretty well in common, though Kelly was
very much richer than his associates.

Presently some other people came in and began playing
at another table.

One of these Kelly knew by sight.

He was one of the largest wool-growers in the colony
and seemed to have a charitable disposition.

Whether he speculated in one thing or the other, he,
like the character of ancient days, found everything turn
to gold.

His name was Marsden.

If he had one fault—it was his belief in his luck.

In business this was very well, but he carried his con­

fidence into cards and billiards.

An almost imperceptible sign passed between Kelly and
his confederates.

It meant, "Game to be stalked."

The three lazily finished their game and then laid down
their cards.

They preferred to be greatly interested in the game
played by Marsden and his friend.

After the game had gone on some time and Marsden had
made some good points, Kelly spoke.

"Something like play," he said to Roe.

"Back your opinion," cried one of the players, a man of
the name of Black.

"Certainly," responded Kelly; "twenty to four on the
striker."

The striker was Marsden.

"Done in five," the other continued.

And Kelly won.

"You seem a dabster at this game," observed Mr
Marsden, when the game was over. "Willyou play me?"
"I would be robbing you," coolly rejoined Kelly. "I could give you twenty out of every hundred." Now Marsden, though a decent fellow and a gentleman at heart, was awfully proud of his prowess at billiards. The room was filling, and a great many friends of Marsden were present.

"You think so?" was the sarcastic reply. "I am simply certain," was Kelly's cool rejoinder. "I will lay you a thousand to five hundred," exclaimed the rather exasperated citizen.

"Done," responded Ned Kelly. The excitement was great. The bushranger ordered a cup of coffee with a soupscon of brandy in it. He lost the toss. His adversary had to begin. We are not going to enter into the details of a billiard tournament.

Marsden played a goodish game, but Kelly was too much for him. He won the thousand pounds, and a good many odd bets besides.

"You are too much for me," said the wool-grower, a little sulky. "Shall we play another game?"

"Level betting," cried the bushranger. It was agreed; and, after an interval for refreshments, the tournament was renewed.

Kelly won easily. His power of calculation was something wonderful. He scarcely ever missed a stroke.

"I presume," remarked Mr. Marsden, with a sneer, "you are a professional."

"Professional what, may I ask?" asked Kelly, in a bullying tone.

"I mean no offense," was the reply, "only you are a most remarkable player."

Marsden had betted. "Have I cheated?" was the next curt question, put with assumed dignity.

"No—no," the other said. "You couldn't if you would. Let us dine at — Hotel, and try our luck at the cards."

"Anything to oblige," coolly replied Kelly, "only—few men can beat me at the pasteboard."

"Frank confession is good for the soul," laughed the wool-dealer, "and all those in the immediate neighbourhood were supplied with glasses of whisky straight, which effectually put an end to the laughter and chaff he so much disliked. He deliberately substituted his own cards for those Marsden held in his hand, and this done sat calmly waiting for him to continue the game. The furious fight in the room had diverted attention from the card party. Marsden was quite willing, and the two took their places at the table. Kelly commencing to talk, as he so well knew how to do, and rattling out anecdote after anecdote, to the great amusement of his companion, who, however, watched him as he shuffled the cards, with the determination not to be taken in this time.

"You won't catch me napping twice," he thought, looking excessively cunning.

At the table Kelly was the only entrance fee required.

The large room was crowded with men, women, and young girls, and having indulged in a few peculiarities with the female portion of the company, Kelly walked over to his friend the wool-grower, and tapped him brisly on the shoulder.

"Well," he said, "here I am to give you your revenge. I am a man of my word, and never breaks a promise under any circumstances."

Marsden was very watchful when they commenced the next game, fearing that Kelly might use his trick again, but he had lost his rager.

"Done," answered Kelly. Marsden did look, and found he had the worst piquet hand possible.

Kelly while they were talking had changed hands with him. The audience roared.

The feat seems impossible, but the writer has seen it done. "You could not do that again," cried the discomfited wool-grower.

"Try me," said Kelly, drily.

"You shall come to the Scrap to-night," responded Marsden, "and if you can do that again—I'll stand supper round."

"Done," answered Kelly. The trick is not at all an uncommon one, but it has a load of historical interest. It was played upon the late Emperor Napoleon before the Empress and his whole court.

After this they went to the Scrap.
luck was all on Kelly's side, and, after losing a considerable sum of money, rose from the table and declined to play any more.

Kelly was leaping back in his chair taking great gulps of an alcoholic drink, an habitually becoming intoxicated, when a fine strapping wench came up to him with an impudent smile and challenged him to a game of carté.

Kelly was agreeable enough.

He was rather partial to the society of females, and did his best to make himself agreeable to his companion as the game proceeded, fixing his bold bloodshot eyes upon her with evident admiration for this remarkably fine and rather coarse-featured young woman.

She seemed bent on encouraging him to drink, and he certainly needed very little persuasion, gulping down the fiery liquor with a perseverance worthy of a better cause.

He began to play rather knowingly in consequence, actuated by old habits and instincts, and forgetting his best to make himself agreeable to his companion as the game proceeded, fixing his bold bloodshot eyes upon her with evident admiration for this remarkably fine and Rather coarse-featured young woman.

One thought was how to get out of the room.

His cankered heart was full to overflowing with bitter passions.

"A debt repaid ceases to be a debt," muttered Kelly, "and I shall never rest satisfied till I have paid Tom Conquest.

He tottered unsteadily to the door, and the moment he entered Kelly, st.11 thinking of Tom Conquest.

"A bolt of it, leaving his companions in the lurch.

Ned heeded not the rain. He was red-hot with drink, and his blood ran through his veins like liquid fire.

Some people have frightful dreams, but the most imaginative person could never dream of the baleful atmosphere Kelly had committed during his past life, and was yet to meet before the close of his strange eventful history.

It was waste of breath, but in his fierce frenzy of rage and uncomprehending passion it gave him relief to find vent for his venom in words.

His startled heart was full to overflowing with bitter wrath.

"A debt repaid ceases to be a debt," muttered Kelly, "and I shall never rest satisfied till I have paid Tom Conquest in full.

So thought this fool who had blundered through the book of guilt, spelling his villainy-a slave to his own vile passions.

All the flights in hell would have had more tender samples than he.

The bushranger must have had a constitution of iron, or else his wild life and fearful temper would have wrecked his body.

We wish that we had a less ghastly and revolting tale to tell, but this is no work of fiction.—every word set down is the simple truth.

Kelly went through the blind elements intoxicated with rage, and longed for someone upon whom to vent his evil passions.

It is difficult to determine how a man differs from the brute creation.

The bushranger knew that he could hazard no delay. He must get to some place of safety where he could hide for a day or two.

He would roam earth for vengeance upon those who dared to cross his path.

His one thought was how to get out of the room.

His cankered heart was full to overflowing with bitter passions.

He was not one of those criminals who shrink from solitude and treble at the thought of solitary communion with their own heart. Perhaps this was because he was so thoroughly case-hardened, so lost to all shame and scruples than he.

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The bushranger knew that he could hazard no delay. He must get to some place of safety where he could hide for a day or two.

He would of course be searched for in all directions, and must hide until the hue and cry was over.

Most men half as guilty as he would have found a fiery whirlwind in their conscience, but nothing could equal the hell within him.

"Sold! sold! sold!" he cried exultingly. "Ned Kelly has yet to find his match—Tom Conquest or any of his crew shall never get the reward. Sooner than get into their hands I'll give myself one leaden pill, or go over a precipice—do anything to balk them of their blood-money."

He strode over the sodden grass making no sound.

The rain came down in torrents, soaking him to the skin, and the bushranger, enraged at having been compelled to evacuate his comfortable quarters, swore a savage and blood-curdling oath that he would be revenged upon Tom Conquest.

He felt, indeed, that he had a narrow escape, and that for that chance movement on the part of the detective he would have never seen through his clever disguise.

"Curse on him!" he muttered between his clenched teeth, as he looked at the sultry sky. "The meddlesome fool shall live to regret what he has done this night. I swear that this night has sealed his doom. Ned Kelly will give him his death-blow."

While he was thinking of the vengeance he would mete out to another it never occurred to him that the guilty must some day meet the doom of guilt. He never reflected that there must be a terrible recompense for all his revolving crimes.

Every action of his life gave his guilt a blacker dye; he was always on a new scent for blood.
his keen eyes on the alert to catch the first glimpse of a
pursuer, and his ears strained to take in the slightest
sound; but all was still, not a leaf rustled on the trees,
nothing was audible but those faint murmurs of the night
which could be so distinctly heard by a sensitive ear at such
an hour.

He found himself in a small green dell built all round
with high sloping hills, and paused as he became aware
that he was nearing a small hut, hesitating whether to
turn his footsteps in another direction, or advance boldly
and demand shelter for the night.

He was not long in coming to a determination, and
walking quickly towards the door of the hut knocked re-
peatedly until the door was opened, and a man in a
shocked hat looked out at him with an angry frown.

"Hash!" said this individual, warningly. "Do you
want to disturb the uneasy slumbers of a dying man?"

Kelly responded that he had no desire to do anything
of the kind, but would be glad to find shelter from the
rain for a few hours at least, and after a moment's hesi-
tation the man stood aside and allowed him to enter the
hut.

Kelly gave a glance at the haggard face of the sleeper,
and it seemed to him that his features were not
altogether unfamiliar; but he had dismissed this idea from
his mind, having something else to occupy his thoughts.

He paused, as he wondered what the man who stood
near him would have thought if he had known who he
was— for Kelly was feared by some people more than the
most ferocious wild beast, and he was rather proud than
otherwise of this distinction.

There was a sinister smile on the lips as he sat listening to
the heavy rain as it beat upon the roof of the rough hut, Occa-
sionally glancing at his companion, who volunteered a
suggestion, but the bushranger's hurried flight had made him feel
miserable and wretched, and his short words soon made the
man relapse into silence, which remained unbroken until
the sleeper turned uneasily in the bed, and presently opened
his heavy eyes, staring hard at Ned Kelly, and passing
his wistful hand over his heated brow, while an expression
of utter bewilderment stole over his pale features.

"What!" he gasped, sitting up for one moment, and
then falling back breathless and exhausted, "Ned——
Kelly knew the man now, and made a warning gesture.

"I know your friend," he said, turning to the other
man, who was looking at the two in surprise.

"Yes," assented Kelly, "you did do me a good turn in
the bush, and I have always thought that you had taken
notice of it, and I have been thinking of doing something
for you——"

Kelly gave a glance at the haggard face of the sleeper,
and seemed to be in deep thought.

"I have," said Donovan, faintly. "I have a motive
in this, and I have been thinking of doing something
for you——"

"What's the use of beating around the bush? What do you
want me to do?"

"What I want you to do is to take the money I have
found, and find it worth your while. I don't expect you to pat your-

donor briefly explained how he had obtained posses-
sion of the treasure he wished to divide between his
family and Ned Kelly. It is enough for the reader to
know that he had worked through blood to obtain his ill
wittled gains.

(The Celebrated Novels.)

The Black Angel, A Tale of the American
Revolution.
The Star of the South.—A Repry to
The Black Angel.
The Fiery Cross.—A Tale of the Great
American War.
The Rebel Privateer, or the Last Glimpse
of the Black Angel.

Demons of the Sea.
Love and Adventure.
Run away from Home.—A Life of
Adolescence.
The Golden Reef, or a Dive for Half-a-
Million.
The Idol's Eye.—Adventures in Search
of a Big Diamond.
Lord Scornbrain, or the Rough
Diamond Polished.

The Rebel Privateer, or the Last Glimpse
of the Black Angel.

Wild and Wonderful.
Widow Ray, or the Life and Adventures of
a Scarecrow.
The Cloud King.
Mildred's Cross, or the High Road to
Ruin.
One in a Thousand.
Andrew Lortimer.
Robert the Rover.
The Mutiny of the "Thunder."
He was a little, wiry, shaggy-faced Englishman, doubtless, if his antecedents were known, an ex-convict like so many others.

"Rather late for business, sir," he said, with a smile, rubbing his claw-like hands together.

"Never too late for that," laughed Kelly. "I should like half-an-hour's chat, so pull out some first-rate swizzle.

The old man led the way into a small sanctum, filled with all sorts of goods. But there was a table and two chairs. Dick Pond opened a cupboard and brought out a bottle and two glasses.

Kelly poured himself out one, smacking his lips as he did so.

"Good stuff," he said, "and now to business." Opening his waistcoat he uncovered a belt from around his middle.

His gold was in his box at the hotel, but his share of the diamonds he carried about him.

"What do you think of these?" he asked, as he showed the diamonds on the table. To provide against contingencies, Kelly had changed the produce of his many robberies into diamonds. He was a shrewd judge of their value; nearly every shaving he had plundered was thus invested, and it was only when he required cash for his current expenses that he drew upon this novel bank of "exchange" by selling a precious stone.

The man matched at them with the avidity of a vulture securing its prey.

"What do you think of them?" Kelly asked with a quiet chuckle.

The man looked up rapidly and fixed his eyes with a meaning glance on Kelly's.

"Will you truck?" was the cool reply.

"At a price," said the other, dryly.

"Speak out," continued Kelly. The man fetched some scales, and examining each one, separately weighed a number together.

He then named a price, upon which Kelly with a rough oath proceeded to return them to his belt.

"Don't be in such a hurry," said the trader, looking a little white about the gills.

And filling a glass each the bargaining was renewed.

At last they came to terms. Kelly intimated his wish to remain concealed in the trader's house until the next evening, when he would want an outfit, arms, and a good horse.

Mr. Pond readily agreed to let him have a room and all requirements, after which, it being very late, Kelly retired to an upper room, where he locked himself in.

He slept heavily, and it was late when he awakened, and opening his door called out.

The man soon appeared, and ushering him into a sitting-room on the same floor, gave him breakfast.

After the meal was over, Kelly asked his host if he could send a letter for him by a trustworthy messenger.

"Yes," said Pond.

"You must write the letter," laughed Kelly, "my education has been neglected."

"Mine ain't much," replied the other, with a grin, "but I can manage."

"Only a few words," continued the other. "'Going on a journey. Home in a few days,' with the address."

The man having pressed materials, wrote as directed, and sent the letter by a girl.

She was acute and cunning.

There was no fear of her being followed or questioned by anyone.

Kelly was not disposed to go out in the day-time, so he found time hang heavy on his hands.

The man, in the letter, had concealed his business, kept him company, smoking, drinking, and playing cards.

Thus night came.

Pond now produced a complete miner's outfit, with high boots, Kelly being further disguised with bushy whiskers and a shock wig.
This, and a shaven hat, altered him so much that no one could have recognised him, except, perhaps, Tom Conner.

Having paid his host very liberally, he went out into the street and mounted his horse.

Kelly had no intention of lingering, but rode hard that night until he reached a wild and rough district, where, however, he found a stock-keeper's hut and a small out-house.

He had with him whisky, tobacco, and a wallet of food; so after fastening his horse, he aroused the man.

"Who's there?" presently cried a sleepy voice.

"Be off, or I'll drop you."

"Two can do that, my friend," sarcastically replied Ned Kelly. "I'm a traveller lost my way—got tobacco out, was satisfied.

"You've a fine animal there," he said in an admiring tone, "and I'd like to buy it.

"People about here safe?" asked Kelly.


"I'll go in the bar and stand drinks," replied the outlaw, laughing; "can spare a little coin.

And he did so, asking the men to drink for the good of the house.

It was the custom of the country, and none refused to accept the stranger's hospitality. Presently Kelly proposed a quiet game of cards for a mere trifle, and, all agreeing, was soon the king of the castle.

His manner was infectious; his stories were broad and exciting, and well calculated to win the admiration of the rough-and-ready crew he had to deal with.

After the house was closed, he spent an hour with his sister and brother-in-law, and then turned in.

When once his greed of gold was excited Ned Kelly was reckless.

It was towards night when the outlaw reached the rough-and-ready house he had to deal with.

For several days he met with no adventures and so near Golden Point, but Kelly could bide his time.

He had a good bit of ground to cover before he reached Golden Point, but Kelly could bide his time.

He slept rather late, and found the stock-keeper abroad when he woke, attending to his business.

Kelly went out and saw to his horse, after which the man, who was a rather superior person, returned.

"You've a fine animal there," he said in an admiring way. "Going far?"

"To seek my fortune," replied Kelly, with a laugh.

"Strange fellow," said the stock-keeper to himself; and he tried to learn something of his guest, who was unusually reticent for a gold digger, but Kelly could not be induced to disclose anything of his past.

But he liberally paid for his accommodation and rode off, himself and animal well fed.

"Strange fellow," said the stock-keeper to himself; "can't make him out at all.

He guessed afterwards who he was.

Meanwhile Ned Kelly, who knew the country well, hurried forward in the direction indicated by the dy ing miner.

When once his greed of gold was excited Ned Kelly knew no hesitation. Money was his god.

It was dark, and Ned Kelly had to discuss with himself how to spend the night.

He rose up quietly, and procured a blanket and clock, and the tired traveller retired to rest.

Sleep to him was the one necessity of all others.

In this place, at all events, he would in all probability be safe.

The man grew out something as he showed Kelly a stool.

Kelly first produced a flask of whisky, then some tobacco, and finally some food.

The man was glad of the drink and smoke, but declined the food, of which Kelly partook freely.

The fellow then, who saw that Kelly had a blanket and clock, showed him a shakedown, and the tired traveller retired to rest.

Mrs. Marsh were in the bar, and a number of tough customers were present.

Ned Kelly walked up in his most swaggering way and called for a drink.

"It was supplied."

He then asked if he could pass the night, as he had travelled far that day, and would want to travel further the next day.

He was told to come in.

The woman had recognised him at once, and he was quite welcome.

When they were in the private room they shook hands.

Both had heard of him since his departure, and, like all depraved natures, were more afraid of him the worse he acted.

They got an assistant, an active Irish girl, to attend to the bar, while Maria herself cooked some supper for his hunger.

Ned Kelly and his brother-in-law at once drank and smoked together, such being about the sole amusement of such people.

An hour later a supper was laid before him, which he enjoyed.

"People about here safe?" asked Kelly.


"I'll go in the bar and stand drinks," replied the outlaw, laughing; "can spare a little coin.

And he did so, asking the men to drink for the good of the house.

It was the custom of the country, and none refused to accept the stranger's hospitality.

The man was desperate and yet cautious, fond of notoriety and yet reckless.

After breakfast, making a handsome present to his sister and promising to return soon, he started on his way.

For several days he met with no adventures and so near Golden Point, but Kelly could bide his time.

It was in the height of its prosperity, and exhibited a heterogeneous mass of tents, huts, and a still more heterogeneous mass of people—diggers, dealers, and store-keepers.

They were a rough lot, all intent upon one thought—that of making money.

Everybody went armed, everybody drank, everybody played cards.

Ned Kelly rode up to one of the rough-and-ready houses which gave entertainment to man and beast, and made himself at home at once.

He was in no hurry. He would look about him.

He had not been half-an-hour in the house before he recognised one or two of his old comrades, but was careful to keep out of sight. They might be inclined to earn the reward.

It was determined, as soon as he had rested and refreshed to move away.

He easily secured a position where he could see without being seen, and enjoyed his meal, his pipe, and his glass.

As night came on, the street of miners became greater, and Kelly thought he would make a move.

Tay on delivery, was the maxim of these places, and he had no bill to settle.

Kelly, he moved quietly away, went out and procured his horse from an ostler.

It was dark, and Ned Kelly had to discuss with himself how to spend the night.

As he prepared to mount, a hand was laid on his shoulder. He started round.

"Ain't you a word for your old pal, Joe Long?" he said, in a low tone.
The man Joe Long was plump and short, rather closely clothed, and he was not a man to manifest any great activity. He was not a man to be very demonstrative, and his business, however important it might be considered, was conducted in a quiet, mild manner.

"That's the style!" cried Joe. "I've got some important business in Adelaide," continued Ned Kelly, "where some friends of mine are staying. I must go there, and then, let me see, a fortnight."

"Out of luck here," said Ned. "I think I shall start the diggings."

"Yes," said Joe Long. "Yes, a quiet sort of place," said Joe Long; "only progress scarce."

"I've got a crib of any kind?" asked Kelly. "No, I've got a cabin of any kind," said Joe Long; "only progress scarce."

"So you're to stay there?" said Kelly. "Yes," said Kelly; "I'm going to the target."

"I'll even trust you. Invite 'em all to a feed. Call the Captain Crisp."

The other laughed.

"We're faithful and devoted."

"I've got a meal and a sleep."

"Out of luck here?" said Kelly. "Yes, I've got a meal and a sleep."

"What are you going to do?" asked Joe presently. "I'm going to the target."

"I suppose he is," dryly remarked Ned. "I'll even trust him. Invite 'em all to a feed. Call the Captain Crisp."

The other laughed.

"As a rule all men who connected themselves with Kelly and his friends, but they all understood."

"So you're to stay there?" said Kelly. "Yes, a quiet sort of place," said Joe Long; "only progress scarce."

"He's in camp somewhere," replied Joe Long. "Seed him two days ago."

"Well, after breakfast," continued Kelly, "I'll take a look round. Find such of the boys as you can trust, and let 'em know I'm about. Know a safe place for supper?"

"Jim Wilkins keeps a saloon," responded Joe; "he's all right."
NED KELLY.

... When at last all were tired and exhausted, Jim Wilkins owed the Red Lion Hotel, and the inmates dispersed. Mike Bown accompanied Joe Long and Ned Kelly to their hut.

Mike was a dark, terrible desperado of powerful, almost gigantic frame, with a countenance at once fierce and brutal.

He was, however, a fit lieutenant for the desperate Ned Kelly.

They reached the hut.

"Seen Tom Conquest lately?" asked Mike Bown of his chief.

"Yes," was the dry remark, "I have." "I hope I shall have my turn," continued Mike Bown; "only let me capture him. He caught and hung my brother."

"I know," said Kelly.

"Fit for this tall's been my matter," grinned the giant. "If I ever gets a chance and let that chap escape, then I expect Sol's ghost will haunt me to my dying day." "Wait," continued Kelly. "When you bully boys meet me again, I shall have something to say about Tom Conquest."

He had some cooked meat, damper, and tea, with a rough blanket. Kelly was careful on such a day to secure a supply of water.

As soon as he was clear of the diggings he made for the high-road, and for the place where it diverged on one side for Melbourne, on the other side for Adelaide.

Ned was a very common thing in the colony, snid nobody knew that Kelly was right, and that they must bide their time.

Then he started.

The first thing he did was to "swap" his horse. This suited the bushranger very well.

"I know," said Kelly.

"Fit for this tall's been my matter," grinned the giant. "If I ever gets a chance and let that chap escape, then I expect Sol's ghost will haunt me to my dying day." "Wait," continued Kelly. "When you bully boys meet me again, I shall have something to say about Tom Conquest."

... When the hour for repose came, he simply withdrew into a thicket.

Into the scrub he went.

What had Ned Kelly to think about?

... What man of evil cares to be left with his own thoughts, to his own devices? To his own character of crime.

Men think nothing of hundreds of miles in the colonies, and a hard ride of seven hundred miles—which has been done on a memorable occasion by a very well-known person—did not excite astonishment.

Kelly was in no hurry.

As soon as he was clear of the diggings he made for the high-road, and for the place where it diverged on one side for Melbourne, on the other side for Adelaide.

Mike was a dark, terrible desperado of powerful, almost gigantic frame, with a countenance at once fierce and brutal.

Kelly was careful whenever he could get hold of a colonial paper, to read what was going on—generally with a view to what was said about himself.

As a rule, however, he heard enough conversation on the subject without reading.

Well mounted, and well supplied in every way, Ned Kelly started on his return journey to Adelaide.

The bushranger now was particularly cautious.

He wished to excite no attention, to do nothing to draw notice on himself.

For this purpose, he had to restrain in every way the exuberance of his character.

Despite the great success of the gold-fields and the money spent by the diggers, hotels were on a very rough scale except in towns.

The road-side inns remained barbarous, though with expensive accommodation.

Kelly, who knew every inch of the way, travelled slowly and as if in no hurry.

He spoke freely to those he met, and inquired the news of all ordinary travellers.

More frequently than was agreeable he heard his own name coupled with every possible and impossible crime committed in the colony.

An evil spirit pervaded the man.

He desired to be heard of, but he chose to select his own character of crime.

It annoyed him to have some petty charge laid to him, something mean and contemptible.

One of his chief sources of disguise was dyeing his face, and this he practised with great secrecy.

All the first day he travelled without finding any place of public entertainment.

He had at night to find himself camping out in the woods.

It was no hardship to a man like Ned Kelly, or to any one else eleven months in the year. It is more agreeable to camp out at night than occupy a feather bed.

When the hour for repose came, he simply withdrew into a thicket.

He was careful on such a day to secure a supply of water.

He had some cooked meat, damper, and tea, with a rough blanket.

As soon as he was clear of the diggings he made for the high-road, and for the place where it diverged on one side for Melbourne, on the other side for Adelaide.

Kelly was always careful of his horse for his own sake, and saw to his sted.

Then he located himself in a grove of gum trees, where, without a fire, he contrived to make a very tolerable supper.

After this he lighted his pipe, and passed an hour or two in the disagreeable task of reflection.

What had Ned Kelly to think about?

His own evil deeds, and his own evil origin.

One thing, and this one, at least, he was pleased to reflect on; and yet, like many another so-called hero, he compassionately thought of the many audacious deeds he had done, and which had existed, in some disgust, in others admiration.

"They shall talk of me more," he said to himself, "as he rolled himself into his blanket.

Such a determination would be all well enough if in no honorable cause; but, with those of the outlaw bushranger, they were simply terrible.
Night passed.

A tolerably early hour the man was on the move, and by nightfall got into a main-road, where he met travellers, and once now and then, a terribly rough stage coach.

For him, however, there was no society until, at least, he reached, towards evening, a kind of hamlet, where the coach changed horses.

Here he determined to pass the night.

He could be sure of an excellent supper, and probably a certain amount of company and amusement. As soon as he had thrown his reins to a rude kind of cotter, he intimated his intention of passing the night there.

He then walked into the public room, which no matter how rough, was amply provided for.

"Supper!" was the first order, and then bowing to some four or five strangers, "Drinks—if the gentlemen will allow me?"

Amongst a certain set this sort of introduction is the right sort of thing, and those present were not of a kindred means of revelry.

They nodded with a laugh, and the usual drinks popular in those days, were brought in.

Kelly said little, being satisfied to pay and then eat his evening meal as ordered.

After that he became more social and joined very soon in a game of cards.

It was "spoiled five," which indicated that the players were Irish.

Ned Kelly was very clever at this at every other game, and put money in his purse.

Still he was careful not to do anything to alarm his new acquaintance, and the night's festivities wound up by a stiff bowl of punch.

"You're a broth of a boy, and know what cards is," remarked a rather curious customer, as they rose to leave.

"Come to my room, and let us go our level best for a tiver or two."

Ned Kelly never refused these sort of challenges, and thought the murderer of my brother-in-law," mentioning the deceased merchant, "has gone there, for I'll be bound to annoy.

They played for several hours, consumed a considerable quantity of whisky, and finally retired very much satisfied with themselves.

Kelly was as usual the winner, but not to a very alarming extent, and Simon Gordon the traveller, was not at all annoyed.

"I'm off to Adelaide," he said, "I've business there, perhaps I shall take a trip to the Old Country, some time.

Simon Gordon some time.

A friend of his had a villa in the outskirts of the town.

A friend of his had a villa in the outskirts of the town, and Mr. Simon Gordon introduced the whole four out there and introduced them to Mr. Stanton and his family.

There was a luxuriant wife, a son, and several daughters.

Kelly always did make himself agreeable with the women, and singled out one girl, Mary Stanton, to whom he paid marked attention.

She was a merry, light-hearted girl of seventeen, luxuriant and healthy.

Kelly, despite his roughness of nature, could put on a great deal of the Irishman's blarneying ways when he liked.

He could tell capital stories of the Old Country and else where.

In his rough way he could sing a capital song without the need of accompaniment.

Mary Stanton thought him a wonderful man. Simon Gordon spoke of him as a rich and independent gentleman.

But of course on the two occasions on which Kelly visited Laurel Lodge he made no attempt at any serious manifestation of feeling.

About a week had passed, and Kelly began to think of his rendezvous at Black Water Gully.

Ned Kelly stared with a look of real and unaffected astonishment.

"Hadn't heard," he said.

Then he felt to listen to the details of his own fearful coming trial with bitter compassion.

This rather astounded Kelly, who for a moment thought it was what was vaguely called a plant.

But he presently saw that the other was perfectly genuine, and accepted the proposal to travel the rest of the journey together.

"My traps is gone on," said the traveller, "and we can ride together."

Thus sheltered under the protection of his victim's relative, Ned Kelly made his entrance into Adelaide, going direct to the hotel where his colleagues awaited him.

They were by this time big men at the hotel, and Kelly was proud to introduce his new friend to them.

Simon was a shrewd man of business, but also fond of pleasure and his ease.

He enjoyed any kind of relaxation. He was therefore glad to have anyone who was well acquainted with the means of revelry.

There was no ship quite ready to start for England from the usual cause, and the traveller had to wait.

Kelly smiled grimly as he suggested to his friends another voyage to England.

But none were prepared for such a contingency just yet.

They had considerably broken into their money bags and must replenish.

The "how" now arose.

Mr. Simon Gordon was not a man out of whom much was to be made. He was an easy-going pleasure-loving individual, but by no means a man to lose all his substance very easily.

He was hospitable, spent money freely, but was no easy fool to be fleeced.

They soon found this out.

But he was ready and willing to pay his share in all amusements.

A friend of his had a villa in the outskirts of the town.

He was a successful merchant of the rough-and-ready sort, and was always glad to play the hospitable.

Gordon took the whole four out there and introduced them to Mr. Stanton and his family.

There was a luxuriant wife, a son, and several daughters.

Kelly always did make himself agreeable with the women, and singled out one girl, Mary Stanton, to whom he paid marked attention.

She was a merry, light-hearted girl of seventeen, luxuriant and healthy.

Kelly, despite his roughness of nature, could put on a great deal of the Irishman's blarneying ways when he liked.

He could tell capital stories of the Old Country and else where.

In his rough way he could sing a capital song without the need of accompaniment.

Mary Stanton thought him a wonderful man. Simon Gordon spoke of him as a rich and independent gentleman.

But of course on the two occasions on which Kelly visited Laurel Lodge he made no attempt at any serious manifestation of feeling.

About a week had passed, and Kelly began to think of his rendezvous at Black Water Gully.

He was in the bar of the hotel at a window overlooking the street when he saw Mr. Simon Gordon coming along the side walk towards the house in conversation with a stranger.

Opposite the hotel the two halted, and the stranger looked over.

He was conversing earnestly with Simon.

Kelly knew him now in a moment, though he was not in uniform.

It was Tom Conquest.

Kelly lost not a moment, but joined his companions who were in the billiard-room.

He gave them a whispered direction and then left by the back way.

He at once went to the man who had bought the diamonds, where he procured a rough dress and where he also remained until night.

He then started to walk out of Adelaide, which he decided to give a wide berth to for the present.

He made for a small roadside inn, where at a later hour he was rejoined by his companions, who had also swapped their better clothes for the rough garb of working men.

Conquest had come into the hotel and been closeted with Simon Gordon some time.

The man was a human sleuth-hound, and one of the few whom Kelly feared.

Still he felt himself pretty well a match for him, and took a singular pleasure in foiling and defeating him.

He determined at a future time to show him his mastery over his audacity and intelligence.

Hitherto they had been equally matched, and Tom Conquest in the deadly contest had nothing to boast of.
CHAPTER LXXXVII

TEMPORARY RETIREMENT.

KELLY, however, felt himself growing rather tired at times of his life of constant anxiety and watchfulness, and felt half resolved to find out some means of putting an end to the annoyance for a while.

He had heard so much about being hunted from place to place like some ferocious animal whom the police had determined to exterminate.

"I can't stand it much longer," he told his friends. "I shall do something desperate if this kind of thing continues.

"It isn't a pleasant sort of caper," assented Joss.

"A confounded shame," growled Captain Zeph. "But how are you going to prevent it?"

"Ay," said Salmon Roe, "the reward is high, and it seems to put them on their mettle. We can't dispose of them all, you know—that isn't possible.

"Do you take me for a fool, all of you?" asked Kelly roughly.

They were sitting on the banks of a stream, resting after a hard day's tramp, and the bushranger was not in the best of tempers.

His companions were well aware of this fact and exchanged glances, but they did not venture to speak.

When in one of his sudden humours he was dreaded by even his nearest associates.

It was impossible to say why they attached themselves to him, unless it was for motives of mutual interest, and because he possessed more brains than the whole three.

He was certainly most remarkable in thus winning adherents and awing them into obedience of his slightest wishes.

He could often read the secret thoughts of those with whom he was brought into contact, and he observed that his companions were not well pleased at his behaviour.

"Can any of you advise me?" he asked with a sardonic smile. "Perhaps some of you may have a good suggestion to offer, by which I may rid myself of those bloodhounds for a time?"

"We are waiting to hear what you have got to say," said Zeph thoughtfully.

"You have trusted us," said Joss, "and we shouldn't hesitate if I were in your place. It is a great temptation, boys, to offer, by which I may rid myself of those bloodhounds for a while?"

"We are in want of work," returned Kelly, "and I think it can be managed," said the squatter, thoughtfully; "but I suppose it won't last long?"

"Not longer than necessary," replied Kelly. "I only want to fool the police for a week or two. They will get tired of searching for me, and will be thoroughly shunted."

"There is no station about here, is there?" asked Salmon Roe.

"There isn't a house for many miles." "There is only one shanty about here, and that is about ten miles off," replied Kelly. "I'm owned by a very rich man, who has no occasion to work for his living at all, but can't bear to be idle. He has got lots of stock, and a thundering pretty daughter."

"You seem to know all about him."

"I have been in this part before. Let us start for the place without delay."

The other men who were very comfortable where they were, for they had camped for the night, did not feel in the least like starting off, but the bushranger knew the value of friends too well for such an act of folly.

"We have managed to live a long time without 'em," added Salmon Roe, trying to make himself pleasant and agreeable. "People can't be all alike in this world, but I wouldn't change positions with you for all that. I shouldn't feel very comfortable if I knew that there was ten thousand pounds reward offered for my nut."

"I've often wondered why you fellows don't round on me," said Kelly contemptuously. "I suppose you know that there is a price upon my head?"

"We do," they returned meekly, answering the unnecessary question as Kelly keyed the pistol, but if they thought he had any intention of using it against them they were standing on very insecure ground for they knew the value of friends too well for such an act of folly.

"We have managed to live a long time without 'em," added Salmon Roe, trying to make himself pleasant and agreeable. "People can't be all alike in this world, but I wouldn't change positions with you for all that. I shouldn't feel very comfortable if I knew that there was ten thousand pounds reward offered for my nut."

"I've often wondered why you fellows don't round on me," said Joss with a reckless laugh. "I shouldn't hesitate if I were in your place. It is a great temptation, boys, to offer, by which I may rid myself of those bloodhounds for a time?"

"We are all anxious to hear what you have to propose," said Joss. "I think it can be managed," said the squatter, unsuspiciously satisfied that they were all stout fellows, a great recommendation in his eyes. "If there is anything I do dislike it is to see hearty active men out of employment through no fault of their own."

"It's hard lines certainly," said Kelly. "We are all truly grateful and will take care that you &; don't repeat your kindness."

Mr. Stephens nodded, being a man of few words, and showed them what they would be required to do.

He was not only a good judge of men, little knowing their real character or dreaming that he was standing beside the notorious bushranger.
They all acted their parts with excessive cunning and a coolness which nothing could move, having been well drilled by the estate Kelly, who desired to keep up, for a few days at least, the pretense of securing his object.

A more observant man than Mr. Stephens might have been struck by the bushranger's harsh and marked features, but he employed a number of men and did not think it necessary to trouble himself about their peculiarities of manner and appearance.

All he desired was that they should do his work as speedily as possible, and do it thoroughly while they were about it, and if they satisfied him on that point he asked no more, being an easy going man, who took life as it came and was careful not to give himself more trouble than was absolutely necessary.

He was just the man Kelly would have picked out for his purpose if he had been given the choice. The bushranger hated the inquisitive and curious like poison.

"I hope this won't last long," said Jess, discontentedly when they were alone after the third day's work. "I'd sooner be in jail than stand this life much longer. There you know you are obliged to do work; but there is no need for this slavery as far as I can see. Is Kelly getting funky—" was the reply, "and I'm mowed if I don't think a little while longer boys."

"I am as sick of this life as you can possibly be and am resolved to take a few days and knew no other way to secure his object.

"I'll be if it isn't enough to make a fellow wish they were on your arms yet, you old lag! "

"You're good grub and a bed to lie on," returned Salmon Roe, with a grin, "but and thank your stars."

"Don't feel for your barkers," said Shute, "but have it out fair, like a man."
"My idea is to rouse the house and the pursuers.

I'm going to take departure.

Two of his best and most valued horses were missing.

Several started in pursuit of the supposed thieves, and Kelly and his associates remained behind with others to protect the women.

The bushranger laughed grimly as he watched their departure.

"New, boys," he cried, when the sound of the horses' hoofs had died away in the distance, "Let's go and prepare Miss Stephens for a little journey. I'm going to take her away in pledge, and I expect that the old man will be very handier for a pretty daughter.

In any case we shall find her useful in keeping the traps at bay, and if the worst comes to the worst she'll be a pleasant companion.

"But where shall we take her?" asked Roe, not displeased with the idea, but fearful that they would find a pretty tractable girl.

"The Grey Scrub Flat is the place," returned Kelly, "The place where the ladies are always in place.

Several horses were nearly saddled when Kelly led the trembling girl out into the open air.

"Stephens will wish he had not been in such a hurry to go after his stolen horses," said Kelly as they rode away.

"I am Kelly the ironclad bushranger," said Kelly, with some pride of manner.

The girl looked at the long, rambling structure, and won­dered if she would be able to keep her through the night.

She was almost, paralysed with grief and horror at this outrage.

She looked at the long, rambling structure, and won­dered if it could be possible that they were indeed taking her away from her home and her loved ones.

The bushranger soon made her understand what he wanted her to do, and, fearing that he would carry out his threat of entering the room if she hesitated, hastily attired herself, shivering with horror, and longing inexpressibly to go back to her father.

She was almost unconscious of the terrible danger that menaced her.

"Cheer up," said Kelly, consolingly. "We would not hurt a hair of your head.

We will not.

The girl looked at the dark, forbidding face, and saw how impossible it was to move him to pity, but she made another wild appeal, another vain and fruitless attempt to move his stony heart.

"My father will reward you well," she cried. "He will ask no questions if you will only take me back at once.

In the name of heaven take me back if you are not fiends in human shape."

The tears of anguish rolled down her fair cheek as she spoke, but the cold, hard-hearted men witnessed her distress unmoved, and felt no pang of conscience.

It is not true that conscience makes cowards of us all.

These men were utterly without mercy, and could laugh with careless mirth at human misery.

Death never comes to those who wish for it, or poor Kate Stephens would have fallen to the ground, a lifeless corpse.

She began to sob bitterly, not to move their pity, but to relieve her overcharged heart, which seemed full to over­flowing.

"Those tears are scarcely complimentary," said Kelly.

"Do you know who I am, I pray?" asked Kate, not dis­tracted by the idea, but fearful that they would find a pretty tractable girl.

"I am Kelly the ironclad bushranger," said Kelly, with some pride of manner.

He was proud of his unenviable notoriety.

The girl gave a slight start, recalling her father's voice.

She had heard him many times before, and knew that a man like Kelly would shrivel from nothing, however infamous.

How blind her father must have been to employ such men.

It seemed to her now that everybody ought to have seen through them at first.

They were riding swiftly through the black darkness, and with desperate strength she suddenly tore her horse's bridle away from the bushranger, and, turning her horse's head, galloped in the direction of home.

It was a bold stroke, and for a moment the men were taken utterly by surprise.

"Curse the young bussy!" cried Kelly, angrily. "We must lose no time, or we shall lose her after all. She knows how to sit her horse.

They turned their horses' heads and followed in pursuit of the unhappy girl, who shuddered as she heard the horses' hoofs.

Closer and closer they came; but she urged her horse to the top of its speed, and managed to keep a little in advance, hoping against hope.

Suddenly Kelly determined to put an end to the chase; and, drawing out his pistol, fired recklessly, caring very little which he shot, the woman or the horse.

The girl gave a wild cry as the poor animal fell to the ground wounded.

Kate herself was uninjured, and struggled to her feet to find herself in the grasp of the terrible bushranger.

"A pretty dance you have led us, girl," said Kelly, angrily.

"You might have known that a wench could see through you."

"I wish that I could strike you dead," said Kate, clenching her little fist in impotent rage.

"Why are you here?"

"To find out the name of your hired hands."

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"I wish that I could strike you dead," said Kate, clenching her little fist in impotent rage.

Kelly scowled at her savagely.
He felt that Miss Stephens was going a little too far. He didn't mind a display of temper, but he objected to personal abuse.

"Old fool," he said again, rather harshly this time, and picking her up unceremoniously, placed her before him on his horse in spite of her wild struggles.

The girl could not bear to feel his strong arm round her thin waist, and shrank from him in unutterable horror and loathing.

She did indeed regret her attempt to escape. It had done her no good, but only made her position infinitely more disagreeable and unpleasant.

Kelly looked at her half-savaged face with a smile, and held her closer as he felt how she shrank from him.

"If I could have saved us a great deal of trouble if we had done this at first," he said. "We ought to thank you for suggesting the idea."

Kate made no reply.

She was too indignant to be able to command her voice, and she knew that those evil men only sneered at her tears.

It was a terrible position for a young girl, sweet and innocent, and poor Kate longed for death in her misery.

She felt that she had very little mercy to expect from these men, and her only hope was that her father would return home and find her gone, immediately start in pursuit of his lost daughter.

"Where are they taking me to?" she thought, as they rode along, the deep silence unbroken save by the clatter of the horses' hoofs.

"This must be a very romantic ride for you," said Kelly, bristling with anger. "It will be something to remember when you are old and grey, if you should live so long."

"I shall remember it as the greatest degradation I have ever endured," she returned with an indignant blush.

Before Kelly could make any reply he heard the sound of men, and hastily clapped his hand over the girl's mouth as she was about to cry out.

Then the four men drove their horses behind some bushes, which effectually concealed them in the darkness.

Hardly had they done so when a party of horsemen came in view.

It was the party that had gone in search of Jim Shute.

The shepherd would only have been too glad to comply with the girl's desperate plea.

The young girl's feelings may be easier imagined than described.

To see her father so near and not be able to make known her presence to him, was terrible.

She could only have given away cry.

She struggled so desperately that Kelly had the utmost difficulty in keeping his hand over her mouth.

The horsemen were soon out of sight again, and gradually the sound of horses' hoofs died away in the distance.

"You little she-devil!" said Kelly, when he thought it safe to speak; "you nearly spoilt all with your tongue. I'll teach you to defy Ned Kelly!"

And with these words the brutal ruffian struck her in the face with his open hand.

"What a woman!" cried Kate, her eyes flashing with indignation and mortification. "Coward! to strike a woman!"

"You had better be careful," said Ned Kelly, significantly. "Remember you are in my power, and I can do what I like to you. If I had not got an object in view you should be my wife for a week or two, but I want to get a price for you. If your father thinks you worth paying for, you shall be returned to him safe and sound. If not, I'll keep you here till I am tired, and then turn you out as a warning to those who trifle with Ned Kelly."

"Monster!" cried Kate; "why not kill me at once? I ask you in the name of mercy to put me out of my misery?"

The girl was not afraid of Ned Kelly's fist, but she felt a dread that the licentious bushranger would never let her return before he had accomplished her ruin.

She had heard tales of women being insulted and cruelly used by bushrangers.

How could she defend herself from them? She was a poor weak girl, in the power of men whose deeds were as notorious.

The country rang with tales of their misdeeds.

All that night they galloped on, and Kate knew that she was leaving her home farther and farther behind.

At last morning broke.

Kate looked about.

The country was unfamiliar, and she knew she must be far from home, for she had often had long rides with her father.

The sun shone upon the level scrub-land, and upon the face of the terror-stricken girl and the villains who had torn her from her home.

She was as white as death and exhausted with the long ride.

Grey Scrub Flat was reached at last.

This was their destination.

They had evidently come up with Jim Shute, for there were two horses with riders being led along.

"He'll never think of coming here," said Kelly, and pushed the girl before him on a tumble-down shanty.

A man came to the door.

He was a shepherd. Kelly knew him well, he had often done the bushranger a good turn when that gentleman had made it worth his while.

"Halloa," he said, looking in surprise at the girl.

"What a wench-stealing? Why, I'm blessed if it isn't old Stephens' daughter," giving her a pitying glance.

"Couldn't you go somewhere else?" said the girl, as she was about to cry out.

The man was not all bad. He had helped Kelly to escape from justice often because he had done him a good turn when that gentleman had made it worth his while.

"Shut up," he said, looking in surprise at the girl.

"He couldn't take you home if he wished to, you little she-devil," said Kelly, roughly.

And the man dismounted from his horses, much to the annoyance of the shepherd.

"That's safe to stop here," said Kelly, with a grin.

"Why not?" asked Kelly.

"Because Stephens will search high and low for his daughter," replied the shepherd.

"He'll never think of coming here," said Kelly, and pushed the girl before him, he entered the hut.

The girl, who had seen the shepherd before on her father's land, threw herself at his feet and begged him to take her back.

The shepherd would only have been too glad to comply with this request, but he could do nothing against four men.

"You have some feeling," cried the girl, "you will not let them ill-use me, you will take me home and my father will reward you."

"He couldn't take you home if he wished to, you little fool," said Kelly, with a grin. "You forget that we are four to one, and the first move he made against me would be his last."

The girl saw that Kelly was right.

She would only waste her breath in idle pleading, it could do no good.

The rough owner of the hut felt his heart bleed for this defenseless woman in the power of these men.

He was afraid she would meet with a fate ten thousand times worse than death.

Ned Kelly could have brought her here only for one purpose, and that purpose was so horrible that the shepherd shuddered.

The girl was doomed.

The shepherd resolved to defend her with his life, if
Ned Kelly tried to treat her with indignity. He gave a sigh of relief when Kelly told him of his real intention, and asked him to go off at once to negotiate with old Stephens. He was only too glad to consent to this, for he knew that the old man would pay any sum for his daughter.

"You shall have your share," said Kelly, in conclusion, and the shepherd started off at once. Before leaving he was warned that if the party were betrayed, Ned would shoot the girl on the spot, and that scouts would be placed on the lookout for all comers.

The girl was locked in the hut, and, worn-out with exhaustion, fell into an uneasy sleep.

Kelly and his men, the weather being fine, laid themselves down under the bushes. Presently Joss, who had taken a great fancy to the girl, sneaked away and made for the hut.

The shepherd returned with a handsome reward. "We have the ruffians now," and he fired a pistol in the direction of Kelly and his men, the weather being fine, laid them down as if casually.

They rode hard and fast, nor halted until they had reached a wild and desolate district, miles away from the enemy.

They rode hard and fast, nor halted until they had reached a wild and desolate district, miles away from the enemy.


"Nothing will do but the girl shall be left alone." Joss muttered something, but he did not molest the girl again.

He knew better.

Kelly did not care much what became of the girl, but he guarded her from Joss, because he enjoyed keeping her father from idea for her pleasure. "I am to be returned to her father unharmed, providing he pays the money for her."

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crosses our path. He'll never attempt the leap, no horse could do it."

"I don't know, sir," answered the man. "If that man is Kelly, he may, if the horse is sound; he's done it before, if he knew his way."

"Then he has escaped us," ejaculated the officer, as he perceived the splendid horse jumping to the jump.

The trooper levelled his pistol and fired at the horse.

But in his anxiety he did not touch him. The animal reached the opposite side.

Neither of the men dared to follow. It was a desperate rep., only to be taken by an utterly desperate man.

The troopers gazed after the retreating form in admiration. It was a daring deed indeed.

Kelly rode off at a rapid pace. He knew that the mounted police would have to go a long way round, but he determined to give them no chance of molesting him.

The rendezvous was in a deserted claim, which had been given up some time as exhausted.

He rode hard until about twelve and then halted. He had come by devious ways, and knew that he could not be pursued.

He halted, took a pull at his whisky-flask, and then slept soundly, his hobbled horse feeding within fifty yards of him.

The grass was so plentiful that the beast did not require to roam in search of food. His hard day's work could be pursued.

At about an hour after dawn he rose, chewed some tobacco to keep off the hunger, and started on his way.

Bushell's Creek had once been a popular digging, but it had long since been exhausted.

At all events better claims turned up, and it had been deserted.

Still two or three half-ruined huts remained.

Yet it was very still and quiet.

Had it not been for the windiness of a shaft, a coil of rope, and a few heaps of lime and gravel, which were the only indications of human labour in that stony field, there was nothing to intercept its monotonous dead level.

Kelly reached it about nightfall, and made himself at home in one of the huts.

He sat waiting for his fellows. They came in about an hour, and none of them had seen anything of the police.

They had given them the slip.

The question now arose as to whether it was a wise thing to go to Ballarat.

Kelly insisted that in that motley city of canvas they were safer than anywhere else.

The crowd, the ever-changing crowd, the places of entertainment and refreshment were all means of hiding themselves.

And as usual the rest of the gang gave way to their leader.

Next morning early they started for Ballarat, which they reached towards the evening.

A general dispersal took place, all agreeing to meet at the Big Nugget in the evening.
NED KELLY
THE IRONCLAD
AUSTRALIAN BUSHRANGER
They preferred to have their breakfast comfortably and wander round. Their object was to learn when the gold escort would leave Ballarat for Melbourne and then organise their forces. About midday they went to the Big Nugget and found none of the others had arrived. Ned Kelly found the Ballarat gold escort would depart in five days for Melbourne. The Big Nugget was waiting for the escort. That night he ordered a meeting in a gloomy and retired gully, a mile out of Ballarat. It was known as Dead Man's Hole.

There was some terrible tale connected with it at the time, but what it was is now forgotten. It was in a wild and desolate region, where few were likely to penetrate of their own accord.

A fire was lighted in a sort of hollow at the side of a hill, and round that the band collected, one of the party keeping a good watch on the hill-side. Kelly counted fifteen heads.

He then made them a little speech, in which he laid out his plans fully. They were accurately arranged, but required determination and resolution to carry out. All the world would have very serious regret if it were put in motion. The gold escort would, in addition to twenty mounted troopers, have returning diggers, men who, as a rule, would fight desperately.

The whole thing would be a surprise and a.warning to those about to cross the hills, that had he not been most careful with his disguises he must have been recognized. Not so much, however, had been heard of him lately, and it was generally suspected in the colony that he had made himself scarce.

This was very much in his favour, as people ceased to look out for him, and other topics of the day cropped up.

Kelly was in reality very much annoyed, as his great and crowning defect was vanity. Not to be spoken of at all was to him a great source of disgust. Of course he dared not obtrude the subject for fear of exciting suspicion. But they should know he was alive in a day or two, except the main roads between large towns, which are well kept enough.

About two days journey from Ballarat was a place known as Dead Men's Hole, where there was one of the roadsides. It was situated near a very dense centre of bush, through which the road passed. In consequence of the previous attempts to rob the escort, the leaders had adopted the plan of having scouts about the hills, that had not been most careful with his disguises he must have been recognized.

On the fourth day, that before which the escort was to leave, Kelly fetched his horse, paid for its keep, and started with the mate. They were to go in couples.

About two days journey from Ballarat was a place known as ‘Dead Men’s Hole,’ where there was one of the roadside lines. It was situated near a very dense centre of bush, through which the road passed. In consequence of the previous attempts to rob the escort, the leaders had adopted the plan of having scouts about the hills, that had not been most careful with his disguises he must have been recognized.

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such a barricade across the road the escort would have to
cross, as would arrest their progress for some time, and
bring the whole party under the range of the "firing
party," as we may fairly style the bushrangers, who were
planted in trees thick, almost impenetrable foliage, and
had time to take deliberate aim at the unsuspecting escort.

A volley from the muzzles of twenty guns saluted the
travellers, who, seeing themselves attacked from all
quarters simultaneously, and not knowing but that their
enemies were much more numerous, were awed by
instant panic, and bolted off into the bush.

The enemy were much more numerous, were seized with
an instant panic, and bolted off into the bush. Captain
Johnson was untouched.

At a preconcerted signal from Kelly, down dropped
the gun from his perches, and, with guns levelled,
threatened the remaining troopers with death if they
moved hand or foot; and, to tell the plain truth, they
didn't seem inclined to test the sincerity of the threat.

Two of the troopers were wounded on the ground, but,
fortunately, though Kelly had "marked him for his own,"
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let you have a spell of rest. I see that it won't take you many days to get up your strength. You look better already."

"How's it?" asked the bushranger, laconically.

"Three miles," returned Don; "and it's my belief you could walk it if it came to the push. But there's no need for that when you have got the horse here."

He looked at Kelly's huge frame with admiration as he spoke. He was not a very big man himself, but admired well-developed limbs and physical strength in others.

"I'm blowed if I ain't quite unsteady on my pegs," said Kelly, as he rose with the assistance of his new friend, who helped him to climb into the saddle, and led the horse quietly along. Little thinking of the "big prize" he had within his grasp.

Bob Don was not a man who cared particularly for money. His chief satisfaction would have been the knowledge that he had been able to rid the land of a brutal ruffian.

He had not the slightest idea, however, that he was addressing the terror of Australia.

He volunteered the information that he was a stock­keeper, and owned a large run, as he walked along at the horse's head.

He had been a shepherd, but when, in 1841, sheep fell in price from 40s. to 18 a head, his wages bought him the shop and stock of his bankrupt employer.

He seemed to be a talkative individual, and rambled on for some time without waiting for an answer.

"By Gosh! he is an innocent," thought Kelly, with a grim smile, as he looked down at Don's broad-brimmed hat, and listened to his ceaseless flow of talk. "If I had a horse quietly along, little thinking of the "big prize" he had within his grasp.

Kelly looked at her with unbounded admiration as he passed by.

"Well?" asked Don, as Kelly paused.

"Oh, well," said Kelly, "I got the worst of it, and cleared out of the building, so that he shouldn't be tempted to finish me off to save further trouble. When people can't agree it is best to part, say I; and he was jolly well glad to see my back. He was determined to get me out, dead or alive. So I thought it best to slip away."

"He must have been a strong sort of chap," said Don, without sarcasm. "I'd like to see that brother of yours."

Kelly made no reply. Perhaps he thought an answer to this remark superfluous.

"I've got a wife and one kid," continued the communicative Don, pointedly.

"They won't be surprised or put out," he added quickly, as if in reply to some objection his companion might have been about to make. "I often bring folks home. They are used to it by this time, bless your heart."

Kelly admired her from the first. He was tired of the society of Bob Don, but he found it impossible to leave his pretty daughter behind.

"Morning," said Bob Don, as he left the station, looking back to nod at Kelly. "You are getting quite strong and will soon be thinking of leaving, I suppose?"

"Yes, I shall have to leave here soon," returned the bushranger, with well-simulated regret, thrusting his tongue in his cheek as Don walked away, without the slightest idea what would occur during his absence.

Kelly waited until he had been gone some time, and then, having ascertained that Mrs. Don was busily engaged inside the hut, went in search of Lucy.

"Even if she had known he was so near she would not have dreamed of danger."
She disliked him, without having any suspicion of the truth. She would have been frightened out of her wits if she had known who it was her father had rescued from death.

She had a sweet, clear voice, and even Kelly, who was no judge of harmony, listened with pleasure, and waited in silence until the song was at an end.

"Bravo!" he exclaimed.

She gave a start of surprise and looked about her. To her idea there was nothing in Kelly's appearance that spoke greatly in his favour; but, above all, she disliked his voice.

"Bravo!" he repeated, coming forward with a smile on his lips. "You thought you were singing for your own amusement, and didn't expect to find me a listening behind a hedge. Why don't you give us another tune—a more lively one this time? I like your voice, but I don't like your song."

She looked confused, and perhaps a little annoyed, as she coldly declined to sing again.

"Do now," said Kelly coaxingly.

"The songs I know would not please you," she answered with increasing coldness.

"I am the most easily pleased man in the world," returned Kelly with an admiring glance at her pretty face.

"Don't be obstinate!"

"I do not wish to sing again."

"It's always the way with the women," said Kelly; "they want a deal of coaxing."

She gave an angry cry on beholding her daughter and cried to her mother to save her.

"You beast!" said the girl. "Let me go, or it will be all over."

"Father!" she shrieked. "You think you were singing for your own amusement, and didn't expect to find me a listening behind a hedge. Why don't you give us another tune—a more lively one this time? I like your voice, but I don't like your song."

She gave a shrill cry of terror, as he seized her in his strong grasp.

"Father!" she shrieked.

"Come with me!" hissed Kelly, dragging her along by the waist.

"You beast!" said the girl. "Let me go, or it will be the worse for you! My father will punish you for this."

"Blow the old cox!" retorted Kelly. "I ain't afraid of Bob Don, my lass. I could crack him in my thumb like a flea if I had a mind."

"He saved your life," cried the girl trying to appeal to his better feeling. "What would have become of you if father had not bound up your wounds, and given you a shelter when you were recovering from the loss of blood and gaining strength? Surely you will not act with such base ingratitude as to steal away his only daughter?"

"Law away," said Kelly. "I like to hear your pretty voice."

"Oh!" she cried with emotion. "Have you no heart? In it useless, quite useless, to appeal to your gratitude and your generosity?"

"I must put an end to this," cried Kelly; and clapping his hand over the girl's mouth, he drew a stout handcuff from his pocket and securely gagged her as she was about to give a piercing scream, a loud and despairing cry for help.

He turned his horse, placing her before him, and as he did so Mrs. Don came out of the shanty shading her eyes from the sun.

She gave an angry cry on beholding his daughter and Kelly riding away together.

"Infernal luck!" he ejaculated. "Here's a pretty fix. The old woman will kick up a devil of a row, and Don will be after me in less than no time. I shall be lynched if he gets hold of me. He will be sure to get plenty of coves to help him. That's enough. One quiet, good-tempered man is not pleasant when roused. If ever I do come to grief it will be all on account of those confounded women."

He urged his horse forward as he heard a faint sound in the distance, rightly judging that Don had not allowed the grass to grow under his feet, but had already started in pursuit.

He did not care in the least for Don himself, but what if he had companions?

"—him!" he muttered. "If he comes up with me I'll put a bullet through his lungs and let daylight into him, the fool!"

The pursuer or pursuers, Kelly was not sure which, had the advantage, for his horse had a double burden.

Kelly found great difficulty in retaining his burden, as his horse was a heavy man.

Kelly himself was a heavy man.

Kelly saw that without something extraordinary happened all was indeed lost.

Suddenly an idea flashed through his brain, and a fiendish smile lit up his evil face.

"The girl should purchase his safety. If they refused to let him go on his way unmolested she should die."

He saw that his horse was gradually losing ground, and knew that he stood no chance in the open country. He therefore turned into a wood, his horse making no sound on the soft grass.

Kelly was with great difficulty that he avoided being swept by the heavy branches of the trees. He was well aware that nothing could be gained by hurrying now. He never lost his presence of mind for one instant. We do not wish to take away the only quality in Kelly's character which deserves admiration. His courage and coolness when in danger were wonderful.

Kelly looked about him in every direction in search of a hiding-place, but none presented itself. He heard his pursuers crashing through the wood behind him, and resolved to turn and face them.

He knew he could not escape. His horse was thoroughly blown from carrying double weight. Kelly himself was a heavy man.

So he resolved, as we have said, to face his foes—but to make a shield of the fair form he carried.

Suddenly paling up and facing round, he sunseted the approach of his pursuers, who were yelling like a pack of hounds at some wild beast.

"Drop, you black-hearted cur!" cried the distressed mother, who saw her daughter still struggling to free herself.

"Not if I know it," said Kelly. "I know a trick worth two of that. Come on and try if you can, and I'll cut her blessed throat before the whole lot of you."

"I know you aren't to be begged by such as you."

While so speaking he had drawn his knife, and most certainly would have sacrificed the girl's life if his pursuers had attempted to "rush" him.

By this time the girl had got the gag out of her mouth, and cried to her mother to save her.
The mother, of course, thought of nothing else, and whether Kelly did or did not escape justice was no consideration when the life of her child was concerned.

Knowing the famous passions of the man, and also recognizing the deadly condition of the bushranger, and seeing that his threat was his only safeguard, his opponents paused, and finally agreed to his proposal that they should retire a couple of hundred yards, give him a fair start for his freedom, and he would leave the girl where they should find her safe and sound.

He selected a small hill about 500 yards distant, on the other side of which was the forest, almost impervious, and effectually shrouding any intruder from pursuit.

To this the mother, with natural apprehension, demurred.

"Don't trust that villain, don't lose sight of him," she screamed.

"Shut up, you idiot," he replied. "Ain't my wizen more use to me than your filly? I tell you, you may make your choice. If I'm taken, your daughter has my promise, they became reassured as to the safety of the girl, and began to lock upon the episode as an amusing episode.

He had a number of men scattered over the run in his employ, while his family consisted of his wife and sister, and even found his companions already waiting for him. His departure was watched with mingled feelings of admiration for successful villainy was the predominant feeling amongst the unlettered men who were on his track.

He fulfilled his contract, arrived at the mount and left his horses' bridle, led the brute off, his hostage accompanying him, sooth to say, with no very great confidence in her captor's keeping his word, but reassured when she recognised the desperate condition of the bushranger, when the life of her child was concerned.

"Good evening, sir," said Kelly, civilly enough, "we've had a hard ride and would like to know if there's any grub to be got near here."

"Well," answered James Powers in a half-hesitating kind of way, "I have got a friend round here, ten miles off, who'll have you what you want."

"And he rode on."

"Come from the diggings?" he asked.

"Yes—pretty well tilled of it," answered Kelly; "ain't done much—mean to work our way to England."

After a hard ride they came to Blue Ridge Station and here James Powers was welcomed by Clarence, while the others were handed to the overseer, with orders to supply them with everything they required.

Food is plentiful and the hospitality of the inhabitants boundless.

Their horses were attended to, and then their wants were seen to very profusely.

Mutton, tea, and damper were the principal ingredients of a meal, though in such houses as this there was sure to be a drop of something stronger than whey.

The bushrangers were on such occasions very cautious in their conversation, and though they were careful to steer clear of dangerous subjects, they told many a rare story of the diggings.

At supper, an out-but was pointed out to them where they could sleep if they liked, and the hospitable offer was accepted.

"Master, a rich people, plenty of tin," observed Jess; "should like to try a haul."

"Don't keep much pewter in the house in the Colony," answered Kelly; "folks mostly take it to the bank—besides it's too risky."

At this moment one of the men returned. He was a short, ill-looking fellow, who squinted and looked to the right and left.

"What is it?" asked Kelly.

"Don't you know Fiery Dick?" asked the man, with a leer.

"The devil it is!" said Kelly, and he drily added, "And you know me?"

"The moment I see you," continued the other.

"What are you doing here?" asked Kelly.

"Working, worse luck!" retorted Dick with supreme contempt.

"Do you want to join?" asked the bushranger.

"Yes—but I can put yer up to a job first," was the other's reply.

"What's that?" asked Kelly, curiously.

"Master's made a big away, bought a run from Master Morgan—close by," continued the other, "some of the ochre is in the house."

"Ah!" said Kelly, with greedy eyes, "where does he keep it?"
“In his bedroom,” answered the other. “I was a listening—and he did not see me—when he locked it up in the black box.

“Rather risky work,” said Kelly, musing. “Who sleeps in the room?”

“The master and the missus, at the book,” he continued, “and the sister in a small room hard by.”

“And this cox who brought us?” asked Kelly.

“He stays here the night,” answered the other.

Kelly now took the man out to show him the means of entering the house by the window.

There was no shutter, and the window was only shaded from moon or sun light by a muslin curtain. It could be easily opened, and was big enough to admit a man’s body.

The hinges were held in their places by rusty screws.

The hut was low and rude.

The position was a desperate one, as the persons engaged in the robbery, being unexpected, could have no escape from their pursuers, and the door was fastened with a latch to keep it in place.

Kelly clutched the box. As he did so he heard someone come near.

“Step thief! Fire!” he roared.

Kelly dived away in the direction indicated by Fiery Dick, and soon joined his companions.

They found the camp empty.

They were all in a furious rage against Fiery Dick, though in reality he was probably not to blame.

Mr. Clarence was a rich man, but the impudence of the outlaws and the recklessness it displayed left little doubt that it was Kelly’s deed.

Another was added to the list of his infamies, and the public wondered at the impunity with which this atrocious criminal was able to carry out his nefarious plans.

It caused much discontent, and the colonial press was very severe in its comments.

Meanwhile the gang were determined to put a long distance between themselves and the scene of their misdeeds.

There was one thing which caused them more trouble than anything, and that was the continual necessity of assuming disguises.

On the present occasion they determined to camp in a dense bush, at no great distance from an inn.

There were numerous huts of stock-keepers about, but their own spot was rough, wild, and almost undiscoverable.

Here they agreed to remain until the hue and cry was further away from them.

Food was easy to get. A sheep or two would not be missed, and the roadside inn would supply them with everything else.

Raid as they were, they were well provided, having to supply a population which, since the gold discoveries were made, was always on the move.

An open space was found under some lofty trees, where a very little fire could be made without exciting suspicion, as the smoke was lost in the upper boughs of trees.

Fiery Dick, who could easily give himself out as a shearer, would go down and obtain provisions.

Knowing the character of the people in the neighbourhood, the owner of the shanty inn would not be likely to ask any inconvenient questions.

Money was the one idea of this class of men in the colony.

The inn was three miles from the camp, and Fiery Dick had to come by devious ways.

Not that he was suspected or watched.

Still, he might be, and they were entitled to take every precaution.

As a rule one of them accompanied him to the skirts of the wood and watched for his return at a safe and cautious distance.

Now it happened that on the morning of the fifth day Kelly accompanied him and watched for him in the scrub.

Kelly had good eyes, and as Fiery Dick went on he saw a tall, handsome young man, in trooper’s uniform, with a frank, brave, fearless face, spring from his horse.

It was Tom Conquest, and behind came eight mounted troopers.

Kelly at once determined to be even with him.

He watched carefully, and soon saw him come out in company with Fiery Dick, who placed himself at the head of the troopers.

He had betrayed them.

Kelly took to his heels at once. He had never run faster in his life.

“Mount for your lives, men!” he said. “Tom Conquest is after us. Dick has split.”

No one required twice telling, though the volley of oaths and other strong language which ensued was fearful to listen to.

They, however, lost not a moment, and soon the summer stillness of the bush was abruptly broken by the clatter of horses’ hoofs.

They were all in a furious rage against Fiery Dick, though in reality he was probably not to blame.

Tom, who knew Mr. Clarence, had recognised him and compelled confession.

Still, it was lucky they had commissioned one to watch Fiery Dick on his daily excursions.

Passing through the dense forest and bush they proceeded to cross some more open country, leading to what was known as the range of trees.

Here they could hide in defiance of all the colonial police until it was safe to move once more.

And such proved to be the case.

When the police and Fiery Dick reached the same of action they found the camp empty.
But they did not blame Fiery Dick, who was, however, sent to prison to be tried for having assisted Ned Kelly in robbery and attempted murder.

After a halt of several days, Kelly and his party determined to make their entry into Sydney without being of drum in the night. They intended to appear as sailors for awhile, so as to have time for reflection. For this purpose they would get rid of their horses as having no further use for them.

Then they could adjourn to a crimp, a sailors' boarding-house, and there make some scheme for their future guidance. Kelly was dreaming of some great and extraordinary coup that should be talked of. As the horses were good and sold cheap no questions were asked, and that trouble was over.

With their wallets and small bags they started for a sailors' boarding-house, where they easily obtained one large room for the four.

Early next morning the coarse miners' suits were exchanged for sailors' clothes. The money stolen from Mr. Clarence was soon got through in the low gambling shop of the town, besides which the reckless extravagance of the scoundrels and their frantic liberality to vicious companions aided the depletion of their purses.

CHAPTER XC.

SYDNEY.

SYDNEY, the capital of New South Wales, is a wonderful town. Those who have not seen it can scarcely believe in its wonderful development since its first foundation in 1788.

It is built upon the most beautiful site in the world, and much more beautiful in every respect than the vaunted Venice the superb. It lies on the edge of a bay unsurpassed by beauty and convenience in the world. The water is sixty feet deep at the natural wharves. At the time of which we speak the city was infinitely busy, while pleasure was rife everywhere.

There was no amusement that could be thought of that could not be found in that place. In the daytime the four sailors kept indoors, amusing themselves as best they might. At night time they furnished themselves up to look like captains and mates, and went about. In those days, except in first-class hotels and clubs, everybody was admitted everywhere who had plenty of money.

The four selected a house where billiards were allowed and cards not objected to. It was also a place where money could be spent without stint, as the rent was expensive.

Kelly and Zep were very good hands at billiards, and therefore played continually. The other two preferred cards, or drinking and smoking. After the quartette had been in the habit of going to the place—the Eastern Casino it was called—for two or three nights, they found themselves observed by a young man, who, though neatly dressed, looked otherwise seedy and miserable.

"You seem interested in billiards, my friend," said Kelly, suavely, on the third night, putting on his best quality air. "Why don't you play?"

The young man flushed and looked round slyly ere he made any answer.

"The fact is, I fairly well lost my last quarter's salary on the board of green cloth," explained the other. "I cannot afford it."

"Will you listen?" said Kelly. "I'm not going to play any more. Come I'll stand a supper."

The man, whose name was Temple, and who belonged to a very good family, was only one of those too easily led.

"Very happy," was the jumby answer of the seedy one. So they drank, and then John Temple went off to a private supper-room with the four respectable sailors, captain and mates.

John Temple had not had such a feed for a long time. It was with particular relish and enjoyment he ate his meal.

After supper there was the flowing bowl and the weed, which all delighted in.

The punch flowed round freely. There was no stint of that commodity.

"Let's have a game," said Kelly.

"I have no money," was the answer.

"I'll lend you five quid," said Kelly. "Anything for amusement's sake."

And he thrust the gold into the other's hands, whose face became at once flushed and excited.

"It was to him such an exceedingly novel sensation. He was a poor fool, and not much of a player. But they let him win. And then, as he had too much to drink, they made him up a shakedown.

Next day was Sunday, and during that day Kelly had made up his mind to propose a big scheme to the bank clerk.

He could see at once that he was weak and easily led by evil counsel.

John Temple was rather surprised to find himself in a sailors' boarding-house the next day, with money in his pocket, and a luxurious breakfast awaiting him.

It was hard to understand what had passed; but with him the present was everything.

After breakfast his new friends proposed a drive to one of the places frequented on high days and holidays by the people of the town.

John Temple was delighted, and was equally glad not to have had to go home and dress. He would have had to face his mother and sister at home, where they were nearly starving. He was glad to avoid this.

Sedately, however, a better feeling prevailed, and remembering he had money, he sent them a sovereign by a messenger, telling them he had met some friends with whom he was going to spend the day.

This duty performed he started to enjoy himself, and this can be done in the colony if it can be done anywhere.

It was the dark of the evening when they returned to dine at the boarding-house.

They had a private room, in which after dinner they locked themselves. Kelly had provided plenty of drink, but he was careful not to let John Temple drink beyond a certain amount.

He had no desire to say to him before they parted that night.

"You do a lot of work at that bank?" he began when he thought the young man primed.

"Yes—for very bad pay," cried Temple.

"It's aotation shame," observed Kelly in a condescending tone of voice.

"Yes—but what's to be done?" asked Temple, "the big-pots get all the money."

"It's the way of this here cursed world," grumbled the bushranger; and sometimes you have fogiles?"

"Pretty good size now," said Temple with a grin.

"something likely"
The thing correct, the bank clerk went to his duty.

"I don't think so," responded Kelly, "he's all there when the chime is concerned. Bit like anything."

So next day, freshened up, with clean shirt and everything correct, the bank clerk went to his duty. He was quite exhilarated with hope. He wanted to give up the life of honest drudgery he had been leading, and by which he might have become an honourable man, give up the life of honest drudgery he had been leading, for the sake of making money suddenly by nefarious means.

But he agreed to meet them every evening at the Eastern Casino, where they would report progress. "Found a boat!" said Jack, "a rare good un. Hope he won't get light and peach."

John Temple nodded idiotically and was soon put to bed, as they wanted him to go sober to business the next day."

...and other things.

CHAPTER XCII.

THE BANK CLERK.

Next day Kelly made inquiries as to chartering a coasting vessel, a smart craft, in which he could trade in "notions"...and other things.

Salmon Roe had gone off to the rendezvous to collect together the whole of the band.

John Temple was to be on duty on Friday. His office was to remain after banking hours in a small counting-house adjoining the apartments of the head manager.

The thing was done and he was at the mercy of the robbers, four in number. Closing the door they put on rude masks, so as to be unrecognisable.

"Secure the manager first," whispered John Temple, "leaving the way to his might be different."

Kelly had no wish to push things to extremities if he could help it, so came provided with the means of securing the man effectually. "They went in, John Temple leading, and found the manager, Mr. Benson, fast asleep."

...and other things.

As it happened the actual quantity of bullion in the bank was not very large, a heavy sum having been sent to England that very day; still there was a good haul enough for these rakish preparations.

Salmon Roe returned in a day or two, and then some of the quietest of the men were told off for loading. They were busy all day, and in such a part as that no one took any particular notice. They easily carried on board their arms and ammunition, with tobacco and such liquids as they required.

At last the day came to carry out the most noturious part of their plans. John Temple was to be on duty on Friday. His office was to remain after banking hours in a small counting-house adjoining the apartments of the head manager.

They had come in twos and threes. One took any particular notice.

John Temple knew how to get at them but too well.

John Temple nodded idiotically and was soon put to bed, as they wanted him to go sober to business the next day.

But now the unfortunate John Temple saw all through his mistake. He sat now waiting the half-dreaded signal, with his heart removed bolts and bars. Conscience was silent and dumb.

"Twice a week," replied the weak-minded youth, "the manager makes us take it in turns."

"Can you get the keys?" Kelly went on.

"Yes," faltered the other.

"Well, to-morrow I'll look up some friends," continued Kelly, "and we'll do the job. I'll have a craft ready to put out to sea in—and then away for such a spree as you never saw."

The safe containing the notes was one of those only to be obtained by the manager. The manager would too surely recognise and denounce the robbers, four in number. Closing the door they put on rude masks, so as to be unrecognisable.

But, of course, they must avoid places where English citizens are very much in the habit of visiting. They are apt to be rather inquisitive.

"Can I trust you, young chook?" asked Kelly. "You can; I'm sick of this life—poor, in debt, deeply involved," he said. "I will do anything to get out of it."

"Do you ever sleep at the bank?" the other continued, who had got all this out of him before.

"Once on the high seas they could decide what was to be done. Every man could secure arms and ammunition. As so many of them were women they got anywhere they pleased. There are plenty of places in Sydney, as elsewhere, where everyone in welcome who brings money, and no questions asked.

As a consequence the course of the day, paid his deposit, and began to treat for goods. He said he should find his own crew.

As this was only reasonable, no objection was made.

"As well to-morrow I'll look up some friends," continued Kelly, "and we'll do the job. I'll have a craft ready to put out to sea in—and then away for such a spree as you never saw."

CHAPTER XCI.

THE BANK CLERK.

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Salmon Roe had gone off to the rendezvous to collect together the whole of the band.

They had come in twos and threes. One took any particular notice.

John Temple was to be on duty on Friday. His office was to remain after banking hours in a small counting-house adjoining the apartments of the head manager. This gentleman generally went out of an evening, but always returned before midnight, and shortly afterwards retired to rest. The junior clerk then paraded about, saw to the fastening of the doors, after which he returned to his chair.

All the keys were kept in the head manager's room, but John Temple knew how to get at them but too well. On more than one occasion during his nocturnal vigil he had evaded himself of this knowledge to help himself to certain small sums. He had been very cautious, being a very petty and nerveless thief, and had contrived hitherto to escape detection.

The key of the outer doors of the bank he had managed to secure while pretending to put them in their proper places. He sat now waiting the half-dreaded signal, with his heart in his mouth.

Did no thought of his mother and sister and one dearer still check him in his headlong course? No, indeed.

Conscience was silent and dumb.

The manager, who had two rooms on suite, retired to sleep the sleep of the just. A neighbouring clock sounded one.

Then there was a discreet tapping on the outside in a peculiar way, and John Temple went and with beating heart removed bolts and bars.

The thing was done and he was at the mercy of the robbers, four in number. Closing the door they put on rude masks, so as to be unrecognisable.

"Secure the manager first," whispered John Temple, leaving the way to his might be different."

Kelly had no wish to push things to extremities if he could help it, so came provided with the means of securing the man effectually. They went in, John Temple leading, and found the manager, Mr. Benson, fast asleep.

Three of them caught hold of him, and, before he could make the least resistance, gagged and had him effectually.

His struggles were terrible, but at last finding that they were useless he lay quiet and still. John Temple now secured all the keys which were in his possession, and then he led the way to the vaults.

As it happened the actual quantity of bullion in the bank was not very large, a heavy sum having been sent to England that very day; still there was a good haul enough for these rakish preparations.

But one bitter disappointment was reserved for them. The safe containing the notes was one of those only to be opened by one who understood a secret combination which John Temple did not.

Kelly was savage in his expressions of rage, but it was clearly not John Temple's fault, so that they had to put up with what they had already obtained.

They therefore ascended to the upper regions to make off as quickly as possible. John Temple had, of course, to accompany them.

The manager would too surely recognise and denounce him to his employers.
Such was Kelly's second successful bank robbery. He of many he was yet to commit. They had carped barks with them, and it now became a serious question as to how to reach their inn without being suspected by the police, who, if they saw them about at that hour, would certainly make inquiries.

But John Temple knew of a place close at hand, of not very reputable character, where they could pass the time until daybreak, when they could hurry on board ship and be off. They were fully armed and everything was ready for a start at a moment's notice.

The difficulty was to think of a place where they could go and spend their ill-acquired earnings. John Temple found them the shelter they required, and at daybreak they immediately went on board their ship, which lay in deep water alongside the wharf, and worked down and out of the beautiful harbor. They had a good start.

Their villainous crew never perhaps was collected on one ship. The great thing was to get away from Sydney as fast as possible, and so far that no cruiser would have any idea in which direction the White Eagle had sailed.

All sail was cracked on; long before business hours in Sydney, the schooner was out of sight of land.

Everything depended on their putting the authorities at fault. Meanwhile, in the capital of the colony the excitement was indeed intense, while indignation was profound.

They were at once on the track. A man resembling the one the police described had that morning gone on board the White Eagle schooner, which had sailed soon after daybreak.

The police came to the startling conclusion that Kelly and his gang had been in their midst. The house of the wretched family of John Temple, his mother, sister, and cousin, was first searched, but no trace of him had been seen.

The principal was immediately sent for. He came in hot haste to give authority to open. He had a key to a side door, so that he could obtain admission when he liked.

He entered rapidly, and soon became aware of the names of which he had been bidden to the manager, and the treasurer of the clerk.

The first thing was to release the unfortunate prisoner, then rushing off to the police-station, information was given.

The vessel was well-built and a good sailor, well appointed with provisions and oven luxuries. So they started for the desired haven, with every prospect of success.

Kelly was very strict in his discipline on these occasions, and it was their only hope of safety.

Of course there were certain laxities that would not have been tolerated either on board of a merchantman or a man-of-war. That is, more drink was served out than was wise.

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The men looked at one another aghast, waiting the end with scanty fright.
Curses flew round like carrion crows, or rather white sea-gulls.
No voice of command could be heard, and no orders were given.
All discipline was suspended, and every man was equal to his neighbour.
Luckily these hurricanes are of short duration, and just after nightfall the fearful gale ceased.
But the vessel was doomed. A tremendous sea smashed her rudder. She lay like a log, a hulk unmanageable. She shipped tons of water, and was rapidly becoming waterlogged.
There were no skilled carpenters on board, and they could not stop the leaks.
All looked round desperate and moody.
For these men there was only one resource, and that was the boat.
Fortunately they were stout, and able to accommodate the crew.
"We'll have to get back to the colony," growled Kelly, "from here, lads."
"Mate, it might be worse," said Zeph.
Orders were now given to lower the boats, and to put water and food within.
Each man was to take a limited kit, in which, of course, would be contained his share of the plunder.
All took care to see that their weapons were cleaned and loaded.
As they pushed off from the nearly-sinking schooner the wind almost ceased, and a thick damp and misty haze settled on the waters.
It was impossible to see a hundred yards before them.
Still they pulled steadily, aided by a small compass which Zeph could just make out.
Suddenly they heard a bell sound upon the waters, and the men by one assent ceased rowing.
They then heard night bells sound clearly on the night air.
Kelly and Zeph exchanged a wolfish glance.
"If we could only swamp vessels," said Kelly, in an undertone to his companions.
"Should I let you know what's her size, mate," replied Zeph, "before we do anything?"
And he guided the leading boat until they came in sight of the strange vessel.
Then Zeph lifted his head.
"It's the cutter Snake," he said. "She's on our heels, and means to catch us up."
Kelly swore rather hard and fast about his luck.
"She's a biter," he observed. "Got too many teeth for us to draw."
"No," whispered Zeph. "She's like a ship at anchor watch, or a sloop asleep where the boats, in a storm, takes in sail and goes below."
"Is it likely," continued Kelly, "we could get alongside and try it on?"
"All right. We can hardly make her out there. She can't see us at all down here," answered Zeph, and his whispered order went round.
As Zeph said, from the boats the cutter Snake, a fine vessel of about a hundred tons, could easily be seen, while from the deck of the small man-of-war the boats, in that haze, could not have been easily visible.
After the severe storm, from which the cutter had come out intact, all were tired on board the Snake, and a poor watch was kept.
Besides, they were in a state of intense peace, and a night watch was the last thing to be thought of in Australian latitudes.
Zeph soon showed the men how to fix their ears in the rowlocks so as to row without making a noise.
In this way they reached the side of the cutter unnoticed.
The man at the wheel was half asleep from fatigue, while the rest of the watch were huddled in the waist talking or sleeping.
The officer who should have been on the look-out, had just gone down into the cabin for a cigar and a glass of spirits.
Nothing suspicious was anywhere in sight, while the watch was all that could be desired.
None suspected what a foul and treacherous foe was lurking near them, nor thought they were close at hand.
Just at this moment a breeze sprung up, and the Snake began to feel its force.
She yielded gracefully to the pressure, her canvas bellowed and away she cleft from the boats to the tune of an eight-knot breeze.
Curves, not loud, but deep, followed her course.
However, in a few moments the wind lilted again; but it had served to wake up the attention of the officer of the watch, and stirred up the crew, who were soon moving about on deck.
Kelly's boat followed close.
It could easily do so, as the Snake was only forging ahead about four knots an hour.
The vessel was made for a small port north of Sydney, and evidently would snug up there for the night, as the weather was intensely hot, and semi-cyclones not improbable.
Besides, daylight was necessary, as soon roads abounded here.
Standing off at a safe distance, Kelly watched the vessel port, saw her made snug for the night, and a boat carrying the captain and twelve hands pull for the shore.
Waiting until all was quiet on board, Kelly's gang worked up silently to the side of the schooner, and found the companionship-ladder had not been hauled up, so that as easy means of ascent was offered.
The ruffians crept up the side of the schooner as silently as flies into a sugar-basin.
They soon secured the watch (one man being considered sufficient in harbour), and then proceeded to battle down the hatches.
On board men-o'-war the crew are not as a rule armed until the beat to quarters is heard.
Kelly and his gang were in possession of one of the finest cutters in her Majesty's service.
What was to be done now became the next important question.
Even Kelly revolted at the idea of putting a whole crew like this to death.
"As a general rule," he said, "quarts of blood don't matter, but this ere job is a big one; where's to be done?"
"Don't know," answered Zeph, "except set 'em adrift.
How to get up the anchor was the difficulty.
Working the windlass would possibly be heard above, and up it must be hove before the schooner could be moved a foot.
Accordingly, the windlass was worked very slowly and gradually, and, as the anchorage was light, and the anchor did not bite in this calm land-locked harbour, it was just hauled off the sandy bottom, and half of the gang manned the boat, attached a tow-line to the schooner and with a long pull, and a strong pull, and a punt at it, soon got her outside the harbour.
In the meantime the battened-down crew were making furious offers to get on deck, and Kelly swore the first man that showed would have his skull split.
Still the noise continued, and, resolving to stiffen it and show the utter uselessness of opposition, he determined to let them know who was aboard.
"Look here," Kelly growled down the hatchway, "saw your row, or it will be worse for you. Don't make any mistake about it. Ned Kelly's aboard, and you know what that means. Any more of your—bellowing, and I'll send the lot of you for crabs' meat!"
Consternation went to the heart of his hearers.
They knew what an unscrupulous villain the man was, and that shedding blood was rather a pastime than otherwise to him, particularly if it furthered his ends.
They could not guess what their fate would be, and almost feared it would be walking the plank with most of them.

The first lieutenant, who was in charge of the schooner, thought it was some practical joke of the middies, and that the whole thing was pantomime, but he could scarcely reconcile with this thought the movement of the vessel.

Zeph walked to the quarter-deck and stood over the skylight of the cabin, beneath which was a framework of iron bars.

"Hilloa! what's up?" he cried, hoarsely.

"Who is playing this foolish trick?" said a starched and commanding voice. "Open at once, unless you would be punished for mutiny."

"It ain't no mutiny, governor," answered Zeph, in a snarling tone; "only your crew is prisoners, and we want your ship."

"I don't believe it," was the resolute answer; "it's a deuced bad practical joke."

"Come on deck and see, my lads," answered Zeph, "but if anybody fires a shot don't blame me if you all walk the plank."

By this time the cabin hatchway was removed, and the officers, four in number, came out. The men were still kept below.

They found themselves confronted by between thirty and forty desperadoes.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked the lieutenant in an indignant tone.

"It's no use doing the big boss here," said Kelly. "Now the lieutenant at once know the class of men he had to do with.

If he had had a crew behind him he would have tried the dignified and commanding, but he was utterly helpless.

Such a gang as that he saw before him would have no mercy whatever on him or his followers.

"So that my men are fairly treated," he said, "I care not. Share their fate I will."

"All serene, my jolly swell," responded Kelly. "Get into our boats, I'll add."

Presently the officer and deck-watch were allowed to enter the boats. Biscuit and a little water were given them.

One of the men was now ordered to summon the crew, and inform them of the change of ownership in the vessel.

As a matter of course these were unarmed, and could therefore make no resistance.

They were ordered at once to go over the side and join their ill-fated companions.

Resistance was a madness, and they therefore obeyed in silence.

Soon they disappeared in the haze and mist.

There were several men able to carve a figure-head on board, so that before night every trace of the vessel's identity had disappeared.

Plenty of good plain clothes were found, and as it had been in the war, knew everything about signals and the uniform. That was unanswerable.

The name of officers and men must be found on the ship's books, but they might meet with a courtesy.

Zeph, who before commencing his nefarious career had been in the Navy, knew everything about signal and all that.

If he had been a British man-of-war, they would not enter any English port.

They would change the name and rig and call themselves American; but what about the uniform? That was unanswerable.

She must profess to be a yacht.

Fortunately Zeph, in his portmanteau, had the ship's papers of the White Eagle, which, by judicious manipulation, might be made to serve as those of the armadillo yacht bound for the Solomon and other Canarian Islands.

Young Temple was good at any kind of writing, and besides, the papers of yachts are not closely examined.

So it was decided that this should be their plan.

After the hearty supper the watches were set, and all those off duty went below.

Sleep was very much needed, and a few of those on deck could not resist its temptations.

But the night was fine, and there was a good man at the wheel, so it did not matter.

Next day paint brushes and pots were procured, a platform being ready everywhere of the Snake efficaciously.

There were several men able to carve a figure-head on board, so that before night every trace of the vessel's indentity had disappeared.

Plenty of good plain clothes were found, and as Captain Higgins (Kelly) intended to play the part of a nouveau riche there was not much fear of detection.

He had no pretence to pass as a native-born American.

That would have been beyond even his powers of mimicry and disguise.

So all appeared plain sailing, and the vessel with a fair wind.

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CHAPTER XIII.
CATCHING A TARTAR.

Next day was equally fine, and the racely crew were looking forward with delight to an easy and rapid journey.

The cutter was under all canvas, with a fine breeze and smooth water, when there was a cry of "Sail oh!" on the larboard quarter.

"What do you think of her, Zeph?" said Captain Kelly, examining the stranger through a glass.

"Some stray merchantman, caught out of her course by the storm. We'd best, if you mean to speak her," he added, with a wink, "put yer head towards her under easy sail, so as to near her about suaded.

"Lock out!" said the man at the wheel, a 'cute youth of some two-and-twenty summers, "if ever I saw wood and sails, that there is one of John Bull's calves of the ocean, and a forty-four gunner at that!"

Zeph made no reply. He ran up the main-tops, and remained for ten minutes in absorbed attention of the cut of the stranger's sails.

"We're done," cried Zeph, as he came down, "if we don't mind. We must show our heels."

"All right," said Kelly, "give your orders.

The vessel was well manned certainly, and all sail was set upon her like lightning.

"Heave the log!" cried Zeph.

Kelly was appalled at this ill-timed news.


"She's about nine miles off. She'll be up betoit dark. She draws up. I can see her bowsprit when she lifts, and half-an-hour ago I only saw her foremost." Kelly was appalled at this ill-timed news.

"I leave it to you, mate." The word foremost made him think of the yard-arm.

Surrender on his part was folly. It was simply suicidal madness.

So everything was done that could be done—that art and cunning could devise.

An hour passed, and then those who knew the real danger could see the water-line of the frigate.

Built destity took possession of all; and there was poor discipline on board the pirate.

As to the bank, he was sick of the whole business. He saw he would be robbed of his share of the bank robbery, and be cast in the world a penniless vagabond, unless he could continue in a course of crime and blood, for which he had neither taste nor nerve.

He resolved at all that was going on.

He resolved to abandon his companions on the first opportunity, and even had thoughts of turning Queen's evidence if he could secure his own neck.

He almost longed for the opportunity.

Some suggested the boats, but Zeph stood out. He still had hope of ultimate escape.

The sun had sunk some time below the horizon, the cloud of small sail coming up astern of them began to be distinct, and at last disappeared altogether in a black squall.

Zeph was perfectly prepared for this emergency, which he had expected.

His shortened sail, kept on as much as he dared, and reversed the course of the ship. At the end of four hours the squall was over, and it became lighter.

Though they scanned the sea in all directions, the frigate was nowhere to be seen.

They, however, were in dangerous proximity to a coral-bank, to which Zeph proceeded to give a wide berth. But they did not venture to start until daylight came and made them aware that none but a few coasters were in sight.

They at once cracked on all sail, and resumed their voyage.

A strict look-out was kept, as none had any wish to catch such a Tartar again.

There was always someone at the mast-head, with keen eyes and a glass.

Two days passed without any further adventure, the White Eagle going on her way rejoicing, with her villainous crew.

But on the third day two things occurred. The look-out sighted a sail, which Zeph declared to be the same they had just avoided.

He also sighted another black squall to the southward.

"What in the name of — is to be done now?" said Kelly.

"Port it is," said the man at the wheel, and the vessel was close hauled upon the starboard tack.

She had on her a square mainsail, boom mainsail, and a jib.

The distant vessel was clearly visible, as she was so much taller than the cutter, while her top canvas was kept on much longer.

The White Eagle moved with graceful ease, running right at the squall, which soon burst on them with thundering force.

But all was snug below and aloft, so that when the wind struck her, everybody was ready.

It was a heavy tussle, and necessitated the taking in of more sail, but the cutter lived through it.

Once more she had been fortunate enough to escape, for when the heavy storm was over, the frigate was nowhere to be seen.

But now came the question, what were they to do? Their pursuers might be bound for Singapore, as well as the cuts.

A consultation was held, and Zeph proposed that they should run to within some ten or twelve miles of the settlement, and cast anchor in some unfrequented place.

It would be easy to find a native boat, and Zeph who spoke most of the lingoes of those seas, could go in and learn the news. So it was agreed.

All the time they were proceeding on their way keeping a strict lookout.

A third meeting with the cruiser might prove more fatal than the two others.

Singapore is a British settlement on the Malay coast. Its surface is generally undulating, with round jungle-covered hills.

In some parts it is exceedingly swampy and unhealthy.

The town of Singapore is situated on the southern side of the island.

By rivulets it is separated into three distinct divisions, the west inhabited by Chinese, the central and best part by Europeans, and the east by Malays.

The central part of the town is laid out in regular streets with a parade and carriage drive.

The eastern division comprises the warehouses of Dutch merchants, as well as the dwellings and shops of the Chinese, who have a splendid pagoda in this quarter.

The Kampong Glam, a Malay quarter, is indescribably filthy and evil-smelling.

Many of the dwellings are erected on posts. Bridges, chiefly of wood, unite the three divisions together.

The retail trade of the town is chiefly carried on in the open streets, even to the money-changers.
Finding that the cruiser was not in the harbour, Zeph ordered the men to return to the vessel, which then came in with flying colours.

Kelly gave the two men a severe rope's-ending, and then cast them adrift in a small open boat without oars, food, or water.

"Sink or swim, and be d—— to you!" was his brutal cry; "that'll teach you to make and meddle with Ned Kelly."

And so he left them.

CHAPTER XCIV.
STOWED AWAY.

The great object now was to keep dark for a while and do nothing to excite suspicion.

If they could only find some place where for a little time they could be quiet and enjoy themselves out of the way of English cruisers it would be wise and prudent.

A consultation was held in the cabin.

Captain Zeph declared that Batavia in Java was about as jolly a place as he knew of in the world.

It was a Dutch port, but was very much frequented by sailors of all kinds.

Ned Kelly on the sea, from pure ignorance, was not like Ned Kelly on land, and he had to submit to the advice of Captain Zeph.

The man since he had been disgraced in the Royal Navy had served in various capacities in ships of all nations.

He knew these particular seas better than he did almost any others.

So it was resolved to make for the Dutch colony and spend some time there.

Zeph keenly examined the map, and at once fixed on their course.

Anything was better than remaining in those immediate seas and running the risk of meeting the dreaded cruiser.

Of course a good and careful look-out was kept both night and day.

The men all knew that they sailed with ropes round their necks, and didn't wish to give anyone the chance of having the other end of it.

For several days nothing of interest occurred and they were within twenty-four hours of Java and in sight of a small island, when a sail was again announced as in sight.

Zeph went up and after ten minutes came down with a blank face.

"It's that infernal cruiser again; she sails like lightning," he said, "we must hide. I know there is land close yonder."

The island is not on many maps, but is well known to sailors in those parts.

It is not inviting to ordinary seamen, but it has often been seized as a refuge, a place of concealment for pirates.

On the side on which they viewed it is presented to the view a precipitous and rugged-bound coast with high and pointed rocks dominating in these over the unappeasable and furious waves which broke incessantly at their feet and recolled to repeat the blow.

For them to land was impossible on that side, but Zeph told them he knew of a cove where they could take shelter.

It was to leeward of the island, and was soon found.

For them to land was impossible on that side, but Zeph told them he knew of a cove where they could take shelter.

Presently a waiter came up carrying a tray, which he placed in the adjoining arbour. He was followed by two girls, native and others, whom they found there.

It was a low quarter of the town, and rarely visited by the English.

It was a Malay Cremorne, with bower's and tables, and was lit up by Chinese lamps.

Presently, shaded by some creepers and evergreens, they saw some of their own men come in and begin to foot it in the usual way.

They did not make themselves known to them, there being no motive.

Presently a waiter came up carrying a tray, which he placed in the adjoining arbour. He was followed by two sailors.

They had not observed that the next hotel was occupied by Kelly and his companion.

"You'll never guess why I brought you out here, Bill—never," said the other.

"Ahn good at guessing, Jack," was the answer.

"Well, do you see, if I'm right and I'm sure I am, we'll arm a lot of dollars," continued Jack, "blowed if we don't."

"How so, my hearty? I know we're two pals, and always divide, so spit it out."

"What do you think I see outside the pagoda, just now, Bill?" whispered the other. "Why a wreck they calls the White Eagle; well, there's some big swindle about, for she's the Snark. I know her like my own father. I served aboard her for two years."

"No, Jack!" cried the other.

"But I say yes, Bill!" persisted the first; "and as soon as this drink is over, out I go and I peaches."

"No you don't! collect some men!" whispered Kelly;

"fellow—secure them—and bring them aboard. I'll teach him to stick his fingers in my pipe."

The other went round, spoke to the men, warned them there was danger in the wind, and that they must follow.

They obeyed.

Presently the two men came out and made their way for the English quarter, where all the Government offices were situated.

As they entered a dark passage, they were set upon, gagged, and hurried down to a boat, as if they had been drunken sailors.

The supposed yacht lay well out.
The water was very deep, and they easily ran into the bottom of a land-locked cave.

Here they agreed to remain until they could decide on their future movements.

On landing they found the remains of a very old wreck and two or three hats that had been built out of the fragments.

They contained a few teaket and tables composed of boards roughly hewn out and nailed together.

Around were bones of goats and wild hogs, which was a pleasant discovery, as they were always anxious for fresh meat.

As soon as they were safely moored a look-out was sent to the summit of a rock to watch for the suspicious vessel.

Zeph went up with a powerful glass and saw her approach presently within two miles of the island, when she steered, strangely enough, a course which would take her straight to Batavia.

"Hang me, if she ain't picked up those two fellows," said Zeph; "those the Spitfire. Could any fool have said " her straight to Batavia.

They had a short voyage before them.

The ship's boat had been painted out of all recognition by anybody, besides having been slightly otherwise altered.

So time went on until they were within four miles of Batavia, at one of those marshy points so common on that shore.

They now descended from the height, and on approaching the huts found a very fragrant smell of cookery.

The goats and hogs were very tame, as this island, a rock in the sea, is rarely visited, and they had plenty of fresh food, including eggs, of which there were innumerable quantities about.

It was only one mile long by half-a-mile wide, and exhibited curious phenomena.

There was a valley close to the land-locked bay, with thousands and thousands of trees, each of them about thirty feet high.

But every tree was dead, extending in leafless boughs to another—a forest of desolation, as if nature had at some particular moment ceased to vegetate.

On the lowest of the dead boughs the gutters and other seaweed had built their nests in numbers unaccountable.

So unapproachable did they seem to man that the mothers brooding over their young only opened their beaks in a menacing attitude at them as they passed.

As night approached the men returned to their quarters.

Zeph and Kelly had a long conversation.

The former having by far the better education of the two, could play the part of a lecturer from the interior, Yarrabah, or elsewhere, while Kelly could do the overeen.

So it was settled.

At midnight the weather was not fair, and the wind in the proper direction.

The heat was provided with everything necessary to the short voyage.

Salmon Roe was to command while the two principals went on shore and into the town.

Plenty of provisions were stowed in the long-boat, and all were armed to the teeth.

At midnight they started, and Zeph, with a small compass, began to steer.

They had a short voyage before them.

The ship's boat had been painted out of all recognition by anybody, besides having been slightly otherwise altered.

Some time went on until they were within four miles of Batavia, at one of those marshy points so common on that shore.

The entry into Batavia is up a wide river like a canal, the waters of which are level with the land.

It was formerly styled the European's Graveyard, and was, and is so unhealthy, that a new township has been formed twenty miles higher up where the land rises, and a very handsome city has supplanted the old one.

The summer retreat from the intolerable heat is at Beilenzorg, a city built upon a mountain about 2,000 feet above the level of the fen. It may be called the Sanctuary of the Island.

A fishing village lay at the bottom of the little bay, and into this place Zeph ran.

At certain seasons of the year the rich merchants and residents in Batavia would come out to this place to indulge in fish dinners, and Mein Herr Hermann therefore kept a Lust-haus, where people could be reasonably entertained for an interview.

This Zeph knew, and leaving the boat in the marvhy entrance to the river, where fever and ague always reign supreme, started with Kelly for the capital.

Here they tried to hunt up Hermann, but learned he was at the village aforesaid, and immediately returned thither for an interview.

However astonished Herr Hermann might have been to see his old friend Zeph, he showed nothing of it.

No more mistaken notion can be conceived than that piracy is done away with in that part of the world.

It is not so terrible in its results as of old, and yet many a missing ship, supposed to have been lost in a cyclone or a typhoon, might have its loss traced to human agency.

Having satisfied their appetites, Zeph and the Dutchman were closeted.

After a few explanations the owner of the house agreed to look after the boat and its crew, while the others went to Batavia in a native vehicle provided by him.

This was just what was wanted.

A little after sundown the vehicle was ready and the two men started, and were driven direct to the house of Herr v. Joel.

He was a merchant of what might be called all sorts.

He dealt in anything, from a sack of coffee to a ship.

During the time of the celebrated pirate Van Arden, whose atrocities and audacity are still remembered in those seas, he often entertained him openly at table, and introduced him to his friends.

He was never even suspected.

Batavia is a strange place. Its characteristics are exceedingly peculiar.

It is composed of two portions, the old called Jaccatra or Jacob's Town, consisting of a marshy flat near the sea, and intersected by the great river and sandy banks.

The new suburban portion, extending over the higher grounds to a distance of several miles inland, contains the houses of the Europeans who have left the old town, as we have already said, because of its great insalubrity.

 Fever is often caught in it by sleeping in it one night.

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It is not so terrible in its results as of old, and yet many a missing ship, supposed to have been lost in a cyclone or a typhoon, might have its loss traced to human agency.

Having satisfied their appetites, Zeph and the Dutchman were closeted.

After a few explanations the owner of the house agreed to look after the boat and its crew, while the others went to Batavia in a native vehicle provided by him.

This was just what was wanted.

A little after sundown the vehicle was ready and the two men started, and were driven direct to the house of Herr v. Joel.

He was a merchant of what might be called all sorts.

He dealt in anything, from a sack of coffee to a ship.

During the time of the celebrated pirate Van Arden, whose atrocities and audacity are still remembered in those seas, he often entertained him openly at table, and introduced him to his friends.

He was never even suspected.

Batavia is a strange place. Its characteristics are exceedingly peculiar.

It is composed of two portions, the old called Jaccatra or Jacob's Town, consisting of a marshy flat near the sea, and intersected by the great river and sandy banks.

The new suburban portion, extending over the higher grounds to a distance of several miles inland, contains the houses of the Europeans who have left the old town, as we have already said, because of its great insalubrity.

Fever is often caught in it by sleeping in it one night.

It was formerly styled the European's Graveyard, and with Kelly was hard.
Slaves must either walk on the unpaved center, or if on he footpath, they must get out of the way of every freeman they meet.

The Dutch are notoriously the most cruel taskmasters and slave-killers in the world.

Europeans, as a rule, never walk.

In the olden times if they did, etiquette demanded that a carriage should follow.

Batavia is the great depot for all the Dutch possessions, and is very rich.

Such was the place the pirates had reached.

The residence of Herr Joel was of the usual semi-native, semi-European style.

A long verandah ran in front, with creeping plants, and it was low, of one story.

He was at home. He was not one of those who, because he was rich, assumed a right to a country and a town house. He lived at his office. But it was provided with every luxury money could provide.

Herr Joel was a man who denied himself nothing. He had no objection to work, but he also was very fond of luxury.

He was very polite and condescending to Zeph. He found them clothes, jewellery, luggage, and what not, could believe just what he thought proper of the statement.

All he cared was about making money.

He found them clothes, jewellery, luggage, and what was much more important, money—Mr. Lionel Wells, of Salpiga, Sourabaya, and his overseer, Jacob Jones, of the same place.

They had, therefore, come to Herr Joel to ask him to help them. All they wanted was a handsome suit of clothes, a diamond ring or two, and an introduction to one of the best hotels in Batavia frequented by the English.

But not without a little hesitation.

Introducing Kelly as Jacob, the overseer of his friend, Mr. Lionel Wells, an intending purchaser of a coffee estate, he explained that they had come to Batavia on very important business.

The fact was a large coffee plantation was in the market unprofitably, and probably, if sold before it was put up to auction, might be privately purchased at a very much lower rate.

The very respectable Mr. Lionel Wells, of Sourabaya, and his overseer, Jacob Jones, of the same place.

He then sent them off to a good hotel of the place, where they were, as a matter of course, received.

But not without a little hesitation.

A Hindoo waiter, speaking in the native lingo of Dutch English, and native dialect, explained that they must put up with inferior rooms for a day or two.

"Him English Majesty officers, Spitfire, have taken rooms, sah!" he cried, in a patois only understood by Zeph; "want to find, sah—a plate—link him come yah!"

The idea was so comical to the Hindoo, and waiter at a respectable hotel, that he chuckled immediately.

"Beg pardon, sah—sahib!" he went on, "but de ideal too come.

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T. Joel, the merchant.  

"No sir," cried the English captain, warmly; "we have them in our very ports—the biggest unhanged scoundrel in all creation, one Kelly the bushranger."

The captain gave a brief but eloquent outline of the outlaw's career, to which Kelly listened with a perfectly stolid countenance, but keen, merry eyes.

"Well, sir, this villain, this cut-throat, and his desperadoes, actually, during a haze and a dark night, boarded H.M. cutter Snake, and surprised the confounded sleepy crew," continued Montressor, angrily, "turned them adrift, and took possession."

"You astonish me," cried Wells.

"Yes, sir," the into officer continued, "they did, and then they painted, altered her rig and name, and went into Singapore as yachtsmen. Americans going round the world, they had the impudence to say. But at Singapore, two of the old crew of the Snake recognized her, and decided to give information to the authorities. Unfortunately, they were overheard by some of the gang."

"Unfortunate, indeed, sir," said Zeph, stolidly.

"Yes, because they were overpowered, kidnaped, and taken on board," the captain went on. "The pirate then sailed, and, once at sea, put the two men aloft without any cars. Fortunately, we sighted them and took them on board."

While in the cutter, they had heard enough to become aware of the character of the crew, the captain added; "they took particular note of Ned Kelly and his lieutenant. Besides, they learned that the yacht was bound for Batavia. Here we are ready for them, and may I never be an admiral if I don't string the rascal lot at the yard arm, if I get within sight of them."

"I know you will succeed, sir," said Lionel Wells earnestly. "The impudence of the scoundrels is something beyond conception."

"It is; but the two lads we picked up owe them a grudge, and swear they would know them in any disguise, added the captain. "So no more tricks upon travellers."

"We are deeply indebted to you for your hospitality," said Lionel rising, "and for your extraordinary and interesting narrative. I think we will return now. We have business in the cool of the morning."

The quartette parted after shaking hands, and the planter and his overseer retired to their double-bedded room, where they for a quarter of an hour indulged in unrestrained laughter.

"I thought I should 'bust,'" said Kelly. "It was too scrumptious, shaking hands with a post-captain."

"And again he roared in a low, underhand way.

The other did the same, and then proceeded to discuss some punch, and cigars, which they had ordered into their bedroom.

At a very early hour in the morning they paid their bill and went out.

They had stated at the hotel that they were staying at a friend's in the town, but, for convenience of business, would pass the night there.

As they descended the steps from the front verandah two sailors presented themselves.

They were ex-mates of war-men of the Snake, turned ashore on the ocean, and picked up by Captain Montressor. The two desperados moved not a muscle of their faces, but the Jack Tar ran up the steps in a curiously eager manner.

"This way," said Mr. Lionel Wells, darting down a small alley. "The sooner we're out of this the better."

And he took to his heels until they were in some winding alleys, which soon brought them to the house of Herr Joel, the merchant.

Without arousing him they procured the car which had brought them, and the driver, and drove off as fast as they could to the little village where they had left the long-boat.

Meanwhile the men rushed up to a waiter, a negro, who spoke English.

"Who are those fellows?"

"Don't know, sah; never see 'em afore. Gemmen sleep yah last night, sah, sup with the officers in the ebenee."

"Show me to the captain's room."

The Umbab obeyed. The room commanded a view of the shipping.

Going along the nigger told him the names of the strangers.

In answer to a second knock the captain, in a sleepy voice, bade the waiter come in.

On shore he liked his case, but was always ready in case of business.

"Sailor man, sah, want see you, sahib."

"Show him in," cried the captain. "Well, what is it, Jack?"

"Please sir," said Jack, touching his cheek, "Ned Kelly and Bill Zeph have just left the house. I'm told you supped with them last night."

"Shoe-string is not the ordinary fault of officers in the British Navy, now-a-days, but Captain Montressor gave vent to a round oath."

"Go rouse the first lieutenant," he said, "and bid him come to me as soon as dressed."

He then leaped out of bed, and dressed rather quicker than he had ever done in his life. It was too marvellous to believe.

Then the lieutenant came to him.

"What's the matter, sir?" he asked. "War declared with France and America?"

He was a near relative of the captain, or he would not have dared to speak to him in such a jocular tone.

"Worse, sir," cried Montressor. "We stopped last night with Ned Kelly and Bill Zeph. Yes, sir, and they asked us to their plantation, and shook hands with us."

"Surely, sir," began Lieutenant.

"I am neither mad nor drunk," said the captain.

"What I tell you is a positive fact. Away to the British Consul, ask him to communicate with the authorities, and have the town searched.

The captain then descended to the lower regions and communicated with the manager, who explained that on arriving and giving their names, they mentioned Herr Joel, a very respectable merchant, as their introducer. The captain then descended to the lower regions and communicated with the manager, who explained that on arriving and giving their names, they mentioned Herr Joel, a very respectable merchant, as their introducer. In a dry and irritated tone.

The lieutenant soon returned, having roused the consul, who promised his personal attendance to the matter.

But nothing came of it, while Herr Joel almost told the exact truth as to his transaction.

Hence the rascals had found him out was a profound mystery. One of them spoke excellent local Dutch.

There was nothing left for it but to put to sea and pursue them.

Meanwhile, the two outlaws had reached the fishing village, and at once put to sea.

The mast and sail were taken down, and then the long-boat was rowed swiftly down the stream, until they came to a cove distant from any habitation.

The vegetation was luxuriant, and the trees grew to the edge of the water.

Here they intended to remain a while. A look-out was arranged on a tree whence the open sea could be clearly seen.

They had not long to wait.

The cruiser was soon visible sailing along at a moderate rate, a mile from land.

They had concealed the long-boat in a creek over-arched by trees, but was much more effectually hidden when worked into the tall reeds, which, like the tea-tree scrub in the rivers' mouths in Australia, are so close and so
flexible that they bend like standing corn, and once in amongst them all trace is lost of the fugitive. Just such cover the pirates availed themselves of, and there they remained until their pursuers, like the Levite in Holy Writ, "passed by on the other side."

The look-out came down next moment in great trepidation.

The ship's launch with a strong crew was coming along close on them. The pirates withdrew on board and lay still. All were heavily armed and prepared for the worst. If the launch came in they must fight hard, and run up country.

It was a desperate matter, as lose their boat they must, while, even if they got another, there would be a stout blockade kept up.

The launch was near the mouth of the little cove, when the order was given to back water.

"Couldn't hide a dingy in there, sir," said a young and portly villain, that of a midshipman.

"I expect you are right, Walters," replied the lieutenant, "and we know their boat was a large one" (they had called at the village and made inquiries). "Go ahead!"

The pirates once more breathed freely, but remained still until the sound of voices was no longer heard. Even then it was decided to keep close until night. They did, and, when darkness had covered the deep, pulled out—still having no mast—to where their ship awaited them.

The men had their run on shore, but were careful to do nothing to excite suspicion. They drank, fiddled, and danced to their hearts' content, and then made boldly round the Horn. They again made a halt.

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CHAPTER XCV.

THE JOSS-HOUSE.

This house which Kelly and his party had selected was kept by a very worthy Chinaman named Sing-Wang. He supplied the best of coffee, fiery liquors, and provided numerous other ways of passing the time.

The house was nothing more than a shed with a bar, and behind the landlord's private room, where he kept his stores, and probably his money.

Sing-Wang was a stupid-looking, inoffensive Chinaman whose one only ambition was to make money enough to return to his native land, and live in comfort.

Kelly and his friends felt quite at home in the joss-house. They were fond of drink, no matter what its quality, and bad company.

The bushranger swaggered up to the bar, followed by his friends. "Kelly was for a wonder not sober.

"Now, then, look sharp, you Smoking-looking cuss!" he cried, looking at the Chinaman. "Don't stand skulking about, but serve round your poison!"

"That's right, old smutty, look alive!" said Captain Zeph.

"What is it to be?" asked the immovable Chinaman in broken English, which we cannot pretend to imitate.

"Whisky, you pig-tailed monster!" howled Joss; "hole it out quick, you infernal heathen! if you are not as sharp as greased lightning I'll make a hole through your head!"

The Chinaman seemed accustomed to those polite and audible remarks, for he grinned from ear to ear as if he had been complimented on his personal appearance.

"Don't grin at us!" shouted Stewart; "shut up that gash, or I'll cut out your tongue by the roots!"

The man was used to this sort of thing, and was well aware he would be paid.

In less time than it takes to tell, the liquor was placed on the counter, and the Chinaman demanded two dollars.

"Two dollars!" cried Kelly, "grin and be bewildered!" you, do! Can't you trust me for a moment? Do you want to jump down my throat? Do you think I am going to sling my hook without paying you for your cursed poison?"
"Money down—no slate kept at the bar," said Sing-Wang, pointing to a placard behind his back. "Go and be smothered!" roared Kelly. "If you are not more civil I'll take you into a dead Chinaman, and see you come in a plank suit. You are free to find yourself between four deal boards. That's what the matter with you!"

The patient Sing-Wang still held out his hand. It was the rule of the house, he said, to pay, and furthermore stated that he would drink as much as he liked without spending a penny.

"Drunks not fair," cried the horror-stricken Sing-Wang, who began to see what his customer was like. "Fair or not, I shall do what I like," replied Kelly, scornfully, and as he spoke he pulled out a pistol. "Fill up the glasses again, or I'll make short work of you, you ugly, yellow-faced, old dried-up parchmeat-skin devil!" "Me give no more drink for nothing," said the Chinaman in a dreamy voice. "Look sharp!" cried Kelly. "Will you trust me or have a bullet through your nut?"

Sing-Wang hesitated a moment, and then reluctantly brought the drink.

"I'll trust to your honour of Englee genl'man," he said, trying to look easy in his mind, for he felt sure that the whisky would never be paid for.

But Captain Zeph, who did not want a row, called him, and Sing-Wang was made happy.

The joss-house was almost empty when Kelly entered it, but it gradually filled up and soon became crowded. They were a rough lot, and seemed very thirsty, for they drank like fishes, and seemed to enjoy the fiery spirit. Some smoked, some swore and talked, some sang, and some gambled.

Sing-Wang was evidently doing well, for most of the miners spent their money as soon as they earned it. In California, however much they may be fond of fighting, they would work hard for a couple of weeks and then send you home in a plank suit. You are fretting to find some gambled.

"You're mean, downright mean, you aint got pluck enough to have it out between man and man."

"I didn't mean no harm," the other said. "And present—no harm," yelled Peleg Oswald, "s'posing I pull this yar pistol out of my belt," suitting the action to the word. "S'posing I pints it at you and it goes off of its own accord, would it make any difference to you, you stickler, if I didn't mean no harm? I think I must do for you, I don't see why a sneakin' cuss like you should be allowed to live. I'll do's all on account of good nature.

"I know you was a-joking," said the man who had given offence, with a sickly smile, making for the door with more speed than dignity.

"Joking be bawled!" cried Peleg, and the next moment he was fired, but to his annoyance missed the man.

"I aimed!" he muttered, and made a rush after the unfortunate individual, "I'll make dead sure of him this time."

"Don't be in such a hurry," said Charles Stewart, getting in front of him. "You challenged anyone in this here company to a game, and I am ready to accept."

"I'll be back in no time," said Peleg, with a savage grin. "Let me clear out the varmint and play Euchre afterwards."

"Now or not at all," said Stewart doggedly; "are you my man or not?"

"It wouldn't take long to settle his hash," remarked Peleg. "I'd be sharper than Jersey lightning, that I would!"

"You can settle your dispute with that coward another day," said Stewart, "but if you want to shuffle cards with me, you must do it at once."

"I ain't a quarrelsome man," observed Peleg Oswald. "I'm a man as likes peace and quietness; but when a man puts my back up, I'm a demon—a regular ring-tailed coon. The American eagle don't fly after a chap who is more full of grit than the cuss who stands afore you, stranger, you may bet yer pile on that."

"You have proved your manhood, and that poor frightened, trembling cuss is about a mile away by this time," returned Charles Stewart.

"And I guess is running still," said Peleg, spitting out a large plug of tobacco on to the grimy floor. "He may run to a warm place for all I care," cried Charles Stewart. "Are you going to play or not?"

"I'm on," replied the gambler.

"Order liquors before we begin."

This was done, and then the play commenced. The Chinaman looked on at his customers with as much expression in his face as a barber's block. He only thought of the money that came to his mill. It was nothing to him if his customers killed each other as long as they did not interfere with him.

There was one man in the company who was known by the name of Swearing Joe. The Americans were the first to institute the spelling bee, and it was in California that the swearing bee was first invented.

The man who was modest in his language had to stand drinks all round.

The game had been very popular until Swearing Joe had extorted himself.

But that hero was so strong and fluent in his language
A man should know a hole through another or stab him in the vitals was no very uncommon occurrence in the part of California.

The Chinaman who had carried the dead body of Peleg out of the joss-house had taken the precaution to empty his pockets, but having performed this kindly office, they specify forget that such a man had ever existed.

The man who had hurried another into eternity so recklessly had not gone far, but after passing the scattered Chinese bums near the joss-house, he started off into the dark and aversive nature, he came to the determination of possessing himself of the gold so carefully hoarded by the unhappy Celestial.

He had not taken his friends into his confidence, for the simple reason that he desired to reap the whole profit himself.

He never cared to go halves with any man if he could possibly help it, preferring to set on his own hook, as he eloquently expressed it.

So he waited until the guilty night was far advanced before he ventured out from his retreat.

The wind moaned through the dark tree tops as he crept along as a thing of evil.

All was very quiet and still as he passed on, pausing every now and then to listen, with his hand on the pistol in his belt.

He scarcely knew what he feared, but something in the deep silence of the whole place made him feel strangely uneasy.

He shook off this unusual feeling, however, and became himself again in another moment.

"Just the sort of night for a job like the one I have in hand," he muttered. "That old Chinaman's money-bags shall soon be in my possession. I know I am running a great risk, but it's worth it. I hope that Sing-Wang lives by himself, too.

He soon arrived at the joss-house and tried the door, which he found was firmly fastened.

"How the deuce am I to get into the confounded place?" he thought. "I could easily break the door in, but it would make a confounded noise and wake up everyone within half-a-mile. Eh? The window. I must get through that way."

The window was a warm one, and the unsuspicious Chinaman had left it open, never dreaming of a moment that anyone would try to break into his place.
He had been there some time, and no one ever tried to rob him of a farthing. Thus he was lulled into false security. After much difficulty—for the window was a small one—he managed in the dusk to dig himself through the narrow opening and landing on the floor.

The interior of the joss-house was as dark as pitch, and the man groped his way cautiously, making little noise as possible. He softly struck a match and looked about him. It was a work thing to do; this he knew, but he could not help himself.

He was in the drinking-saloon, and partitioned off was a small room where the Chinaman slept, doubled up with his money.

He was standing on the counter, and he lit his, turning it very low, and, taking down a bottle of whisky, fortified himself with a stiff draught to steady his nerves.

The silence was oppressive, and Stewart tried to hold his breath, fearing that the sound of his heavy breathing would awake the Chinaman.

For a moment he stopped before the door of the inner room, and then softly turned the handle, making no sound. A flood of light poured through the half-open door, and Stewart, to his surprise, saw that the Chinaman was wide awake.

His back was turned, and he was evidently in ignorance that he was watched. He was gloating over a pile of money before him, and chuckling to himself.

Stewart pulled out a long knife and crept close up to the unfortunate Chinaman.

At that moment Sing-Wang became conscious of his presence, and, looking over his shoulder, saw the man with his bright uplifted knife, and the look of murder in his deep-set, blood-shot eyes.

He gave an awful piercing shriek.

At the very moment he was about to make short work of the Chinaman, a sound like rushing waters smote upon his ear. The notes gathered force every moment, and the roar of many voices awoke the echo of the night. Onward came, like the roar of the rapids, and the angry bellowings of a multitude struck terror for the moment into his heart.

"Lynch him! Lynch him!" he heard springing from the enraged threats of the mob.

He rushed from the house, while the Chinaman continued to scream his loudest. Stewart was not quick enough; the crowd was upon him, and there stood the Chinaman, who gasped out the particulars of the attack. Twenty strong arms seized the fellow and carried him, yelling and struggling to the jail.

The authorities resolved to try him, and there was small chance upon two grounds of his escaping the gallows. Firstly, he was a "darned Britisher," and, secondly, he was caught red-handed. The crowd did not disperse; they surrounded the prison and distrusting the authorities, resolved to anticipate the duties of a jury. "Lynch him!" was again the ubiquitous that resounded through the tumult. "Lynch him!" was the universal chorus.

Stewart heard it and trembled. The warders even looked pale and troubled. Presently a mighty rush was made by the surging crowd outside—the door of the prison was forced, and Captain Freeman, the chairman of the Vigilance Committee, followed by the mob, rushed into the room where Stewart stood, pale, firm, but dauntless.

It was the work of a moment to seize him, which was done with needless violence. He was dragged outside, a rope put round his neck, and, with a momentary return of mercy, Freeman cried—

"Out with a prayer, you damned human panther, if you ever knew one, for your time's up."

This was as a rock, and as dauntless as ever, Stewart scowled at his assailants. His hands were still free.

"Look here," shouted Stewart, "I've got something to say. It's only a few words. Let any three of you—"
The evenings and mornings may require a little fire in the tents but no one attends to it through the day, so it goes out. The worst of the winter is the mud; knee-deep is a trifle in the vicinity of the town. Those of the streets not planked were impassable. All is changed now. The drinking and gambling saloons were something sibilant in those days; the drinking has not decreased; perhaps the saloons have. The hotels were then extremely bad—the bed-rooms nearly all two beds. In many, hardly any furniture at all. Kelly and his companions secured two rooms, and then agreed to hold a council of war. At last they came to the decision to stay awhile, to make for some other diggings, and try their luck. They communicated with the ship, found all was right, and determined to start up the country once more. They determined to make for Maryville by steamer and then start for a place called Volcano Diggings, of which they had heard a very good account. Mtn were making for some other diggings, and try their luck. They took a square meal, provided themselves with provisions for the day, and then they started, leaving their companions behind them. They always travelled as much as possible by themselves, being by no means fond of creating new acquaintances. The journey to Volcano Diggings did not take them a long time to accomplish. On the third day they reached it. It was a wild place, and very much scattered. Kelly and his party while looking around made a pretense of building a small cabin on the side of a crevice, covered it with canvas, leaving a corner open to serve as a chimney. Then they of course adjourned to the tavern. The usual crowd was there of idlers and hard-working men. Several had been very successful, as the mines were rich, and hard work was rewarded by the usual result. Among those whom it was said had been specially lucky was John Rutherford. Kelly and his gang noted him keenly. The man was plump and short. Unlike the other natives of the locality he was close-cropped and shaven, as if to keep down the strong blue blackness of his head and hair, which nevertheless asserted itself over his round cheeks and upper lip like a tattooing of Indian ink. He drank his glass, smoked, and did not object to a game of cards; but he was reserved and taciturn—if not sulky. He was a man of iron frame—a melus in partes of thees and sines—a small edition of the Farnese Hercules—one of those prodigies in which nature seems at times to rejoice. There are ‘men and men.” As the French say, there are _Femmes et Fegers_. The man was plump and short. Unlike the other natives of the locality he was close-cropped and shaven, as if to keep down the strong blue blackness of his head and hair, which nevertheless asserted itself over his round cheeks and upper lip like a tattooing of Indian ink. He drank his glass, smoked, and did not object to a game of cards; but he was reserved and taciturn—if not sulky. 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"Yes," replied Zeph, "I'm on the track; go ahead, Ned, and then—yes—and then—"

"Why, assist him to turn in where he won't turn up in a hurry."

A congratulatory guffaw greeted this refined specimen of wit, and Ned seemed greatly gratified by the tribute to his comic powers.

They had just finished speaking when they heard the blazed remnants of his hut, and, though dreadfully wounded, he returned to consciousness just in time to crawl out of sight round a knot of trees.

"Well, I can't say as you'd give your liver away to a man like me," said John Rutherford, though dreadfully wounded, had not been done to death.

When Rutherford was found by friends it was late next day, and he was not for some time able to explain.

By this time the robbers were far away.

CHAPTER XCVI.
MINBREY.

They were after the first day's journey very tired, very thirsty, and very much disgusted.

To men of Kelly's calibre there was comfort and excitement in the leathern bottle slung over the mantillas of their saddles.

But they burst into a tempest of fury when they found that the bottles did not contain aquavitæ as they expected, but had been filled in by a rascally Irishman with bad American whisky.

All around was a sterile waste, bordered here and there by arable fringes and valles of meadow land; but in the main, dry, dusty and forbidding.

On they went, continuing the scent.

(To be continued.)

THE "ANONYMA" SERIES OF POPULAR NOVELS.
PUBLISHED AT 2/-

Anonyma, or Fair but Fruitful.
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Skittles in Paris, a Biography of a Fascinating Woman.
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Formosa, the Life of a Beautiful Woman.
The Beautiful Demon.
Revelations of a Lady Detective.
The Lady with the Camellias.
Paris Life at Twenty.
At times the half-worn, half-visible trail became utterly lost in the bare black out-cup of the ridge, but the vagabonds they had hired soon found it again. When they had ridden a mile along the ridge they began to descend. Vegetation now sparingly burdened the trail, clumps of chenille, an occasional Manzana bush, and one or two dwarf buckeyes, rooted their way between the interstices of the black-grey rock.

Now and then crossing some dry gulch, worn by the overflow of winter torrents from above, the greyish-rock gleam was relieved by dark red and brown masses of colour, and almost every overhanging rock bore the mark of a miner's pick.

The fog had already closed in on Minbrey, and it was now rolling a white, billow sea above, that soon shut off the blue breakers below. At night they returned to Jones's restaurant and amused themselves after their usual fashion, gambling and drinking. They lived an easy, idle, but purposeless life, waiting for prey, or rather hunting for it.

Kelly was somewhat anxious to remain abroad for some time, to allow his doings elsewhere to be, if possible, forgotten. The whole clan were often on the ramble. It happened that in one of these excursions they came upon a wild and desolate valley, very small, with a few trees.

As they had rounded the curving flank of a mountain, from the rocky beach below them a thin ghost-like stream of smoke seemed to be steadily drawn by invisible hands into the thin ether.

Towards this, being tired, they made, with the hope of getting a hearty meal. As they neared the camp and stood behind some thick bushes they heard voices.

"It's almost time we got out of this here country, my lad," said one. "We've made a good haul, enough for all four, and the sooner we get away the better."

"I think so, too," said another; "we've been careful—we've got good stout horses and mules, and I say make tracks while we're safe."

"Should our luck be even suspected, it would go hard with us," responded another.

And the subject dropped as Kelly and his party made a resolution and concluded.

"Come in. What's up?" asked one of the men, a fine stalwart-looking Englishman.

"We're out prospecting," said Kelly, "and are a little tired, so we thought as perhaps you'd give us a rest and a bit of grub."

"There was a meal of tortillas, frijoles (beans), salt pork, and chocolate, and a fresh supply was speedily obtained for them. Then they being at no great distance from the diggings, thanked their entertainers and went away.

The miners were four in number, like themselves, and stout fellows.

"They had four horses, and a small waggon with a couple of mules; they contained their traps and doubled their gold.

The villains exchanged glances as they moved away. Doubtless these men would make a good fight, but if they could only surprise them and carry off the plunder, it would all be tidy.

"They could secure the waggon."

Kelly proposed that they should follow them at a distance, keeping clear out of sight, and waiting until an opportunity occurred for a sudden rush upon their victims.

So they spent the night at the restaurant as usual, rising early in the morning to watch what might happen. The head of the party of four men who had made such a successful haul was a young man of great energy. He and his party, all English, worked steadily for two years, and had all along been tolerably successful.

His name was William Maxwell.

He and his companions had been sober and steady, and had forwarded large sums to England to their account. They now felt an irresistible inclination to return to England themselves.

At first they had been, like many others, unlucky, and had given up claim after claim in succession. On one occasion they found themselves, when at the Digger goldfields, after several variables of fortune, what they called out there "dead broke."

Their credit was very nearly exhausted at the neighbouring store, and they were almost in want of bread.

"Let us have another try," cried William Maxwell; "never give in, is my matter."
And, advised by him, in their desperation they began digging for gold in a very unpromising locality.

Maxwell plied his pick on some hard brick like clay, around the roots of an old tree breaking up fresh earth, and tearing away the grass from the surface of the ground.

He aimed a blow at the clear space between the roots, and the pick instead of sinking into the ground rebounded as if it had struck upon quartz or granite.

"Confound it!" he exclaimed, "I've nearly broken my pick. I shouldn't have minded if it had only been a nugget."

A minute later he called to his companions and asked them to tell him what this was, pointing to a mass of gold cropping several inches out of the ground, like a boulder on a hill.

As each successive portion of the nugget was disclosed to view, the men were lost in amazement at its size.

It was about a foot long, and apparently nearly the same in breadth.

Its weight was very great, but they carried it to their hut and proceeded to examine it. It was completely covered with black earth and so tarnished in colour that an inexperienced person might have supposed it to be merely a solid mass of iron.

But the weight dispelled all doubt on that point, for it was more than twice as heavy as a piece of iron of the same size.

A fire having been made the nugget was placed on it, and for hours they sat watching it burning the quartz which adhered to the nugget.

The gold was weighed next day, when quite clean, and its weight was very great.

But the weight dispelled all doubt on that point, for it was twice the weight of any nugget found up to that time.

"It was almost time they left, as men who go on prospecting about the country do not have a very steady supply of money, usually excite suspicion at the diggings."

They made no fire and kept off the regular track, where they could observe the others without being seen.

It was useless keeping watch that night, as the travellers were of course too numerous for them to manage.

They made a fire.

"I don't like the look of those roughs," said William Peterson; "still, if the chief did come too near me, I'd be apt to use my six-shooter."

Meanwhile Kelly and his party had returned to the restaurant, as we have said, where they spent their evening as usual.

It was almost time they left, as men who go on prospecting about the country do not have a very steady supply of money, usually excite suspicion at the diggings.

But though they were continually watched and even followed from the many rude shanties on the road, and thus they could observe the others without being observed,

One must push up the Back for a considerable distance as the road was hilly and the air so heated that people could be distinguished a very long way off.

Kelly determined under these circumstances to make his way at once.

He first placed the horses at a safe distance from the camp where they could find them when the affair was over.

He had no compunction whatever. Rather than miss the plunder he expected, he was quite determined to kill the lot.

There was no hesitation in his soul.

As soon as the horses were safe he and his gang crept forward with snake-like caution.

The small waggon was placed near the fire, the horses hobbled securely.

The small waggon was placed near the fire, the horses hobbled securely.

They were simply banditti on the look-out for victims.

Kelly was only too glad to be satisfied with cold meat when his avarice was concerned.

And, advised by him, in their desperation they began digging for gold in a very unpromising locality. They were of course the game they wanted to bag.

All took their turn at watching, but that night their patience was not rewarded, and they had at considerable inconvenience to pass all the next day in the place.

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Kelly was only too glad to be satisfied with cold meat when his avarice was concerned.
Each man as he advanced picked out his victim. At this moment there was a great and sudden cry. "Oh golly, missus," roared the negro, "I toss tied—un shoot—golly—"

The negro at the same time fired into their midst, and the four stalwart fellows leaped to their feet with their short rifles in their hands.

"Scoundrel, come on," roared William Maxwell, "we are ready for you—black, red, or white."

Kelly had selected his retreat with judgment. It was down a narrow gully, that turned short to the right.

Several shots were fired but they were of too small, as the bushrangers were far too wary to be caught napping.

But Kelly's ferocious rage was something fearful and wonderful to hear when they were out of reach of the foe.

Even his fierce and reckless companions were awed into silence.

He was more like a wild beast than anything else. He raved and swore.

But the first thing they had to do was to think of their future safety.

Kelly had concealed the horses cleverly and had soon regained the spot and started off in the direction of the hill country, where there were hundreds of places to conceal themselves for a time.

So the sudden open attack on those four young men and their watchful negro, would have been simply utter folly and madness.

But Ned Kelly was not without hope, that by some means or other, he would still be able to compass the possession of the successful gold digger's pile."

As soon as he was discovered, the bushrangers easily selected a room in which to pass the night. It was crowded and dirty, but it was a roof over their heads.

They were, however, careful to start off early in the morning. They wished to reach Sacramento city before the noon hour.

"It took Ned Kelly a good many hours to figure out this.

But Kelly was careful not to be offensive; he thought he knew his man. A little respectful familiarity would be all right.

As it happened, the miners did come on board the next day.

As soon as one was discovered, the bushrangers easily selected a room in which to pass the night. It was crowded and dirty, but it was a roof over their heads.

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"What was not much of a game in three places. They preferred games of chance to those of nerve, skill and cunning.

As was the custom of the boat to wait for them until the latest passengers were expected from the diggings, and it was the same boat as those they had sought to rob.

At this Kelly contrived one occasion to be seated next to William Maxwell.

"You play a good game, sir," observed Kelly, in as soft a tone as he could possibly assume.

"Pretty fair," answered Maxwell, looking at a rough customer who was playing beside him, "but it does not require much art. It's purely luck, and nothing else."

"Perhaps so," continued Kelly, "but still there was at all events no suspicion shown, and Ned Kelly determined to go on to San Francisco and try his grand cove there."

He meant to have that treasure if it were in any way possible.

"But how was it to be got at, was the question the hitherto baffled ruffian asked himself."

Of course it was locked all day, and at night guarded by four pair of stalwart arms, besides the Argus-eyed negro.

"It did not seem likely that they could do anything under these adverse circumstances."

They must give it all up until they got to San Francisco, when an infernal idea came into Kelly's head.

"He would wait and have patience."

"To carry out his new scheme he must try and scrape some sort of acquaintance with William Maxwell and his three companions, and then go to the same hotel."

In those days of the gold fever, classes were very much mixed, and few people asked who was who as long as they behaved themselves.

William Maxwell and his party were not hardened or professed gamblers, but they had no objection to join in a game of cards.

"As there was no knowing what might happen, if they could disguise themselves and make another attempt on the gold."

They reached the city, swapped their horses, resumed the rest of their clothes and went to an hotel.

There was no boat ready to go that day. A great many persons present indulged in fluttering the flimsy pastime.

It took Ned Kelly a good many hours to figure out this.

There was no boat ready to go that day. A great many passengers were expected from the diggings, and it was the custom of the boat to wait for them until the latest moment.

Kelly did not much relish the idea of travelling to San Francisco with the four stalwart young Englishmen. He trusted, however, to his disguise, his impudence, and his unwavering good luck, in case he should go down in the hands.

He meant to have that treasure if it were in any way possible.

Kelly and his party were careful to keep as far apart from that of William Maxwell as possible. The latter had evidently a keen and far-seeing eye.

Kelly determined to be on the safe side, and do nothing to excite any suspicions.

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William Maxwell and his party were not hardened or professed gamblers, but they had no objection to join in a game of cards.
He spoke of it to Zeph and that worthy agreed to join it with all his heart and soul.
He believed it to be a very probable thing to be done.
"At all events it was worth trying," he said.
"As well be hung for a sheep as a lamb," growled Zeph.
"Perhaps better," grinned Kelly.
Never say die was the reckless motto of these desperate men.

Next evening they would reach San Francisco, and commence operations.
Kelly kept up the habit of occasionally playing cards with William Maxwell, but never tried for too much intimacy.
He was rather humble than otherwise, and William Maxwell began to think he had very much misjudged his character.

He was simply an honest, rough customer after all, with no particular harm in him, he thought.
"Where have I seen him before, though?" observed one of Maxwell's friends. "His confounded face seems familiar to me, somehow."

"I thought so at first, myself," remarked William Maxwell, "but I can't place it. These rough sort of fellows are often very much alike."
"I suppose so," answered the other, rather thoughtfully, and the conversation dropped for the time.

When the steamer stopped at the quay or wharf, Kelly was careful to hear for what hotel Maxwell and his friends were destined.

It was the President Jackson, and Kelly immediately ordered his luggage to be taken to the same rather aristocratic locality.

It was somewhat of a dear place, but the bushrangers had still plenty of command of money without showing a large amount.
Kelly always carried a considerable number of notes about him in the belt with his gold.

Of course, in those days all were welcome, so that they had plenty of coin.

That was about the only question thought of.
Money was what made the man to go there, as at most periods of the world's history.
All were able to secure rooms, as a good many people had recently started for Europe.

It was before the overland route had been invented.
There was no way of course a truck d'orien, and this they all sat down to as soon as they were comfortable and settled.
Kelly and his companions were no fools. They were careful to examine other people and do as they did. Thus their solemnities were not very great.

Still no one could mistake them for anything approaching to civilization.
They were looked upon as lucky nouveaux riches.

After dinner they dispersed to the billiard-room and smoking-rooms, to divert themselves as best they might.
Kelly and Zeph, however, went out to look about them, and their first visit was to a cabinet-maker's.
They wanted to know about the gold boxes.

To Kelly's surprise he found that except in difference of size the gold boxes were all made of about the same material.
They could, therefore, easily have a box made the same size exactly as that of the Englishman.

Then it could be sent him, strapped and sealed, with heavy weights of lead inside.

The only difficulty, and it was no easy one, was to ring the changes.
It was no easy task, but Kelly fully believed that he could succeed.

The vessel for England would not start for several days, so that they had time to arrange everything.

During the hurry and bustle of the day, a box wrapped round with black gloves both with Joss's keys was easily introduced into the hotel.
Nobody noticed it but one of the darky waiters, and it was taken to Kelly's room.

There they proceeded to fix it up to look exactly like that of the successful gold-diggers.

Now commenced the opportunity of making the exchange which was not easy.

In times like those, everybody was particularly careful of his own belongings.
Every bed-room had two keys, one carried by the occupant, the other kept by the owner of the house, and only trusted to the servants for a short period of the day.

It was rather hard work to get one of these keys out of the custody of the faithful domestics.
To try that would have been folly; there remained nothing for it but to try the efficacy of Joss's keys.

He never travelled without them, and they had often stood him in good stead.
Well, he would try if he could be as successful here as elsewhere.

Of course it could not be done at night, as then the owners would be in their rooms.
How was it to be managed.

The suit of apartments occupied by the four young Englishmen was next to that occupied by the bushranger.

Now, between them they had managed to make their own box look as exactly like the other, that once in different rooms, it would have been almost impossible to see the difference.

One or the other could have been openly conveyed on a truck to the vessel without exciting the slightest suspicion.

After lunch most of the gentlemen, as everyone is called in the gold regions, adjourned to the billiard-rooms or elsewhere.

Joss and Zeph retired together to the garden attached to the hotel, to quietly mature their plans. After having given orders so that they went to their own rooms, and entering, closed the doors carefully behind them.

Now came the difficulty, the arduous tug of war. They one or twice opened their door a little, and listened for every sound in the hotel.

Presently all seemed perfectly calm and quiet. Not a soul appeared about.
Zeph lit up a big cigar and approached a window overlooking the port.

Then, tools in hand, he came out and began to apply himself to the door.

In ordinary cases the thing would have been easy, but in a large house they so liable to interruptions.

"Golly!" suddenly cried a well-known voice, "What am I gone m'an up to?"

Zeph and his pal looked thoroughly scared as they heard the voice of the bigger. They looked round for the black, but saw nothing. They heard the chuckle—the yell, yah! of their black detectives, but the sound appeared to come out of the floor. They could see nothing, but understood at once that the game was up, and that in five minutes the attempt to enter the Englishman's room would be divulged.

They hurried downstairs to the billiard-room, where Kelly and Salmon Roe were awaiting them.

At one sign from Captain Zeph they understood, threw down their cues and went out.
Their luggage was the least part of their valuables, and not one stop was taken to take anything but their hat and coat.

They were only too glad to be off before the negro succeeded in giving the alarm.

Instantly this class of men know how to leave such quarters.

On leaving the hotel they dived into a district where from third to fifth-rate huts were to be found in abundance.

After plunging down some lanes and alleys they found not only what they wanted, but some boxes and street suited to their wishes.

Humidity was now their game, and it behaved them to be as little objectionable as possible.

Having procured what they required, they went found
lodgings at a quiet hotel, where, of course, they told what story they liked, and then, by their profuse expenditures of money, satisfied all parties.

In rude and vulgar places men, of course, the only consideration.

At first they were firmly told that lodgings at a quiet hotel were not available. But after a little discussion, the landlord agreed to accommodate them on a pinch.

"We're just lambs," laughed Kelly.

"They are outcasts of civilization," he said in a low tone, "fair is fair, you know."

They agreed to shift their quarters for a day or so, and, while still the police might prove cautious and dangerous, they were not afraid of interruption.

The landlord was a quiet man of unassuming manners, particularly regardful of the comfort of his customers when they paid liberally.

He found Kelly and his party to his taste, as they often asked him up to step and join them in their thirsty guzzling, old-squid, and other amusements.

On the second evening of their arrival a man—a meek, apparently well-meaning sort of fellow—came up and closed the door.

"That's what he did at first," he said in a low tone, "fair is fair, you know."

"If you like I'll take you there," he asked if Smith had ever seen anything of four chaps as had been staying at the hotel. Smith understood Kelly and his party to his taste, as they often asked him up to step and join them in their thirsty guzzling, old-squid, and other amusements.

The names of the four Englishmen were known to Kelly, and with cautious inquiry Smith found that they had taken passage in a vessel, and were about to start immediately for England.

They had, therefore, nothing to fear from them, though still the police might prove cautious and dangerous.

Through Smith he made inquiries about the yacht, and found that she was all right, though many of her men had got tired and deserted.

"Is that a bad lookout?"

CHAPTER XI.

JOE'S MEETING A NEAR RELATIVE.

For several days they accordingly remained in the small out-of-the-way hiding-place where they had concealed themselves.

They were all afraid of William Maxwell while he remained in town; he was moving heaven and earth to bring them to justice.

But his time was up. Kelly was anxious to see after his craft. It would have to be provisioned before they started on another journey.

The men had been advised to frequent as quiet drinking-shops as they could, but of course it would be too much to expect they would keep away from drink altogether.

Still, stowed away, Kelly and his immediate companions had a good supply of money.

Still, stowed away, Kelly and his immediate companions had a good supply of money.

"I never preach on friends," was the dry reply.

"Send round all you want presently," he said in a low tone.

"And be careful to keep clear of the men, whatever they may say, anything but easy in their minds."

The police of San Francisco were particularly sharp.

Besides, vigilance committees were very active, and crime was not allowed to go unpunished.

Still, in such a seething mass of beings, all intent on money-making, all influenced by the demon of avarice, many crimes did remain undiscovered, the perpetrators getting off with impunity.

In their case there really had been nothing perpetrated, and they had every hope that the matter would blow over with the departure of the four travellers for England.

All they had to do then was to eat, drink and be merry, and hide their time.

Smith kept them well provided with everything needed, not forgetting to charge accordingly.

The names of the four Englishmen were known to Kelly, and with cautious inquiry Smith found that they had taken passage in a vessel, and were about to start immediately for England.

They had, therefore, nothing to fear from them, though still the police might prove cautious and dangerous.

So they were careful.

Through Smith he made inquiries about the yacht, and found that she was all right, though many of her men had got tired and deserted.

"This was a bad lookout."

CHAPTER XI.

JOE'S MEETING A NEAR RELATIVE.

For several days they accordingly remained in the small out-of-the-way hiding-place where they had concealed themselves.

They were all afraid of William Maxwell while he remained in town; he was moving heaven and earth to bring them to justice.

But his time was up. Kelly was anxious to see after his craft. It would have to be provisioned before they started on another journey.

The men had been advised to frequent as quiet drinking-shops as they could, but of course it would be too much to expect they would keep away from drink altogether.

Still, stowed away, Kelly and his immediate companions had a good supply of money.

Still, stowed away, Kelly and his immediate companions had a good supply of money.
always makes the road easy for his follower, with a grim smile.

...old ruffian, a little parrot, a little diffusing off suspicion, might have inspired utterance, but Kelly went on recklessly, undaunted by any ridicule.

Never once did he cast back a look of regret on his past life. He was equally indifferent to the future, and only lived for the present hour.

Kelly had not known fear; but, as he grew older, he grew fiercer and more bloodthirsty, and many brave men had been known to stand in awe of him—men who have fought with wild beasts and savages, and charged uphill to the cannon's mouth. True he was not wholly dead to some feelings or rather family instincts, for a good deal of his determination to visit California, and subsequently New York, was his desire to hear something of a brother, who had been acquiring some notoriety as half-smuggler and whole pirate. His name was Christopher, abbreviated by his friends to "Kitty," and as "Kit, the Cruizer," we may yet hear more of him.

"Did have any effect the most active part in the resurrection of Stewart's body from the grave, in expectation of extracting a heavy reward from the very wealthy family as the price of its restitution. The enormous wealth of the family fostered this expectation.

Whether "Ned" fell in with his brother's plots, the sequel will show.

Men declared that they could face anything but that fiend in human shape, and the words were repeated in Kelly's hearing, much to his openly-expressed delight.

He knew that there were some people who regarded him as a hero in consequence of such rumours, and was tempted to have his glass and looked sullenly down at the ground.

"Why did you throw away my drink?" he asked. "I had determined, in order to procure the requisite men to man his ship, that he would offer double wages and a double allowance of grog.

Even then it was doubtful whether this temptation would have effect, but at all events it would do no harm to try, even if he did not succeed.

"We must take care that we do not ship aboard lots of muffs," said Salmon Roe, as they entered a low drinking shop to while away the time until it was time to go to the Red Plain Hotel, "for it won't be any use to us. We want ships like oursehes, that don't care a tickler's curse for anything, and wouldn't be squeamish about a drop of blood.

"Trust me," said Kelly. "I know the sort of customers to pick out; but if we should happen to get hold of a rotten Jack Tar, who might round on us, why all we have got to do is to chuck him overboard to be eaten by sharks, if any of those cursed ugly fish happen to be about.

"That's your sort," said Captain Zeph. "Send the lot to blazes if they ain't the right lot; don't make no bones about it, but chuck them overboard, bag and baggage."

"I'd give 'em four dozen on their bare hides with the cat-o'-nine-tails, just to give them time to think over their latter end," observed Joss, who was in a sulky humour, having been considerably brow-beaten by Kelly of late.

"Since you have put it into my nut," cried Kelly, with a grin, "you shall be tied up to the grating first, just to show the others a good example. It would be a treat to hear you howl, old man.

This remark, although probably intended for a mere jest, did not appear to meet with Joss's approval in any way.

"Perhaps I shan't need with you." muttered Joss to himself, as he looked askance at Kelly with a rather vicious expression in his bloodshot eyes." You ain't going to ride roughshod over me, mate, so I tell yer."

"This was a mistake on Joss's part, as he had never told Kelly anything of the kind, and was very careful not to let him overhear what he said to others.

"What are you a-growling and a-muttering about?" demanded Kelly, seeing the man's lips move. "If you have got any complaint to make, spit it out.

"I should like to smash you up," thought the person addressed, but he said aloud—"Whose a-complaining, who is a-growling and a-grumbling, I should like to know? You seem to have made a dead set agin me, and I can't please you nohow. Directly I open my mouth you jump down my throat.

"You are a pet too low," said Kelly, sarcastically. "So and drink, man, go and drink."

"I'll drink starvation to you," muttered Joss, with another sibilant glance at Kelly's dark face.

The bushranger was making a mistake in his treatment of Joss, who grew more saucy every moment, brooding over his real or imaginary wrongs.

Even when Kelly stood treats all round, the men's faces did not clear, and he contrived to spill his liquor instead of drinking it, ordering another glass at his own expense to which he mentally drank " hell and confusion " to his enemy.

Kelly was not blind to this little bit of by-play.

"Do you hear?" howled Kelly, going up close to him with a threatening gesture.

"A deaf man 'ud hear you through the roar of Niagara,"—of which he had heard enough in America—returned Joss, trying to look at his case, but the onlookers noticed that the man was unusually pale and trembled so violently that he could hardly hold the glass.

"Why do you throw away my drink?" he asked.

"Like to know the meaning of that 'ere trick." Joss made no answer, but took another slip out of his own glass and looked sullenly down at the ground.

"You'd best answer up if you want to raise the devil in me. Curse you! Why can't you open your mouth, you confounded fool? Did you do it to insult me, I say?"

"No, it was to show the others a good example. It would be a treat to hear you howl, old man."
intense suffering, and any man but Kelly might have hesi­
tated ere he inflicted such torture on a comrade.

Joss muttered, shaking his fist at Kelly's broad back.

Kelly made no reply to this, but said something in an
undertone to Salmon Roe, who grinned all over his face,
and disappeared for a few moments, while Kelly contrived
to keep Joss in close conversation.

"I said for liquor," he said, suddenly looking round.
"Loss off, man; drink it to the drops, just to show you've no malice."

Joss hastened to comply with this request, but the ex­
pression of his face changed after he had taken a good gulp.

"Ugh!" he yelled, dashing the glass against the wall,
and shivering it into a thousand fragments.

"I'll 'dead' you if you don't get up at once," cried Joss.
"I'm a'most dead," whined Joss.
"I'll 'dead' you if you don't get up at once," cried Joss.
"I'm a'most dead," whined Joss.
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"I'll 'dead' you if you don't get up at once," cried Joss.
"I'm a'most dead," whined Joss.
"I know what I'm about," said Morgan, confidently.

"Leave it all to me."”

"I run all the risk," replied Morgan, cheerfully, as he turned to rejoin his friends, who wondered, some of them, what he was up to.

There was not much amusement to be derived from watching the drunken sailors, who were swearing, laughing, and talking, playing cards, and enjoying themselves generally in a tipsy fashion; so Kelly and his comrades left the place, after having had two or three drinks.

They were dressed like swells of the vulgar order, and, after singing about for some time, entered an oyster-shop.

It was rather a seedy place, and behind the counter sat a stout woman with a pleasant-looking face, dressed very smartly. She had smiles for everyone.

There were several harks and Chinese waiters, and they served, while her sole occupation seemed to consist in taking the money. The place was crowded, and she evidently did a roaring trade, taking care to keep a sharp lookout to see that her assistants were not wasting their time.

"Snug and comfortable place this," observed Captain Zep, as he swallowed his oysters. "I say, Joss, you're in Kelly's right circle; that rather prepossessing lama seems to have taken a fancy to you!"

"I don't want any of your say," growled Jos. "Can't a man cut a dozen of oysters without being bothered?"

"She's a staring at you with all her eyes," observed Salmon Roe.

"This was the truth, Mrs. Flynn was looking at Joss keenly, with a puzzled look on her face.

"What the devil is she staring at?" said the aggrieved Joss. "I hope she'll know me again; blessed if I might be a lucky one for him after all."

"What lie was up to.

"All right," answered Kelly. "I know what I'm about," said Morgan, confidently.

"Then I'll never leave you again," he cried; becoming most affectionate as his glance took in the comfortable and substantial arrangements that met his gaze.

"Never leave you again, so help me!" he cried. "How I ever came to do it puzzles me. You, who was so good! Thank you, my girl. Just a taste more of the stuff to spoil the water (as he tendered the glass she had filled for him). Yes, it fairly puzzles me, now I think on it, how I ever could! I'm blown if I can make it out but here I am, old woman, and here I'll stick, and we'll be just as happy as rats in a corn-husk.

He threw his arms round his wife's ample figure as he spoke, and they embraced each other, while Kelly and his companions looked on, amazed at the unexpected and dramatic scene.

"You mean what you say?" she asked rather doubtfully.

"You won't leave me again?"

"Never!" he returned, well pleased to have found such comfortable quarters.

"I hope you will keep your word," she said with a faint sigh, as she hardened to place the best the house afforded before her unexpected guest.

After drinking to the health of the re-united couple, Kelly and his companions left Joss with his wife to talk over old times, and went to their hiding-place.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW KELLY AVENGED TREASURE.

The bushrangers had a good laugh over Joss's matrimonial adventure.

They never, however, for one moment believed he would give up his roving life to sit quietly down with a wife, and help her to keep a shop.

They believed it to be a mere frolic more than anything else, of which he would soon weary.

After breakfast, Kelly, thinking that one person would be less noticed than three, arranged to go down to the "public" and meet Morgan, his boatswain.

He was flautly dressed, while he had assumed a new pair of whiskers, that completely changed the expression of his face.

He knew his way about, and soon found himself once more within the walls of the low-roofed saloon so dear to the sailors' mind.

Morgan, the boatswain, was there, and several other members of the crew.

Morgan had gone round to all the drinking places in the locality, and by telling them that Kelly was about once more to take to the seas in search of plunder and adventure, easily persuaded nearly every man of the old crew to join.

It was unwise to trust new hands.

After drinking to the health of the re-united couple, Kelly and his companions left Joss with his wife to talk over old times, and went to their hiding-place.
the hotel kept by Smith, whence they could be sent on

After finishing his business, he strolled along, and pre-
sently came near a police-station. He had no fear there.
Too many crimes were committed in California for them
to bother about those committed in Australia.
He nearly betrayed himself, however. Coming down
the steps of the station was Joss, in conversation with an
officer.

"This night, at eight, master," said Joss to the man,
"and you shall make a fine haul."

"I'll get the men together," replied the officer, "so don't
bother me here in time."

"Never fear," answered Joss, with a savage sneer on
his countenance. "I'll teach him to play his dirty prac-
tical jokes on me. But before I place the lot in your
hand, I must know something about my part in it. I must
have an agreement that I am not to be quodded with the
lot, for this reason."

And so they parted company.

Kelly's passion was something terrible to witness. He
could scarcely restrain himself, but he knew that he must
do so if he would have vengeance.

All was clear to him. In return for the brutal practical
joke played upon him on the previous day Joss was about
to win immunity for himself by betraying his comrades.

It was a momentous thing. It was all or nothing. The
chief, "and he'll give you a clean bill of health for the
future. Come along; you won't bust yer boiler at that
pace."}

Kelly's object was to induce Joss to walk a few yard*
in time. Morgan promised strict
discipline.
Kelly then went back to the don where they had been
canceled by Mr. Smith.

He watched the place keenly and saw nothing suspicious.
No, Joss wanted to have the luxurious enjoyment of wit-
nessing their capture.

He went in, and found his two companions playing a
friendly hand of cards.

"What's up?" asked Zeph, who saw that the bushranger
looked black as night.

"That villain, Joss, the cowardly sot, is going to betray
us," he replied, with a fierce and terrible oath; "he's been
so far as to excite his suspicions too
greatly.

He conversed in a bantering way with him, called for
drinks, and smoked another cigar.

Mrs. Flynn sat behind the bar, presiding over all as
usual.

"I don't care," answered Kelly, and reseated himself for

"What a triumph for the Frisco police would be this
extensive capture!
To do what had been the hope of all the colony forces
for years!
The English government would of course ask his ex-
tradition, and the reward would be claimed in California and
not in Australia.
"I'd sooner run my — neck into a noose," said
Kelly, when they were alone, "than let that white-
headed car crow over us."

"But what's to be done?" asked Zeph. "The traps
are on the lay."}

"I'll tell you that they mean to make a big haul, and
won't be ready until eight," said Kelly, "when the maen
hound is to meet the police. Meet the cuss—never. I'll
bring him in his own den first. Listen to my notion."

They did, and with perfect ease.

The plan proposed by Kelly was a daring one indeed,
but the most dangerous part he took upon himself.
"It required great command of face and temper, and the
utmost cool courage.

His comrades admired and agreed.

Iwards six o'clock then Kelly went to the oyster-
station kept by Joss's wife.

He found it bust as usual.

Mrs. Flynn sat behind the bar, presiding over all as
usual.

Joss was fussing about generally, smoking big cigars
and making acquaintances.

His sallow complexion flushed a little at sight of Kelly,
but he invited him to have a drink with almost exuberant
hospitality.
Kelly did not refuse.

"Forgotten all about our lark yesterday, eh, old man?"
he said, grinning.

"Of course," replied Joss, grimly.

"Going to tie yourself to your wife's apron-strings
after all?" laughed Kelly.

"I'm safe," responded Joss; "and then, I've see,
there's no work to do. I'm the perfect gent; all I has
to do is to eat, drink, and do the swell."

"Ah!" said Kelly, with a grin, "that life '11 suit you to
a hair, my friend."

"Yes," said Joss, who did not like the way in which
Kelly spoke.

But Kelly was careful not to excite his suspicions too
greatly.

He asked him if he was really going to give up the
ship and all to

Mrs. Flynn seemingly took no notice. She appeared
absorbed in the multitudinous ramifications of her
business
Presently the clock marked seven.

"Well, Joss, darling, about that whisky?" she said,
with an odd gleam of the eye, which Kelly carefully ob-
sered.

"You ramboungious she cat!" he thought to himself,
"If I only had you safe!"

But he simply watched Joss.

Kelly's object was to induce Joss to walk a few yards
with him—to accompany him to a rendezvous, but how to
do this had puzzled him sorely.

Morgan, however, suggested the means.

He wrote a letter from the "trap" with whom Joss had
been in communication, and whose name he managed easily
to learn, requesting Joss to meet him at the police-station
upon an important business.
Kelly managed so that the missive was delivered while
he was at the bar, and chuckled with devilish glee as he
saw him leave the house in answer to the letter, and walk
blindfolded into the pit prepared for him.

I don't care," answered Kelly, and recited himself for
a moment.
As soon, however, as the other's back was turned, he
Kelly hastily rose and followed him, as he took his way down a narrow street which led to the station.

Kelly followed him closely, but cautiously, until he came to a doorway at a great distance from an oyster-shop.

Kelly whistled, and out darted a party of seamen, who threw a horse-cloth over Joss's head.

Before he could strike he was secured, and hurried along by his comrades.

It was quite dark, and by exercising great caution they managed to reach the boat that awaited them, into which Joss was loaded, much more dead than alive.

Meanwhile, at the police-station, several officers and some forty policemen had been selected for the expedition.

At first the officials refused to believe in the possibility of some audacity.

It was a common bandit and bushranger should have the audacity to seize a vessel on the high seas, and surround the world with his gang appeared in those modern times incredible.

Let our readers who doubt this wait until they see what Kelly's brother did in this line, and the correspondences between Victoria and the British Government upon the subject, vide Times July, 1881.

It was the joy, therefore, of the officers and men, at the prospect of such a wonderful capture.

Eight o'clock came, but no Joss, and the officers became very uneasy.

One of them determined to go down to the oyster-shop and make inquiries.

Mrs. Flynn was very much alarmed. Her husband had gone out soon after seven.

The chief of the "robbers and thieves" was in the saloon, and he had come after him.

"The rascals have had some of him!" cried the officer, and dashed back to the police-station.

Then all rushed to the pier to see the supposed yacht in the act of sailing out of the bay.

The officers were frantic with humiliation and rage.

There was not a single steamer available for the chase ready.

All the men-of-war on the station were absent, cruising at sea.

It was determined, however, to send out a sharp revenue cutter to give warning.

But all felt bitterly disappointed at the failure of their well-laid scheme.

Meanwhile, Kelly and the whole of his band had got on board.

Joss was cast into the hold very tightly secured.

Kelly was determined to execute a bitter vengeance upon the traitor.

It should paralyse even his own crew.

Now his principal object was to escape from his enemies.

That he would be hotly pursued he could well imagine, and safety was the first law.

A sharp look-out was kept, and then he and his men held a consultation.

Kelly determined to try him by court-martial, condemn and hang him.

His associates were unperturbed at the idea.

It was an idea suited to their ferocious natures.

But for the timely action of Kelly they would all be lying in San Francisco jail.

Had the police not had the sense to keep Joss a prisoner all would have been over with them.

Death, or prison for life, would have been their portion without a doubt.

But they would soon have their revenge on the cowardly traitor who had turned upon his pals.

As soon as breakfast was over Kelly called those who acted as officers together, and bade some of the men bring doss in.

A court martial on board a regular ship is a very solemn thing.

If the was her business the ship is greatest rocky.

The great cabin is prepared with a with a green cloth.

Pens, ink, and paper, prayer-books, an war, are placed round to each member.

"Open the court," says the president.

In this case Kelly, Zeph, and Saloon Rose the court, while pipes, tobacco and spirits are fore them.

The prisoner was brought in. He was dea and his legs shook under him with fright.

"So you write-lively go!" observed Mr. Holford.

"And the penalty for peaching is — "

"Death!" replied all who were near.

Joss tried to speak, but he was dragged off to the deck, where, during the brief trial all the barbarous preparations for the fearful execution had been made, but they fell far short of what Ned thought the merits of the case demanded.

Kelly, with a brutal laugh, went down into the cabin, and tossed off a glass to his swift passage to a warm place.

Of course, according to those men and their villainous code, the deed was a just and retributive one.

He had been a traitor to his pals.

Kelly had for some days pondered over the form of death he would inflict upon them.

"You trebling coward who forsakes his master,"

an "My name is Norval" has it.

The yard-arm was too common, shooting was too sudden.

He must be done to death in a way to

"Make the world grow pale.

To pour a river of life into a sea."
fled he deserved it.

Quietly lowered the shrinking, quivering, trembling body, over the side, by which the white-bellied sharks were

He suffered the pangs of death fifty times over. Verily, arms and carried him screaming to the side of the vessel.

Self-preservation, and without any hope of release. He felt the pains of hell get hold upon him.

"The pains of hell get hold upon him.

"Ain't I gentle, my baby?" mocked Kelly, as he

His whole previous life passed in review before him; the victim struggled all he knew now, with instinct of self-preservation, and without any hope of release. He felt his last terrible hour had come; and, what was more, he felt he deserved it.

His whole previous life passed in review before him; he suffered the pangs of death fifty times over. Verily, the pains of hell get hold upon him.

"Ain't I gentle, my baby?" mocked Kelly, as he quietly lowered the shrinking, quivering, trembling body, over the side, by which the white-bellied sharks were courting along, their noses rising every minute above the water, as if anticipating the repast that was to fill their open jaws.

Shriek upon shriek issued from the unfortunate victim, as he returned his horrified gaze upon the formidable jaws of the huge beasts, which almost sprang from the waves to snatch the men from the arms that were lowering him to such a fearful and certain death.

Kelly held him with mock tenderness close to himself, laughing wildly and maliciously, as he almost cuddled Jess in his Hercules arms.

Those looking on, almost felt compassion, until the thought of the fate he had prepared for them re-awakened their vengeance, and stiffened all human feeling.

Suddenly they were startled by a loud and furious curse, and Kelly was seen to grasp the man's throat.

Joss, in his despair and agony, had fixed his powerful teeth in the flesh part of Kelly's arm, and held on like a tiger.

It was only when almost choked, that his bite relaxed.

Macdonald by the paw, Kelly resolved the wretch's fate should not be postponed any longer, and crying out to those holding the tow-rope to "slack off," Jess was flung into the water, which was soon reddened with blood, while half-a-dozen sharks soon obliterated all earthly signs of the once stalwart Jess.

All fell relieved when this interlude was over; Kelly intended it to be a lesson to those around him.

And no doubt it was so, but it was not the last or the least that Kelly practised upon those who, in his parlance, were called "enrolled" on him.

The deed of blood done, there was a general carouse; and Jess's name was dismissed from the minds of all.

Zeph told capital stories of Tahiti and its beauties, both local and human.

Zeph made it out to be a kind of terrestrial paradise. He had been there three times, and only regretted having ever left it.

So, keeping a good look-out, avoiding anything that appeared suspicious, they wended their way towards the happy islands of the South.

Zeph, and one or two real salts, made considerable alterations in the rig—shortened the masts, painted her sides of a different colour, did everything they could to avert suspicion.

And so the days passed, until one evening just before sundown, they sighted the hills of the ancient Otaheite, modernised into Tahiti.

(To be continued.)
New Caledonia is an island in the Australasian seas, in the South Pacific ocean. It is surrounded on all sides by coral reefs, connecting numerous islets and banks of sand, rendering the navigation so intricate and dangerous, that the island can be approached by two openings only.

In physical aspect the island greatly resembles New South Wales, consisting in the interior of barren, rocky mountains, interspersed with fertile valleys. The sugar-cane and bananas, cooca-nut palm, breadfruit tree, taro and mangoes are cultivated, and sandal wood is found to some extent. The inhabitants live mostly on yams and fish. Trepung is flaked on the coast.

The natives are of a deep black, with curly hair, robust, active, and well made. Some tribes of them are known to be courteous and friendly to strangers, while others are treacherous, merciless and cruel man-eaters.

When the officials came on board he coolly told them his story, and, as a matter of course, was believed. As a matter of course, except under peculiar circumstances, any idea of committing any starting robbery was out of the question.

It was decided to be very cautious while at Papeete. Under French laws the government was rather severe, and any open or violent encroachment against the regulations would be resisted.

As a matter of course, except under peculiar circumstances, any idea of committing any starting robbery was out of the question.

When evening came round they smiled forth in "longshore toggs," and went into one of the innumerable grog-shops. It, like all its compatriots, was crowded with French and other sailors, and a very large mass of the other sex.

"Well I'm darned!" cried Kelly.

"What's up?" asked Zeph.

"Look at them two spoonies," responded the bushranger, laughing. "Ain't it fine?"

Well, it is all very well, perhaps in the art of courtship usually visible to the naked eye. Presumably, they were sweethearts—at all events, they ought to have been.

The two drunken sailors made some very strong objec­tions; but being extremely angry and well built, the two natives were simply, in the eyes of these sensual and coarse individuals, a revelation.

Kelly seated himself and looked around.

The scene was utterly new to him. The male, a stalwart young Frenchman, was in company with a Tahitian girl.

As Lord Pembroke says, in "The Earl and the Doctor," he had his arms round the girl's waist, while she had hers round his waist, and hung upon his breast in a simply affectionate manner.

There was also Yankee skippers to be seen among the New Caledonians, consisting in the interior of barren, rocky mountains, interspersed with fertile valleys. The sugar-cane and bananas, cooca-nut palm, breadfruit, taro and mangoes are cultivated, and sandal wood is found to some extent. The inhabitants live mostly on yams and fish. Trepung is flaked on the coast.

The natives are of a deep black, with curly hair, robust, active, and well made. Some tribes of them are known to be courteous and friendly to strangers, while others are treacherous, merciless and cruel man-eaters.

When the officials came on board he coolly told them his story, and, as a matter of course, was believed. As a matter of course, except under peculiar circumstances, any idea of committing any starting robbery was out of the question.

The port would very soon be too hot to hold them. But these men were always alive to the fact that something might turn up.

When evening came round they smiled forth in "longshore toggs," and went into one of the innumerable grog-shops. It, like all its compatriots, was crowded with French and other sailors, and a very large mass of the other sex.

"Well I'm darned!" cried Kelly.

"What's up?" asked Zeph.

"Look at them two spoonies," responded the bushranger, laughing. "Ain't it fine?"

Well, it is all very well, perhaps in the art of courtship usually visible to the naked eye. Presumably, they were sweethearts—at all events, they ought to have been.

The male, a stalwart young Frenchman, was in company with a Tahitian girl.

As Lord Pembroke says, in "The Earl and the Doctor," he had his arms round the girl's waist, while she had hers round his waist, and hung upon his breast in a simply affectionate manner.

Zeph laughed. He had seen that sort of thing before, and it did not even amuse him.

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Zeph laughed. He had seen that sort of thing before, and it did not even amuse him.
Their attire was of the simplest. But they were not even respected. They begged, prayed, entreated, commanded the crowd to disperse. Someone twitched the sticks out of their hands, which caused a roar of laughter and a fresh torrent of eloquence from the brown bobbies, which sent on the mob good-humouredly fist as they were told.

Having only arrested the criminals, their next duty was to carry them off.

Strangely enough, one of the most common articles belonging to modern civilization was utterly unknown—the handcuff.

Rope made from coco-nut fibre was substituted, and after a terrible fight the unfortunate were being away.

"The country's crowded," replied Kelly, "but what's all this here banting about?"

"Fate Napoleon," answered Zeph.

"What in the name of—pepper does that mean?" asked the trumpeting bushranger.

"Well, mate, the country belongs to the Emperor of the French," replied Zeph, "and this is his birthday. That bill mentions a big thing in the shape of a fête, as they call it, at Government House."

And he pointed to a large poster.

It mentioned that this, the sixteenth of August, being the anniversary of the Fête Napoleon, the Third, a grand garden-party would be given.

The Queen Pomare would be present, it said, and tickets of admission to strangers could only be obtained by reference to their local consuls.

"Let us go," said Kelly, "Can't get in," replied Zeph.

"Bounce!" coolly responded the bushranger.

And so they wandered their way towards Government House, the gardens of which are simply fairy-like.

We have already alluded to the loveliness of the Halls of Eliza, but never, author Vathek could scarcely have conceived anything to equal this place under such an atmosphere.

"Can't get in," said Zeph.

Kelly had been watching.

The man who took the vouchers was a grinning little ape of a half-caste.

The bushranger watched him keenly.

He noticed that he was extremely deferential to some and haughty to others, and his quick wit made him soon aware that the difference consisted in palm oil.

"My good fellow," said Kelly, "talking up with an awful imitation of an aristocratic strut, 'I've left my voucher at home—too much trouble to go back.'"

And he handed him a sovereign.

The man hesitated, and then, of course, yielded.

The Government House is a very handsome structure of white free-stone, in the Elizabethan style, and finely situated among well-wooded grounds on a height overlooking a cove.

Once inside the grounds the two men swaggered about without hindrance or stint.

The fête of Tahitian society was present, but that did not prevent many odd things from occurring—"the Fête Napoleon, and, as a matter of course, there were religious ceremonials.

The religious ceremonials were accompanied by music and dancing.

The hymns were sung, to the tune of noted minstrel-song, and the dance nothing else but the notorious can-can.

"Look out!" suddenly whispered Zeph, "that is the queen—she's the wonder!"

"That's the governess," said Kelly, "Why I've seen a better-looking one in the bush."

She was not beauty and was very fat.

"Still she was a very quiet, dignified, and good-natured old lady.

But she seemed much amused at the scene, was very friendly and gracious to all.

It was indeed what is commonly called a swell ball. Nothing so wonderful had ever been seen by such a man as Kelly.

It was simply like a view out of the Arabian Nights, and reminded him of Homburg, of trente et quarante, of fire-work nights.

He crept up as near to the chief swell party as he could.

The local governor, whose name was General Viscount Dubois, offered his arm to the queen, by whose side was, perhaps, one of the most lovely girls any man ever gazed at.

Kelly was one of those men incapable of love in the real sense of the word, as poets and authors say, but strongly capable of the passion in Montaigne's sense of the word.

He was an animal and nothing else—a coarse, and particularly vulgar animal.

The reader must recollect that we have to describe the man as he was, this being no romance, but the history of an actual (then) living individual.

"Who's that?" he asked Zeph, pointing out the brown beauty to his comrade.

"No idea," responded Zeph. "I'll ask."

Which he did, and found that the lovely creature was the left-sided daughter of the queen.

Kelly, wild, wicked and passionate, at once took a mad fancy for the lovely damsel.

There was no chance of an introduction, and he knew it well.

At this moment a young man, in semi-naval costume, an undoubted Englishman, stepped forward and joined the group.

He was "only a sailor," but he was unmistakably a gentleman.

He was introduced to the queen by the British consul, and by the queen to the girl.

Then Kelly saw this young man take the arm of his enamorata and lead her out.

He was one of those men incapable of love in the real sense of the word, as poets and authors say, but strongly capable of the passion in Montaigne's sense of the word.

He was a very quiet, dignified, and good-natured old lady.

The natives roared, but Zeph explained that their laughter was caused by the outrageous coarseness of the song with which they accompanied the dance.

"I've left my voucher at home—too much trouble to go back."

On inquiry, he found that her name was Lenee Bona, and, though known to be the queen's daughter, was spoken of as a distant relation.

After this dance was over, there was a great rush to a kind of enclosed meadow, where stood eight girls in very light and airy costumes—more airy than light.

At a given signal, and on the playing of a sprightly tune, the whole eight girls cast themselves on the sward, throwing themselves on their left elbows, and began wriggling about in the semblance of a dance, scratching their right legs.

"Can't get in," said Zeph.

"Bounce!" coolly responded the bushranger.

And so they wandered their way towards Government House, the gardens of which are simply fairy-like.

The natives roared, but Zeph explained that their laughter was caused by the outrageous coarseness of the song with which they accompanied the dance.

With rare exceptions, decency and morality are things unknown to the female sex.

As Lord Pembrok says, the girls are not moral.

It would be thought strange in Europe if a young lady would, on you had seen scarcely ten minutes, and had not spoken ten words to, were coolly to propose deserting her kindred and friends, and accompanying you, bag and baggage, to the other end of the world; but in the South Seas, is it but an ordinary occurrence, scarcely deserving of notice.

"I remember at Samoa, two ladies of high degree, fat, brown and forty, paying their court with such irresistible allure, that after telling most shameless lies about a heroically jealous wife in England, by way of making a police
He wished to give a grand lunch on board to a few of the better sort.
He particularly wished to invite Lord Westport, and some other gentlemen of position, but they must all bring a lady with them.
He had an idea that a dance would be acceptable, and had music.
The man, whose name was Evelyn Hastings, said it could be easily managed, as he had plenty of good introductions, which he had failed to deliver from want of money.
Kelly at once asked him to join them at the hotel the next day, giving him money with which to procure a rig out.
Leaves fish as the man was, he looked as if he could be trusted.

CHAPTER CIV.
ON BOARD THE YACHT.

Next day, very sparsely dressed, and looking a jaunty, devil-may-care sort of gentleman, Mr. Evelyn Hastings called on Captain Higgins, at the Queen’s Hotel.
The bushrangers had waited breakfast for their new guest, who sat down to the meal with a self-satisfied smile.

After breakfast he went out to purchase further necessities, including some luggage, and to release others detained for rent.
He then returned to the hotel, where for the present he had taken rooms.
Then, when the heat of the day was over, he went out to make calls.
He was away for some time, and then when he reported progress found that he had been very well received.
A day or two passed, and then Mr. Hastings sent out certain invitations to his numerous acquaintances, to lunch on board his friend Captain Higgins’s yacht.
There would be music and dancing, and every gentleman was expected to bring a lady.
After sending out the invitations, Mr. Hastings called on a good many of the invited guests, especially on young Lord Westport.
He graciously accepted, and promised to bring Lenee Bana, who was reported the best dancer in the country.
Kelly chuckled. Thirty couples and more had accepted the invitations.

What was the villain’s intention? To get rid of all the men and keep the women.
But how was it to be done?
As to that he had not made up his mind.
To murder thirty odd gentlemen in cold blood would be unspeakable folly.
Such a fearful crime would rouse a natural confederation against the arch-felon.
He had quite enemies enough already, without making a host of unnecessary ones.

He determined, therefore, to be wholly guided by circumstances.
It would be impossible for him to abduct Lenee Bana unless he allowed the same latitude to his crew.
What to do with the women before they entered another harbour was another consideration.
They could easily set them on shore on some uninhabited part of one of the many islands, and then escape.

Captain Higgins, as he called himself, now began to make great preparations to entertain his guests.

Every kind of Parisian shop was to be found at Papeete.
The upper-class ladies dressed in true Parisian style though this was, to say the least, a trifling gaudy.
He gave unlimited orders for the lunch and refreshments, with a select band of music, and everything that could contribute to the enjoyment of his guests.

At twelve o’clock next day the yacht fired a gun, and then was covered from deck to truck with bunting.
Soon after, barges and other boats put out in the direction of the yacht.
There was only one English man-of-war in port, a slop, while three were several Frenchmen.

Mr. Hastings, who spoke French fluently, had invited one or two of these.

Captain Illigas had deputed Hastings to do the honours, himself standing on one side, trying to look bluff but honest.

As the ladies and gentlemen came on deck, and were introduced by Hastings to their host, they thought that if he were bluff but honest, he was confoundedly ill-looking.

Still he was very humble, said little, and was most profuse in his hospitality.

As soon as all were on board, the guests and supposed officers seated themselves.

The ladies were all young, beautiful and naives.

Hastings had particular instructions on this point, which he had faithfully fulfilled.

The whole deck was covered by an awning, and the tables laid beneath.

Besides a number of boats, belonging to the guest, the caterer, and the band.

The lunch was thoroughly enjoyed, and then the decks were cleared for dancing.

As Kelly danced only in a very rude way, he had no care for this part of the entertainment.

The band struck up. All who cared for dancing selected partners, and the fun began.

Kelly went below and gave instructions.

None of the guests, naval or military, were armed while the crews of the boats took their refreshments in the different cabin.

As the dance ceased, every male guest was suddenly seceded from behind, and his arms pinioned.

Then the terrified women found themselves confronted by a band of armed sailors, looking more like satyrs than men.

A Babel of voices arose.

"Bundle the fellers into their boats," cried Kelly; "overboard with them if they ain't quick."

At this moment, Lord Westport, who had noticed the suspicious look of the men coming up from below, and who had the presence of mind to evade capture, rushed at the supposed captain of the White Eagle, and clutched him by the throat.

"Villain, what means this outrage?" he cried. "Speak ere I brain you."

" I wish I had killed you," responded young Lord Westport, to whom Lenee Bana clung, lovely in her abject terror.

" Overboard with him," cried Kelly; "let him walk the plank. Drag the girl away."

He was obeyed, and Lord Westport was taken to the sally-port.

Lenee Bana stood still, dazed and shivering with horror.

Then she leaned over the side.

Lord Westport, despite his clothes, light and summit to the climate, was swimming in the direction of the shore.

He was a very powerful athlete in every way.

But Kelly knew the waters to be infested by sharks, who swarmed in that spot.

The yacht was outside the eastern point of the bay.

It was half-a-mile to the shore.

No man, unguarded by a boat, could swim that distance without falling a victim to the voracious robbers of the deep.

Suddenly Lenee Bana gave a wild shriek as a shark slowly lifted himself and made for the swimmer.

He was close at hand, in the act of turning on his back to aim at its prey.

Lenee Bana snatched a knife from one of the sailors, darted into the waist, and leaped clean overboard.

A shout of applause burst from the lips of the astonished and applauding ruffians.

"Man a boat!" shrieked Kelly.

Everybody knows what swimmers the natives of these islands are.

Lenee Bana went down out of sight, and then, rising, swam hand over hand towards the marine monster.

It was close on to Lord Westport, but the brave girl caught one of the beast's fins and plunged her long knife into the stomach in the direction of its heart.

There was an intense wriggle, a spurt of blood, and the shark turned over.

Lenee Bana simply dived, and again attacked the animal.

By this time the boat was out and approaching the girl, while Lord Westport was making frantic efforts to join her.

The boat was first.

The girl, who swam easily with one hand, pressed the knife to her bosom.

"Like him in first," she said in very fair and intelligent English.

The men obeyed, and the two were dragged in just as the shark, furious and savage, turned to renew the attack.

Soon they were on deck.

"Now," said Kelly, as he ordered Lord Westport to be secured, "now boys, the girls are all your own."

And he clutched Lenee Bana by the arm with a ferocious grip.

"Sore!" thundered Hastings, who was wild with excitement and horror. "Look!"

And he pointed to the old Semaphore telegraph, which was exchanging rapid signals with the Semaphore tower in Government gardens.

"Do you understand what that means?" he asked in a loud tone.

"No," sullenly responded Kelly.

"Those on yonder tower have seen all, and are telegraphing the news. In a quarter of an hour two men of war will be after you."

All were startled at this information.

Escape was certainly the one thing needful for these unhanged villains.

If caught, any fresh outrage would tell against them in case of capture.

"Take the prisoners below, and crack on all sail," cried Kelly.

"Zeph, see if it is done smart," said Lenee Bana.

Their necks were virtually in a halter, and the men worked indeed with a will.
The cutter, as we already know, was a quick-sailor; but Zeph had heard that both the Royal George and Reine Pomare were very sharp vessels.

As soon as they were loose from their anchors, a lookout was sent aloft.

He reported at once two vessels in chase; they were both men-of-war.

Of course they would pick up their officers as they passed, but this would only cause a very brief delay indeed.

Every stitch of canvas that the vessel could carry was clapped on, and every act resorted to that clever seamanship could devise.

The vessels, however, that pursued them, were well-manned and admirably appointed.

Zeph and Kelly sat in the cabin alone.

"Curse Eve, and all her daughters!" said the bush-ranger. "I wish I'd never spotted one."

"We can't talk him over," asked Zeph. "He's poor as a church-mouse."

Ah! he didn't mind a bill, but he was too up to snuff," cried Kelly. "He'd do a man with a bill, or swindle a tradesman or anybody else, but he'd got nasty nice about a job like this."

Zeph made no reply, but, after drinking off a stiff glass and lighting a cigar, went on deck.

Kelly, after thinking over the matter for some time, followed him.

"Well, mate, what's the ticket?" he said to the other.

"Looks like a dark and dirty night," was the answer.

"I tell you that's our only chance, give 'em the go-by."

"Well, we'll wait until it's quite dark, then take in all sail, furl up everything," continued the sailor, "and lie to. If they can't see us, it will be spiffing."

This was agreed to, and when darkness fell upon the face of the deep, they suddenly changed their course, put out all lights, and then took in all sail.

The two men-of-war, one French and one English, kept on their course.

All they knew was, that the so-called yacht was in reality an audacious skimmer of the seas, a blot on the escutcheon of human yacht.

As for any inking of the truth, no one could, by any stretch of imagination, believe in the monstrous idea that Ned Kelly was in reality a man-of-war.

On board the English ship that evening, just before eight, the captain and first lieutenant were talking, before the former turned on for his watch below.

"Captain Crowder," suddenly said the subordinate officer, "I see it all!"

"In what way?" asked the superior.

"Don't you remember my reading you that amazing story about the Snake being stolen by bushrangers, and turning up at Singapore and Batavia as a yacht?" explained Lieut. Crofton.

"Yes, but..."

"That yacht is the Snake, and the rascally cur who entertained us was Ned Kelly," was the startled and amazed answer.

"By Jove!" said the captain.

Then putting things together, this and that, they came to the conclusion that they were right.

Only the more eager were they to capture the suspicious vessel which had carried off the girls.

"That Hastings must have been a confederate," mused Captain Crowder.

"I don't think so, sir," remarked Crofton, "he's not very particular, but he's not in that swim. I think."

"Come down and have a glass of wine," said the captain, "and then keep a sharp look out. This darkness is unfortunate."

And so it proved for them.

Early the next morning, on board the White Eagle, a good look-out was kept.

"Sail on the weather-bow," was shouted.

Zeph went aloft and saw that it was a large vessel under sail.

"Bout ship," said he, as he descended to the deck.

As soon as the White Eagle tacked, the other took in her topmast studding-sail and hoisted her wind.

The pirates had no stomach for fighting. Their only hope was flight.

"But I mean not to be taken alive," said Kelly, who, however, little thought his identity was suspected.

At the first trial of strength between the vessels there was perceptible difference.

On board the Frenchman—for it was that vessel, when the first lieutenant examined her exactant, he could not perceive that he had gained a single cable length.

"We will keep away half a point," said the captain to his lieutenant, "we can afford that, and still hold the weather-gage."

The Reine Pomare was kept away, and at once increased her speed. She neared the pirate a quarter-of-a-mile.

"They are gaining on us," said Zeph, "we must keep away a point."

The Frenchman went the White Eagle, and would have recovered her distance, but the Frenchman was again steered more off the wind.

"They'll come up to us, and be caught," said Zeph, "it's only a question of time."

Kelly swore blasphemous oaths, but prepared for the worst.

The vessel was well armed, and at a distance would make a good fight.

They still cracked on, for so slowly did the foe gain on them, but it might be night before they came up, when by some stroke of carking they might escape.

But every preparation was made for a fight. The men were well supplied with arms and ammunition.

Towards night, the Reine Pomare seemed to gain on them considerably, and they knew that the end was near.

The Reine Pomare fired a gun, but of this no notice was taken.

Still, after a consultation, it was determined to trust to a long gun they had on board.

Their only chance was to disable the other's masts, and then again seek safety in flight.

Zeph had it hauled out and carefully loaded. He and one or two old men-of-war men undertook to work it.

He put a good man at the wheel, and stood by to give his directions to him and to the sail-trimmers.

They took steady aim, and then at an opportune moment fired.

All watched the result, but it was null—except that it set a few ribbons of canvas flying.

"Better run," growled Kelly.

But it was too late. The Reine Pomare was splendidly handled, and soon came near enough for a broadside, which tore several of their sails to pieces, and sent the main topmast by the board.

They must now surrender or die fighting. They fired a broadside as well, and kept up a constant discharge of the long gun.

They certainly did considerable damage, but that did not prevent the other vessel from coming up head-over-land.

The pirates were ready, well-armed, and desperate.

They fought with furies round their necks.

Soon, amid a cloud of smoke and the roar of artillery the vessels collided, grappling irons were thrown, and then a mass of men darted on the pirate's deck.

The defence was of a formidible order.

Kelly fought with desperation. Bringing off his revolvers he drew his cutlass and fought against odds manfully.

Several times the Frenchmen were driven back, and many hurled into the sea.

The deck was slippery with blood.
Suddenly from below rushed Lord Westport, and with a drawn sabre rushed at Kelly, whom he cut down, wounding him severely.

The rest surrendered, and a few minutes later, the delighted ladies being set free, the two vessels were being refitted.

Next day they entered Tahiti harbour in triumph, and the audacious pirates were lodged in the local prison.

Such a sensation had never been known in that generally peaceful island.

CHAPTER CV.

THE PRISON.

Kelly was not seriously wounded, but still he required care and nursing.

As chief and ring leader he was more watched than anyone else.

"Tell me all hands it was determined to make a signal example of him.

Such a daring action as the abduction of the girls and the defence against a man-of-war was unheard of.

Then an examination of the vessel proved her to be the Snark.

The whole mystery then came out.

The English representatives demanded that the vessel and the pirates should be given up to them.

The French authorities demurred, and finally the decision of the knotty question was referred to the home government.

This gave the pirates a long respite, which Kelly determined to make use of.

He resolved to feign great weakness.

He was not chained, but fastened in a strong room with a bed, a small table, and a chair.

All the money that remained to the villains had been secured as prize money, but the persons of the prisoners had been only hastily searched.

Kelly had round his waist a girdle full of valuable diamonds, which he had always ready to put on when in danger or likely to be compelled to "make tracks."

This knowledge gave him courage.

He was visited twice a day by the doctor, and once by a sister of charity, while his meals were brought to him by an odd character enough.

Danger or likely to be compelled to "make tracks."

"I have to say the man, clasping his hands, "and my famille, and the rest surrendered, and a few minutes later, the audacious pirates were lodged in the local prison.

Ned Kelly reluctantly gave his consent.

Jean Gordon, a marine, who in the course of his voyages had picked up a small smattering of French, was now unveiled his plan.

"If he would help him to escape he would divide them their way to the garrets and on to the roof.

They could make their way to the curtais and on to the roof.

He would contrive a good stout knotted cord, which would enable them to reach the exercise-yard.

He fully explained his plan of seizing the ship and being far away before they were pursued.

There was a guard-house and sentries outside, but scarcely any watch was kept in the interior of the prison.

Ned Kelly's eyes sparkled with hope. The man was evidently greedy and covetous.

He sat wrapped in deep thought for a long time.

Should he escape alone, or should he let loose all his fellows?

A grand idea flashed across his mind.

He would liberate all, and once again seize the cutter and put to sea.

In the evening the jailer returned, and announced that he had received thirty-three pounds for it—a little over eight hundred francs.

The man had questioned him much about it, but he was careful to give no information.

He wanted to know if there were any more, and his answer had been, he believed, yes.

As the man had brought him his supper, with a small bottle of whisky which he had smuggled in, he offered to stay awhile and discuss matters.

Kelly, who saw the man was bound to him body and soul, now unfolded his plan: He proposed that at midnight next day he should let the whole party out.

Of course he must go with them.

He fully explained his plan of seizing the ship and being far away before they were pursued.

The man listened to him with amazed horror, the impudence of the thing was so intense.

"Egad!" he cried, "but that is a fine stroke of vat you say—plans. Where you go?"

"To a land where gold peeps out of the ground like 'taters," said Kelly.

And he described the gold-diggings, of which Jean Goujon had certainly never heard.

The man was enraptured and agreed to everything.

Discipline in that country was rather lax.

There was a guard-house and sentries outside, but scarcely any watch was kept in the interior of the prison at night.

He could with his key unlock the rooms and cells in which the prisoners were confined. Then they could make their way to the curtains and on to the roof.

He would contrive a good stout knotted cord, which would enable them to reach the exercise-yard.

Jean Goujon declared that to ensure success he must have a confederate, and the only one whom he could trust was a woman.

She was bound to him body and soul, and could be trusted.

Ned Kelly did not relish the proposition, but the jailer declared it must be.

Ned Kelly reluctantly gave his consent.

Jean Goujon further offered to make enquiries about the cutter which lay in the harbour.

He then left his new pal and retired, leaving Ned Kelly in the seventh heaven of exhilaration and hopefulness.

He had, after long research, found on board the cutter a secret locker, in which he had concealed a considerable part of his plunder.
He had every hope that he would be spared.
At all events, he could but try his fortune.
It was the midday news which Jean Goujon brought him, and with it news.
The Snake had been refitted, but, pending finding a crew for her to be taken back to Australia, she had a few necessaries put on board her—in fact, what is known to afloat as an anchor watch.
Kelly grinned as he heard.
She had been cleared, well supplied, and of course there was plenty of provisions on board.
Kelly wasflushed and excited.
He longed for the night to come, and for it to be over.
The warder gave him his very earnest about the whisky, and not to drink it until the last visit of the doctor and nurse.
They would be sure to smell it, and that would spoil all.
There was no fear of Kelly disobeying his injunctions.
There was by far too much at stake.
Then Jean Goujon retired, leaving the bushranger alone, very much elated, but still filled with suspense and anxiety.
As the prisoners detained in the Snake case were only accused, they wore their ordinary dresses.
Meanwhile, Jean Goujon had not been idle.
He had been round to all the prisoners, and informed them that they were to make ready for a start.
"Ned Kelly" was enough.
He was in a feverish state of excitement.
Kelly was flushed and excited.
She had been cleared, well supplied, and of course there was plenty of provisions on board.
Kelly grinned as he hearned.
Kelly said he'd think about it and went out. Once in the street, he made up the jailer's money to a hundred pounds as he had promised. He owed life and liberty to him.
Meanwhile, Zeph had made for where the Sn.
and found Kelly an anchor watch kept on board.
Not a sound was heard.
She was only warpor to pikes and when seeing a boat they crapt on board, they found three men sleeping on the deck.
These were at once secured.
If there were any sentries about, or custom-house officers, they slept under the heavy night air. At all events they were nowhere to be seen.
A couple of boats were put out after a most noiseless fashion, and every preparation made for towing her out of the harbor.
Once clear of that they could hoist their sails and have several hours start of their foe.
After this escapade they could surely expect no mercy from English or French.
Presently Kelly and the Frenchman came hurrying on board, the vessel was unmanned and slowly and cautiously she was towed out.
The scene was one that would have singularly impressed a thoughtful mind. The beautiful—though rather dark—night, sleepy clouds, myriads of stars, and the vessel as it swept along in dark shadow actually touching the trees as it passed.
Everything was hazy in that fortunate clime, and no one as a rule bothered themselves about other people's business.
The Snake was a mile from shore before an hour, with all sail set.
The astonishment of the crew was something stupendous.
Their belief in Kelly when they heard alll became a coarse, vulgar kind of hero-worship.
There were few of those who expected to escape the gallows on board, and their relief was naturally very great.
The wind was fairly fresh, and at two o'clock they had made a good stretch.
Five minutes later, a rocket went up, and the boom of big guns was heard.
"Who's the row?" asked Kelly.
"They find out you have escaped," cried Jean Goujon, with a shrug of the shoulders.
"We must crack on a buster," said Kelly, addressing Zeph. "If they see us at daylight we shall be gone come.
Zeph gave his orders, and then the leaders went below to smoke, and drink, and sleep.
They were to be called at daylight.
Thev were, and came on deck at once.
Nothing of the dreaded cruisers were to be seen, but in the wind's eye was a merchant brig.
"Might hold something useful," said Kelly. "All is fish to our net.
"Nothing comes unwelcome," replied Zeph. "We'll steer for her.
And, altering their course, they did so.
The vessel tack hardly any notice of the supposed warship which was coming up.
The brig was Yankee, owned by a man who was going around with notions to sell in the islands.
He was a straight up-and-down sort of a chap, with an impertinent opinion of himself and his country, which is not an uncommon failing with our transatlantic brethren.
As soon as the pirates were close to her they fired a gun.
The brig came to, wondering what was the matter.
The cutter put out a boat, and Kelly and Zeph, with a crew, started for the brig.
They meant to play a practical joke of a kind not likely to prove very pleasant to the sufferer. When they, in the dress of officers, leaped on the deck, they found the master sitting on a hen-coop. He was a short, thick, paunchy-looking fellow, who never offered to salute them.

"You're Britons, I guess?" he said.

"I guess we are," replied Kelly, imitating his twang.

"Has Columbia, heavy load? If I ain't ruined, I'll be d—d." said Zeph.

Kelly in a bantering tone.

"Them the kind of notions you're loaded with?" said Kelly. "Got any good whisky?" asked Kelly.

"Is your cargo so valuable, old horse?" asked Kelly. "Some like sweet almonds, and some likes silk; and some likes opium, and some," he added with a cunning grin, "to prove very pleasant to the sufferer.

"Them notions is, you see, a little of all sorts, sir," replied Kelly. "Some notions and what spirits lucky over them dollars," cried Kelly, and what spirits sighted after the yacht of the Yankee skipper, showed her teeth. "Sail ho!" cried the master, whose face became the colour of one in the jaundice. "Hang over them dollars," cried Kelly, and what spirits you can spare or, by thunder, I'll sink your craft."

"You're only piling it on," said Kelly. "You'd better be pretty smart," said Kelly, as he pointed to two of the best men at the wheel, and others as sail trimmers.

The skipper went on board and told his story in exaggerated tones. The officers heard him with astonishment. They, however, soon got rid of the drunken Yankee and started in pursuit.

Zeph now examined the map keenly. There were not only charts, but there were also "Memoirs of the Sea," which minutely described every island.

The number of inhabited islands was considerable, but there were also some that were quite uninhabited. Zeph proposed to make for one of these islands, which lay under the lee of Tabani, and there remain concealed until the first hue and cry was over.

Kelly at once acquiesced.

He was, while at sea, completely in the hands of Zeph in whom, however, he had the greatest confidence.

It was not so many years before that the island to which Zeph was about to make his way was the refuge of pirates. The passages through this dangerous navigation being then only known to the pirates who frequented them, proved an added security.

The largest of the three islands forms a curve like an open horseshoe to the southward, with safe and protected anchorages when once in the bay on the southern side. But previous to reaching the anchorages there are extensive coral reefs through which it is necessary to conduct a vessel.

This passage was extremely intricate; but there was amongst the ship's charts a very good one of this island, made by a well-known American.

Zeph felt that he could, with the aid of this, come near them.

When they were close to the dangerous channel, Zeph put two of the best men at the wheel, and others as sail trimmers.

He himself went forward and placed the chart on the captain.

The chart was carefully prepared, with every point marked out clearly. The islands themselves had been originally composed of coral rocks, a few cocoa trees raised their heads where there was sufficient earth for vegetation, while one part was a tall rock.

But the chief peculiarity of the islands, rendering them suitable to those who frequented them, was the numerous caves with which the rocks were perforated, and the breakers now turned and broke in wild foam over them, in some cases merely rushing in, and at high-water falling into deep pools which were concealed from each other when the tide receded; in others, there was a sufficient depth of water at all times to allow you to pull in with a large boat.

It is scarcely necessary to observe how convenient the higher and dryer caves were as receptacles for articles which were intended to be concealed until an opportunity occurred for disposing of them.

They were soon in the channel, and Zeph quickly showed what seamanship he was capable of. He carefully evaded the breeze, but, however, to be careful, as the breeze had freshened, and the water was in strong ripples, so that they could no longer see the danger beneath her bottom.

Half-an-hour later the wind had considerably increased, and the sea was becoming much rougher, and the breakers now turned and broke in wild foam over the coral reefs in every direction.

The wind was one just suited to the craft, and so off they went again out of sight.

Meanwhile, the American had taken care to cross the track of the cruiser, and to put up signals of distress.

The cruiser at once backed her mainyard and lay to. As Kelly put his foot on deck there came a cry of—

Zeph went up, and at once declared it be the English raisin, but dull hewn. Zeph at once gave his orders, and soon the White Eagle stood under press of sail to the northward.

Zeph knew that nothing but a misfortune would save them but a hail from the British slr.; and, if they were seen, the cruiser would be sure to follow. The cruisers at once backed her mainyard and lay to. They were soon in the channel, and Zeph quickly showed what seamanship he was capable of. He carefully evaded the breakers, but, however, to be careful, as the breeze had freshened, and the water was in strong ripples, so that they could no longer see the danger beneath her bottom.

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"Mold Columbia, heavy load! If I ain't ruined, I'll be d—d."
But there was little chance of their being seen. They would have to attend to themselves.

Zeph stood at the bowprit giving his directions to the helmsman.

More than once they grazed the reefs and then were clear again.

Spars were forced astern, and every means resorted to to check her way.

They had now no guide but the breaking of the wild water on each side of them.

"Starboard a little," suddenly shouted Zeph. "Starboard yet. Steady so," and he pointed to some smooth water between the breakers. "Port a little—steady!"

And a few minutes later they were safely anchored in a sheltered haven under the lee of the tall rock we have spoken of.

They were for the present safe.

Then a look-out was sent to the summit of the tall rock, and in two hours later reported the cruiser in sight, bound for Tahama.

The ruffians knew themselves safe for the present.

They took in all sail, lowered the spars, and then went into the already pirated casa to enjoy themselves, which, under the circumstances, meant smoking, drinking, and gambling.

There were no nymphs or maids to beguile the time in those diggings, not even our maidens.

CHAPTER CVI.

KELLY MAKES A DISCOVERY.

Early next morning Kelly, who liked nothing unless it was audacious, proposed that next night after dark a select party in various disguises should visit Tahama, and hear what was said.

He proposed four sailors in the captain's gig, himself, Zeph, and Jean Gouton.

He of course must be carefully disguised. But the marine was not a Frenchman for nothing.

To him to make up as an English sailor appeared the easiest thing in the world.

How he was to carry it out was to the vainglorious Frenchman a mere trifling question.

Of course he must avoid speaking, though for that matter he might be a Jersey man, even a Frenchman.

Such things had happened.

The island of Tahama was about two hours distant.

It was not their intention to go into the harbour direct, but to land somewhere up the coast, hide the boat, and walk into the town.

Kelly had a straw hat, a loose cotton blouse, trousers tied, and loose boots, the dress of European cotton planters.

He further had a pair of spectacles and a riding-whip, which, under the circumstances, meant smoking, drinking, and gambling.

There were no nymphs or maids to beguile the time in those diggings, not even our maidens.

Close at hand was another one much larger, which was occupied by a part of English naval officers.

There was Lieutenant, Lord Westport, and the captain they had bamboozled at Batavia.

Kelly knew them in a moment.

"Ve, sir," said the latter: "The unchallenged event actually proposed with us, and invited me to spend a day or two at his plantation!"

"The soundspell?" responded the young lord; "never shall I forgive my impudence. To invite her Majesty's officers to a breakfast!"

"The villain must be awfully cunning," resumed the other; "while his impudence is something beyond comparison."

"Nothing would astonish me," said the young nobleman.

How Kelly chuckled. The last was all nuts to him. His gross vanity was tickled.

Half his crimes were the effect of his inordinate conceit and vanity.

He was in a rage when he was caught, and when the water came—he spoke some sort of English—ordered a most gorgeous lunch.

His companions were afraid he would do some rash and dangerous deed. When exhilarated he was very reckless and daring.

They resolved to watch him carefully, lest he should do anything rash.

But Ned Kelly was too glad in heart to be as mad as he sometimes became when under the influence of drink.

He whistled and crowed, and did nothing at all outrageous.

Zeph and Salmon Roe kept a constant eye upon him; but he merely cracked a joke or two.

He was even cautious not to raise his voice too high.

He knew it was a peculiar one, and might be recognized.

Presently, the heat increasing, the officers went in, leaving the bushrangers to their devices.

Kelly laughed grimly. He had never enjoyed anything so much in all his life. It was a splendid joke, and he appreciated it.

"Blow me if I don't keep it rolling!" he said with a hoarse laugh; "we dine at that there table to-day," he added, pointing to a bill.

"Be cautious, Ned," urged Zeph.

"I value my neck as much as my bloke," growled Kelly, "so don't you do the same thing.funk."

"All right," responded Zeph.

They went into caravanserai and secured rooms for the night.

They reclined on luxurious couches, and drank sangaree and smoked.

It was not their intention to go into the town, but to land somewhere up the coast, hide the boat, and walk into Tahama.

The dinner passed off very well, and then the whole party adjourned to a large coffee-room and saloon, much frequented by the élite of the native and European population.

Kelly and his party sat at a window looking out of the window in the man; of course, rough, vulgar, and daring.

Presently they fell asleep, nor woke until the first gong sounded for dinner.

There was no severe etiquette at that time of year as to dress.

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Kelly had a straw hat, a loose cotton blouse, trousers tied, and loose boots, the dress of European cotton planters.

He further had a pair of spectacles and a riding-whip, and looked eminently respectable.

Zeph had a similar disguise, and the rest were to represent sailors, while Salmon Roe was made up as an overseer.

On reaching the coast they found a small fishing village, where they could leave the boat and the crew.

It was about a mile from the harbour, and the walk was a pleasant one, and shady one.

The three walked along leisurely in conversation, smoking as they went.

They passed several natives, who nodded and laughed, but luckily did not speak.

Then they reached Tahama.

They did not care about making a grand entrance, but worked their way into the town towards the port.

There were the public buildings, and among others a grand hotel of two stories high, covering a large space of ground, and surrounded by gardens.

In these were several tents.

One of these the three took possession of. They were bell-shaped, and did not reach within three feet of the ground.
For the first time Ned Kelly met Jekn Goujon, the English captain, and moved on.

"I'm after you as the pinna said to the rabbit," cried Josh Caleb; "but I'm a blamed vagabond has," cried Caleb; "but I'm a Britisher !" said the Yankee skipper, "so to-morrow we'll start for Australia.

"He was darned if he war a-goin' to be streaked by a dirty Irish accent," spoke—

"That's the right grit. I reckon I'd give a few cenis to be a Britisher again," cried Ned Kelly, "and mean to be even with the salt junk and ration rum."

"Yes; he'd never be happy out of his old den," remarked Ed Kelly.

"No more!" was all the other said.

"I trust in you, mate," urged Kelly. "Me a confounded pumpkin faced Britisher? No, sirree, I ain't. I'd sooner go to—- and pump thunder—- I would—at three cents a clap, than be a confounded Britisher?"

"Yes, the daring ruffian has committed more crimes than any other bushranger in the colony," continued the English captain, "because his name is worth a thousand dollars in gold."

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"Me a confounded pumpkin faced Britisher? No, sirree, I ain't. I'd sooner go to—- and pump thunder—- I would—at three cents a clap, than be a confounded Britisher?"

"I'm after you as the pinna said to the rabbit," cried Josh Caleb; "but I'm a blamed vagabond has," cried Caleb; "but I'm a Britisher !" said the Yankee skipper, "so to-morrow we'll start for Australia."

"The vilest vagabond that ever broke the bread of life," cried the skipper, "are equally lolish and blatant.

"I wish I had the varmint by the scruff of his neck."
attended by anyone who chose, but not by the higher classes.

Still it was good enough for Kelly and his accomplices, as they went.

It was the usual free-and-easy kind of affair, and the three men enjoyed themselves.

About an hour after their entrance, they noticed Jean Goujon and the others of the boat's crew come in.

They looked very shaky, as if they had made a night of it.

They entered an inferior saloon, and Kelly determined to keep an eye on them.

If Jean Goujon got drunk, he might talk, and in the exuberance of his good fortune it was a very likely thing for him to do.

Kelly followed him into the room, and stood close behind Jean, who, with the others, was standing at a gin and whisky bar.

"Superlète!" cried Jean Goujon. "Ve veck drank ze visky — vat you call a la sante of ze Engleesh."

They laughed heartily.

Then they went to the board of green cloth.

Their own people, had come to Tehama under the escort of the English sloop of war.

The American colony were all there.

And they returned to the hotel.

The English officers had all taken their departure, but the American colony were all there.

Captain Josh Caleb, as he called himself amongst his friends.

They were spotted him," he whispered to an English sailor of the boat's crew, "make your carcases scarce, or you'll be copped. Take him with you."

"I always cypher'd," said a looker-on; "you Johnny Grenouilles didn't cotton to Britishes."

"Lah is all change," cried Jean. "Ze Engleesh and le Français best of friends since Bong Johnny time, a men vieux. Veel you drinks?"

"I reckon that's Johnny Gudjeron," whispered a man close to Kelly. "Dana my old stockin's, he's a worth a pot. Let us off."

And the two men moved away.

Kelly hurried up to where Jean Goujon stood with his friends.

"They've spotted him," he whispered to an English sailor of the boat's crew, "make your carcases scarce, or you'll be copped. Take him with you."

"The man nodded, and two minutes later the party took their leave.

Kelly and his companions followed their example, and returned to the hotel.

The English officers had all taken their departure, but the American colony were all there.

Captain Josh Caleb, as he called himself amongst his own people, had come to Tehama under the escort of the English sloop of war.

He thought he would thus be safe.

They played cards, they drank, they sang, they shouted, and then the three bushrangers saw Josh Caleb up to their rooms.

Having run him in safety on Kelly's own bed, Zeph pinned a card to his coat, on which he had written a few words.

Then the three men went downstairs, paid their bill, and took their departure.

It was late next morning when Josh Caleb awoke, to find himself lying full-dressed on a bed in the hotel.

Poor with thirst, his mouth white and hot, he rang the bell and the waiter came.

"Water and straight whisky!" he cried.

The waiter gave him both, and then did a perceptible grin.

"What's up, you yellow cuss?" asked Caleb.

The waiter, a Mexican-looking card, pointed to a white card fastened to a button.

Josh Caleb snatched it and read.

The card was written, or rather printed, by Zeph.

"You skinny old curse! I don't brag so much, old nutcracker! You've sipped twice with Ned Kelly, and you paid for it."}

Josh Caleb leaped from his bed with a roar, and, hastily making his toilet, went downstairs, whence he went off to the American Consul.

That individual was at first incredulous, then appalled.

But what could be done? There was no man-of-war on that station, but a swift revenue cutter, which was at once dispatched.

The fury and indignation of all who heard of the audacious deed, may be imagined better than it can be described.

The impudence of this cosmopolitan ruffian was beyond all bearing.

It thrilled people with astonishment and dread.

CHAPTER CVII.

KELLY PLAYS ANOTHER TOUCH.

Mrs.—while, the clucking bushrangers had made off; they knew that the only two vessels they had to fear were conspicuous by their absence.

They, therefore, did not hesitate to hire a conveyance to the village, where their boat awaited them.

Dismissing the driver at a small inn frequented by sailors; they found it just open.

It was nearly daylight.

Their own crew was there, quiet, and ready for orders.

Not a moment was wasted; a rapid breakfast was consumed, and then they went to their boat and hoisted sail.

No one had the slightest suspicion that anything was wrong, and no notice was taken of the escape of the nefarious gang.

As soon as they reached the cave in which the vessel was concealed, a look-out was sent to the top of the rock to keep a sharp look-out.

One of these was Jennings, the short, young man-of-war's man, a sharp, clever fellow.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE CELEBRATED NOVELS,

BY W. STEPHENS HAYWARD.

Published at 2/-.
NED KELLY

THE IRONCLAD

AUSTRALIAN BUSHRANGER
About twelve he signalled Zeph, who at once went up, and saw a sharp-looking schooner dashing through the channel under heavy press of sail.

"The revenue cutter," remarked Zeph.

"Yes, sir," replied Jennings.

And the two went below to report to Kelly. His advice was to haul out at once, and be ready to start as night fell.

"You're right, mate," answered Zeph. "But not just yet; wait for the tide.

Of course that was a matter of which Kelly understood nothing, so he acquiesced. They spent the day in the cool caves.

"Ned Kelly," suddenly said Zeph, "do you know that somewhere in these caves are hidden lots of tin?"

"One of our sort was took and offered, if his life was spared, that he would show them where over a million, in plate, jewels, diamonds, and money, was concealed."

"And the sufferers refused?"

"Yes."

"And what did they do with the bloke?" asked Kelly, with a slight show of interest.

"Hanged him," replied Zeph.

"A very stupid thing to do with a cove," philosophically remarked Kelly; "seems to me about the silliest thing yer can do with a fellow."

And the bushranger unconsciously said in other words what a great author had said before him.

"I tell you what, Zeph, do you think it's true?" asked Kelly, after a pause.

"I do," was the answer.

"Now, look you here, my shaver," said Ned Kelly, in a low voice, "tare an' ouns—what do you think we'll be doing when we get clear therefore without difficulty.

But of course they must abide their time.

"The revenue cutter," remarked Zeph.

"Pride of Lima," answered one of the officers, an Englishman, "letter of marque under the republic of Peru."

"Happily to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance," replied Zeph. "Ours is the yacht White Eagle, is this the spot?"

"Is this the spot?" asked Kelly.

"I believe it is," continued Zeph; "all I know is that not one, but twenty, old salts have told me the treasure is here or herabout's."

"Then, curse me for donkey's father if we won't find it," exclaimed Kelly; "we must look it, keep close for a time.

After some further conversation orders were given to be ready. The men were treated with excessive liberality and then put on careful rations.

"Safety before everything," urged Zeph, and the men were cheered to own that he was right.

The cutter was slowly warped out by boats, and before daylight was all-a-taunt-o.

The supposed yacht made signals and suggested an interview.

The privateer, the Pride of Lima, at once agreed, and the White Eagle put out the captain's cutter. Kelly, Zeph, and Salmon Roe went in the boat and boarded the privateer.

On the deck of the vessel, which was wonderfully well manned, stood a host of officers in deference to the British flag.

The first man who leaped on deck was Zeph. There was something of the real naval officer about him, despite his fall.

"May I ask what vess is this?" asked Kelly.

"Pride of Lima," answered one of the officers, an Englishman, "letter of marque under the republic of Peru."

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The cutter was slowly warped out by boats, and before daylight was all-a-taunt-o.

The morning was bright, clear, and hazy. The cutter got clear therefore without difficulty.

An hour later, with every stitch of sail on, the White Eagle was steering direct for New Zealand.

Except on rare occasions, the peaceful ocean keeps true as soon as she perceived her she bore down.

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Exceptional to its name. Storms are of rare occurrence, but when they do come round they are excessively severe.
SIlence—who spoke?—I cannot think what you mean,"
gasped Zeph.
"Uncle Alfred," was the calm response of the other,
"I knew you at once. Deny me, do with me what you
think proper, but do not attempt to deceive me."
"Where are you bound for?" asked Zeph, hastily.
"Callao," was the answer.
"It is well; meet me there in a week," replied Zeph.
"You shall tell me all."
"I am second lieutenant," said the young man, "and its
easy enough berth—but will you really meet me?"
"Yes," was the hurried answer.
The letter of marque was a brig of fourteen guns, and
with a goodly crew.
Zeph at once re-entered his boat and rowed back to his
own ship.
He was very much upset.
The man had been a very different person from what he
was now.
Some folly, some imaginary wrong, had changed him,
and made him a being of crime.
He was deeply moved, but he made no remark to anyone.
Who knows what memories of the past had been evoked
by this extraordinary meeting—what strange feelings, long
since, he believed, dead, were aroused within the bosom
of the man of blood and crime?
He afterwards volunteered some explanation to Kelly,
but entered into no particulars.
He seemed a changed man, his brow being overcast
with thought.
The two vessels parted company, each going its own way,
and then Zeph proposed that they should visit Callao.
Kelly was in his hands.
If he had said go to China, it would have been all the
same.
Several days passed away, during which they kept aloof
from all vessels.
Once more they assumed the characters of Americans,
as more likely to ensure them popularity where they were.
Lieutenant Charles Warner, of the Warspite privateer,
had given Zeph an address at an hotel named the Lima.
Zeph, huskily. " Give me wine—and do not interrupt,
but enter into no particulars.
He the young officer carried out his uncle's suggestions,
and then shut the door and locked it.

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CHAPTER CII.
CAPTAIN ZEPH'S STORY.
The ex-officer's narrative was rather discursive and inter-
twined with expletives.

We will not, therefore, tell it in his own words, but
give a summary of the narrative.
Zeph was the third son of a country squire, with more
pride than purse.
His estate was worth about two thousand a year, and
wholly entailed, and all would go to the eldest son
while the second was provided for by his mother's por-
tion.
Alfred and his sister were dependent on what their
father could save, and that was not likely to be much, with
the father's habits.
Hisidea well, kept a good table, and was fond of a-
hundred-and-twenty shilling port.
Alfred was to go to sea, and when under its influence was
hot, fierce, and irascible.
Alfred, as we shall for the present call him, was of a fiery
disposition himself, as was shown by his constant trouble
at school.
He was frank, generous, quick and mischievous, and
had a large portion of what sailors call devil, which was
openly displayed, while a much larger portion was deposited
in his brain and bosom.
His ruling passion was pride, accompanied by a great
deal of obstinacy.
He was quick at learning, but up to all sorts of tricks
and mischief.
In the robbery of orchards he was great, and immense
at the stealing of eggs.
He was cunning, and contrived to carry off the new-
laid eggs with practised dexterity.
At home he was the plague of his sister. Without in-
terference he was cruel.
When fourteen years of age he went home for his holi-
days. His father was ill—suffering from his periodical
accession of gout.
It was very fine weather, and cherries were ripe. The
father strictly prohibited any fruit from being picked
except by the gardener, a cannie old Scotchman.
But when the cat is away, the mice will play; and those
orders were not strictly obeyed when the father was ill.
Alfred and his sister went out one afternoon when
luncheon was over in search of an alfresco dessert.
They put a ladder to a cherry-tree, and began their
feast.
Just as they were enjoying themselves to the full, the
cannie Macdermott came in sight.
"Good morrow! the world's coming to an end," he cried. "Did
you ever see the like o' that?"
Lucy, the sister, lost her presence of mind and fell
with a sharp cry.
Alfred rushed to her, tried to lift her up, and found
her ankle sprained.
"You bullying brute!" cried Alfred, and hit the Scotch-
man a smart blow between the eyes.
He then turned to help his sister, leaving the Scotchman
furious.
Half an hour later, Alfred was summoned to his irate
father's presence.
The parent was furious.
His cherries had been consumed, his daughter's ankle
sprained, and his trusty gardener assaulted.
Violent terms ensued. The father was foolish enough
he had told me I was not worth my salt.
"But would you like to hear my story, boy?" asked
Zeph, huskily. " Give me wine—and do not interrupt,
above all else.
The young officer carried out his uncle's suggestions,
and then shut the door and locked it.

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At Christmas he came home, and nothing was said of the past, but the father and son were never cordial again. In due time Alfred passed his examination and entered the service.

He distinguished himself by his activity and general good conduct. At last he was promoted, and went home on a visit. Though always rough he was ready and courteous, especially to his sister.

But his parent was not disposed to have him at home long:

He applied to the Admiralty for employment.

Two days later his father had a big bounding official communication, announcing his son’s appointment to the Digby brig of eighteen guns at Portsmouth.

He was told to join his ship at once and take up his commission.

Alfred started next day, and, on his arrival at Portsmouth, put up at Billing’s, as a matter of course.

It was the resort of all the naval aristocracy, and near the admiral’s office.

Alfred was now above putting up at the midshipmen’s favourite resort, the Blue Posts.

Perhaps this arose from modesty, and a desire to spare his old cmdent the trouble of touching his hat too often. He then made inquiries for his captain.

He did not put up at the George, nor did he mess at the Crown; he was not at the Fountain, nor the Parade Coffee-house.

After considerable research he found that he patronised the Star and Garter.

To the Star and Garter he therefore went, and asked for Captain Ledley Gordon.

It seemed to Alfred a strange place for a captain, as it was a notorious resort of warrant officers, mates and midshipmen.

But there he was, and sending up his name he was told to go upstairs, where he was introduced to the presence of his aristocratic chief.

Captain Ledley Gordon was seated in a small room, with the remains of a glass of brandy and water before him; his feet were on the fender, and several official documents lying before him.

He rose as the other entered, and let him see a short, square-built frame with a strong projection of the sphere, or what the Spaniards call barriga.

The abnormal roundness of corporatism was, however, supported by a pair of legs that might have honoured a Bath-chairman.

He was rather good-looking, with a pleasant smile upon his lips; a deep dimple in his chin.

His eyes were peculiar: they were small but piercing.

“Happy to see you, sir,” said Captain Ledley Gordon; “proud that you have joined my ship. Sit down lieutenant.”

Alfred was delighted. This was the sort of man to be comfortable with.

“I always take care to know something beforehand about my officers,” he went on. “I look for good officers and gentlemen, one scabby sheep can spoil a ship. Above all no coarse manners, execrations, or abusive language. I have taken the liberty to make inquiries about you—and everything I hear is to your advantage.”

“My brother captains in their cabinet at the Crown. Alfred could only bow.

“I have sisters to keep”—he went on—“But never mind. To-morrow at nine o’clock.”

Alfred went back to his inn thinking how fortunate he was in having such an honest, straightforward, bold British tar of a captain.

He then ordered dinner at the George, and afterwards strolled out to make his purchases, and give a few orders for a few articles for sea service.

He then fell in with some old messmates, who congratulated him on his promotion, and insisted he should wet his commission by giving a dinner.

This he did.

At seven o’clock next morning he went down to breakfast in a speak and span new uniform, with an immensely large epaulette stuck on the right shoulder.

Presently he sallied forth, in his own conceit, as handsomely a chap as ever buckled a sword belt.

He skinned with a light and joyous foot down High-street, and on reaching New Sally Port was hailed, but made no answer until he came to the point.

“Where to, sir?” asked the waterman, as soon as Alfred had secured a boat.

“Brig Digby,” he answered.

The waterman simply heaved a sigh and said not a word, at which Alfred was rather pleased than not. He preferred his own thoughts to anything else at that moment.

The brig proved to be a beautiful vessel. She mounted, as we know, eighteen guns.

Alfred’s astonishment was great when he found the pennant was up for punishment.

Of course he took it for granted that some aggravated offender, such as mutiny, had been committed.

Seeing Alfred was an officer, he was at once admitted alongside.

So he paid the waterman, who went away.

As Alfred walked up the side he saw a poor fellow spread-eagled up to the gratings, while the captain, officers and ship’s company stood round witnessing the athletic dexterity of a boatswain’s mate, who, by the even, deep, and parallel marks of the cat on the white back and shoulders of the victim seemed to be perfectly master of his business.

All this did not surprise the young lieutenant, but, after the mild conduct of his captain on the previous day, he was amused to hear him using language in direct violation of the second article of war.

Excoriations and curses pour out of his mouth with a volubility equal to that of the most accomplished Mott on the Point.

“Boatswain’s mate,” yelled the captain, “do your duty better, or by — I’ll have you up, give you four dozen, and then disembark you. One would think—your— you were flapping flies off a cat’s back instead of hugging a soundret with a hide as thick as a buffalo’s.”

While the captain was delivering this elegant speech the victim had received four severe dozen, which the master-at-arms had counted out and reported duly to the captain.

The wretched creature turned his head over his shoulders with an imploring look, but it was utterly in vain.

Alfred all this time, appalled and horrified, watched the operation which they were compelled to witness.

He appeared to take a diabolical delight in the hateful operation which they were compelled to witness.
Now the second boatswain's mate commenced operations with a fresh cat, and gave a lash across the back of the piece of mostly blue. Alfred started.

"One," said the master-at-arms, in a droning voice, beginning to count.

"One!" roared the infuriated captain. "Do you call that one? it's not a quarter of one. Hang you, you are after everybody aft in the quarter deck."

"What?"

"That cat."

"Give that fellow a dozen, sir," said Captain Gordon.

"And if you love him, I'll put you in cross and stop your liquor."

Tom Best was the boatswain's name, and singularly enough the last part of the threat with him was worse than the first.

He began, as the saying is, to peel. Off came his spacious coat and other garments followed. Then he rolled up his shirt sleeves above his elbow and showed an arm and a back very like the Farnese Hercules, which no doubt all our readers have seen at the foot of Somerset House.

The mild and elegant commentator on the articles of war, seized the cat.

The handle was two feet long, one inch and three quarters thick and covered with red baize.

The lashes of this terrible weapon were three feet long, nine in number.

The first lieutenant, Arnold, introduced Alfred into common society and been very much struck by her.

She was a very beautiful girl. Alfred had met her once or twice in society and been very much struck by her.

While dancing she came almost face to face with Captain Gordon.

Alfred saw a fearful scowl on his face.

"Are you not well, miss?" asked the young officer.

"Yes, I was only that horrid man," she answered. "I detest him. He persecuted me with his attentions a year ago, and when I refused him, threatened me awfully. Do you know him?"

"He is my captain," was the grave reply.

"I am sorry," she said.

And the subject dropped for the time.

"He is coming this way," she whispered presently in an agitated tone. "Secure the next dance; it is vacant. I can then refuse him."

Of course Alfred did not hesitate.

"Miss Laferl," said Captain Gordon, in his most urbane manner, "may I ask for the next dance?"

"My tablets are full," she answered, putting her arm in that of Alfred as the music began.

"But this gentleman has just danced with you," he continued. "Surely he will resign you to me."

"I must decline the exchange," she answered, and drew Alfred away.

Captain Gordon stood petrified, quivering with rage. But he was helpless.

He was not on his own quarter deck now. Still he bided his time. He would be avenged.

He, however, made no more advances to Celestine Laferl that evening.

This incident naturally made the young couple more intimate, and before they parted they were very much in love.

Early next morning Alfred went on board and returned to his duty.

The captain took no notice of him.

At length came, in routine, his turn for going on shore. He was refused in language more energetic than usual.

"You've had your answer, sir."

"I have, sir," retorted Alfred; "but it is unusual, sir, to alter the routine arrangements."
"Mutiny, by heaven!" cried the captain. "I stop your leave altogether!"

"Then, sir, I shall write a letter to the admiral," said Alfred respectfully, "which I shall trouble you to forward."

"I shall not send it."

"You have said that publicly, sir," Alfred went on calmly, "in the presence of the officers and ship's company. I shall forward it myself, asking why my leave is stopped."

The captain, who was an arrant coward, at once toned down.

It was not his wish to have an official inquiry into the state of his ship.

He knew that officers and men would all testify against him.

He went below, and presently sending for the first lieutenant, bade him let the second have his usual leave.

"Boo careful," said the first. "I never saw such a devil's gleam in a man's eye!"

Alfred went on shore and called on the parents of Celestine.

They were plain, simple people, thinking only of the happiness of their daughter.

Alfred asked for time, that is until he made his next step.

Celestine had a small fortune, which at the death of her parents would be doubled.

This important step settled, the young lieutenant asked the girl to show him something of the town.

It was a cool and pleasant day, and Celestine readily consented.

Presently they passed an hotel, on the steps of which stood Captain Gordon and other officers of similar rank.

Alfred saluted, and the captain returned his salute with ironical politeness, at the same time nudging the man next to him, and saying something which aroused a roar of laughter.

"Be careful," said the first. "I never saw such a snake look in a man's eye!"

Alfred's cheeks burned.

He knew the coward had said something derogatory to the girl he loved, but he was powerless.

"There is a snake look in his eye," she went on, "which makes me shudder. If he can do you an injury you might get off with light punishment."

"But, my boy," replied Zeph, whose real name we need not give, "all that is ancient history. I have become a wild man; everyone's hand is against me, as mine is against everybody's. Forget me; never say to any that we have met. I could not if I wished it return to society."

"You will think better of it, Uncle Alfred," continued the warm-hearted young man. "There are other careers open to you besides the navy. In some obscure country retreat you might outlive all this."

"No, my choice is made," hoarsely cried Zeph. "I am not sorry we have met, because it shows me there is some good in this world."

And he would talk no more of himself, but asked questions of others, of those he had known in happier days.

Celestine had not entered the port and an hour after the meeting was over was again upon the high seas on her way to New Zealand.

After a prosperous voyage they reached a small and insignificant port on the Australian coast.

Here they agreed to remain a few days to take in water and fresh provisions.

But the great question now arose as to what was best to be done.

Kelly was tired of the sea. He was eager for more action.

Their plunder fairly divided would give them a good start.

But what about the vessel?

Could anything be done to retain it as a last resource in case of future complications?

Zeph thought not.

There was no place where it could by any possibility be secured.

Besides, its discovery would implicate them.

Their return would be known.

"What's your game, then?" asked Kelly.

"Settle her and land in boats," was the answer, and as it was said Kelly mildly agreed.

After a few days' rest and recreation, that is of orgies in sailors' drinking saloons, it was agreed to start the next day.

Zeph and Kelly had stayed on shore during the whole time, and kept aloof from the men.

They occupied rooms in a boarding-house, and hired several clerks and others.

Few had cared to inquire who the two strangers were who spent their money so lavishly.

They paid their way and were quiet, which was all the landlady cared about.

At dinner two clerks were in conversation.

"Russell, up at the custom house, is in a fidget about the strange vessel," said one; "he strongly suspects her."

"In what way?" asked the other in a low tone, but quite audible to Kelly.

"Thinks she's the missing Snake," answered the other.

"He has telegraphed to Hobart Town for a man-of-war."

"Good thing for Bussell, if he's right," responded his companion; "lucky dog."

Kelly and Zeph exchanged glances. There appeared to be some good fortune on their side.

They went on with their dinner quietly; when it was concluded, sat as usual for a few moments.

Zeph, however, slipped out and had the luggage sent down to the boat.
An hour later the two men left.

"Mr. Bene," said Mrs. Jones, the landlady, when they were gone, to one of the speakers, "you've lost me two good lodgers—they've gone away in a huff."

"What do you mean?" asked Bene.

"Your talking about the ship in that way sent them off," she continued; "paid their bill, saying they were in a hurry."

"What do you mean?" cried the puzzled man. "I do not understand."  

"That was my belief," the captain, and first officer of the vessel yonder," she answered. "I watched them while you were speaking, and they exchanged queer looks."

"Oh, Lord!" cried the man. "What a fool I have been," and he rushed out.

He went at once to the customs, and from there he and the discomfited Mr. Russell had the satisfaction of seeing the White Eagle making seaward, with all sail set.

"Good lodgers—they've gone away in a huff."

The carpenter and others had been at work. Holes were subjected to the same treatment as the ship.

Two vessels had come that day into harbour. They were, of course, warmly received.

They then sent for a ready-made clothier, and selected their own country, but

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England. accent in the world. She had lived nearly all her life in expression that was bewitching.

Frenchwomen, as commonly the case with Frenchwomen. Such a woman.

It mattered not to them who were winners or who were losers. rooks.

They contrived to dine forty. followed by a game of chance.

several haunts frequented by professional and other gamblers.

would be then at the mercy of one of the frail sex. cards printed.

But Kelly declined.

It was his policy never to trust a woman. His disguise would be then at the mercy of one of the frail sex.

Count Anatole resigned his position at the hotel—of course, it was only during the height of the gold-fever that this anomalous state of things existed—and went round to several haunts frequented by professional and other gamblers.

The programme was seductive. A select dinner party, followed by a game of chance.

The apartments were extensive, and, by the aid of an hotel, they contrived to dine forty.

They were an odd assembly. There were newly-arrived miners, wool merchants, roues, foreign and native adventurers.

All was at once settled, the place was taken, and the cards printed.

The count wanted it to be "Mr. and Madame Fellowes present their compliments," offering to find a very eligible Mrs. Fellowes at a moment's notice.

But Kelly declined.

Kelly felt like a fish out of water.

He was bewildered.

On reaching the hotel, they at once adjourned to the rooms occupied by the countess.

She had sent to her to have a luxurious evening.

"Yes," responded Kelly, colouring.

"How d'ye do here?"

"How many chips do you want?"

"I'll find the tin if you'll go halves," replied Kelly.

"I've shaved some o'ehre in the bank."

"I may say that, though I was born in the colony."

"Wonderful place," she went on, taking an admiring glance at the hereculian proportions of Kelly.

Frenchwomen, as a rule, admire brute strength far more than regularity and delicacy of features.

"It is," responded Kelly.

And then the game began, which slightly checked the conversation.

"Bring your friends. The Count Anatole will come too."

Kelly, of course, could not refuse, and so the evening ended.

It would not do to keep it up too late.

It would excite the suspicions of the neighbours and of the police, and Kelly had no desire to have dealings with the latter.

Madame la Comtesse de Paradis had a small carriage waiting, and in this she returned to the hotel, Kelly accompanying her.

He had not been used to this sort of thing—a fashionable carriage and a pretty woman.

Kelly felt like a fish out of water.

He was very pleased, but he was conscious of a difficulty in keeping up conversation.

But she counted, really a gaverness discharged for misconduct, did the talking.

Since her disgrace she had lived in certain demi-monde circles, where a varnish is acquired, a little too much for Kelly.

He was bewildered.

On reaching the hotel, they at once adjourned to the rooms occupied by the countess.

She had sent to her dace de compagnie to have a luxurious supper ready.

Madame la Comtesse had only been in the colony four months, and she had made a victim or two.

She was irresistible, and, like another Danse, was woooed in showers of gold.

Her jewel-box was a wonder.

And yet nothing could be substantiated against her.

She could not help people loving her.

Her secret life, at all events, was well kept. It might be shady indeed but no one knew anything.

To Kelly the reception in the Frenchwoman's rooms was simply a revelation.

Covers were laid for eight.

Kelly, Salmon Roe, Zep, and the Count Anatole were the men; the Countess de Paradis, her dame de compagnie, and two bright-eyed French girls were the females.

The repast was exquisite.

The viands and the wines were simply perfection itself, and the champagne lovely.

At the Tremont there were no trials upon travellers. It was real and genuine.

Kelly was in the seventh heaven of delight.

Next day, when in the seclusion of his own chamber, he fixed her eyes on Kelly with a look of bold admiration.

She was rather masculine, slight, and had a moustache, as is commonly the case with Frenchwomen.

But she had fine eyes, full and handsome mouth, and an expression that was bewitching.

She fixed her eyes on Kelly with a look of bold admiration.

"You are English, sir," she said with the slightest accent in the world. She had lived nearly all her life in England.
Kelly paid the expenses of the luxurious supper. The count was prolix in his compliments. "But I'll have my rights, mate," insisted Kelly with jiggery of obstinacy. "Well, if you like a bullet in your carcase," quiedy returned Zeph. "I'll shoot him in the streets." Zeph tried next day to alter his determination, but Kelly was obstinate. One of his savage fits was on him, and he would not be advised. "I'll have my rights, mate," insisted Kelly with jiggery of obstinacy. "If he turns tail, I'll shoot him in the streets." Zeph went to the hotel where Senor Mendez was residing and sent up a card he had written as a stayer. It had on it his real name and rank. Zeph was courteously received, though the Spaniard looked rather cool. Zeph told his story, which the Spaniard listened to with nonchalance. He spoke English perfectly, though with a slight accent. "Tell your friend that he is a low blackleg and thief," was the cool reply. "If I hear from him again, I shall hand him over to the police! Good morning." And he bowed the astonished Zeph out of the room. He was dumbfounded.

The rage of Kelly was as fierce as it was impotent. The threat of the police completely humbled him. "I'll be even with the beggar yet," he growled, with sunday savage calls. But Mendez was careful not to throw himself in his way, and soon after sailed for Havana, in Cuba, there to pursue his varied fortunes. Would they ever meet again? That only time could show. Kelly, with dogged obstinacy, would have liked to follow him, but he had other matters to attend to.

"I'll make cold meat of him," Zeph cried, as he matched the bracelets—"Demonin!"

"You are a liar," said Kelly; "and if they ere marked I did not know it."

"Sacre de dieu!" roared Mendez. "I like that. Refund the money, or—"

"Kelly rose and faced his antagonist. "You're an infernal scoundrel," he said, "and if you turn tail, I'll have my rights, mate," insisted Kelly with jiggery of obstinacy.

"All right," replied Zeph. "Good riddance of bad rubbish." Kelly muttered something, but he was in no humour to quarrel with Zeph, so he changed the subject. Their stay in Sydney was getting protracted, and might prove dangerous.
Still Kelly was not prepared to leave at once. The constable held him in his thrall. One morning after breakfast Kelly was taking an early walk. The kind of life he was leading was making him fat.

This would not do at all, as he might at any time have to return to the bush. He was amusing himself when he gave a sudden start. It was not surprising that his heart gave a great bound.

He had recognised one whom he cared for more than any human being.

A mounted policeman was passing, and he rode Marco Polo. Marco Polo, a horse which performed exploits quite equal to anything done by Black Bess.

"It is well known in England that for many years the province of Victoria was the scene of unparalleled outrages committed by the most lawless and desperate gang of ruffians that ever attacked a gold escort on its road from the diggings to Melbourne, or 'stuck up' a bank in some lonely little town on the edge of the bush. At the head of these desperadoes, the 'ironclad bushranger,' Ned Kelly, had made himself notorious and beyond the law by means of such crimes as appear to be wholly incompatible with the most-vaulted civilisation of the nineteenth century in the last quarter of its existence. In contemplating, however, the atrocities with which we have lately been familiarised in every quarter of the globe, we are tempted to ask with a melancholy American quester, 'Is the Caucausian played out?'

Given such opportunities as the wild and tangled fastnesses of the Wombat and Strathbogie ranges in Victoria afford, it seems but too probable that the 'Kelly gang' or other similar associations of fearful marauders will from time to time cause our readers to think of the Antipodes as Dick Turpin's Black Bess is in these islands. It was not unnatural that, when month after month passed without the arrest of Ned Kelly and his three daring associates, upon whose head a reward of two thousand pounds each had been set, murmurs of complaint should have been heard in Melbourne against Captain Standish's management of the forces under his command. The remonstrances, however, founded on terror, little knew the character of the country in which the bushrangers had established themselves, and where for years they were as safe as runaway negroes who in the slavery days had sought shelter in the Dismal Swamp of Virginia, or in the cane-brakes of Alabama.

Kelly then stood still and watched him. The horse was in magnificent condition. Kelly stopped up.

The policeman was quite a young man.

"It is a beautiful beast," he said, feeling his shoulder. "Splendid creature."

"You may say that," replied the other, with an Irish accent. "It's a beautiful beast."

"It is," replied the bushranger. "Will you quench?"

pointing to a drinking-saloon.

It was a quiet neighbourhood, and the trooper had no objection.

A boy held the horse.

The horse was in magnificent condition. Kelly alighted.

The policeman was quite a young man.

"The animal that my man," he said, feeling his shoulder. "Splendid creature."

"You may say that," replied the other, with an Irish accent. "It's a beautiful beast."

"It is," replied the bushranger. "Will you quench?"

pointing to a drinking-saloon.

It was a quiet neighbourhood, and the trooper had no objection.

A boy held the horse.

They entered the shop.

"Seems strange such a beauty should be in the police," observed Kelly. "No offence, sir."

"Shure and it's like this," continued the man. "The brute belonged to that thief of the world, Ned Kelly; and Captain Tom Conquest, when he grabbed the animal, swore he'd keep him."

"Oh, that's it?" replied Kelly. "Well, all I can say is, I hope he may keep her."

"Maybe not," continued the open-spoken young policeman, "as it's said that that eternal rapproche, Kelly, is about again."

"The devil he is?" cried Kelly.

"Yes, and Captain Tom, he's after him. Shure and he'll get him after all," the man said, "and then won't we all have a beautiful "wake" over his body?"

"I hope you may," said Kelly, with a queer expression which the young trooper afterwards remembered.

Now, Kelly had a new ambition in his heart, and that was to recover Marco.

"Do you often ride this here horse?" asked Kelly, as he finished.

"Every morning, sir, I pass this way," the man answered, with a wink at the public-house.

"All right," said Kelly, "I'll have another squint at the critter to-morrow."

And so he went away.

That he would have the horse he was determined; but it must be only at the last pinch.

It was nearer than he expected.

The usual evening occurred.
The table was in luck this time, and Kelly revelled in the delights of winning.

He was in the seventh heaven of delight.

The usual evening occurred.
The table was in luck this time, and Kelly revelled in the delights of winning.

He was in the seventh heaven of delight.

In the vicinity of Melbourne, Ned Kelly was known and remembered in the public-house as Dick Turpin's Black Bess is in these islands.

"It is," replied the bushranger. "Will you quench?"

pointing to a drinking-saloon.

It was a quiet neighbourhood, and the trooper had no objection.

A boy held the horse.

The horse was in magnificent condition. Kelly stepped up.

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The horse was in magnificent condition. Kelly stepped up.

"I tell you, sir, that the man who makes me presents, who is in love with me, is the robber Kelly," said Madame la Comtesse.

"I cannot tell you how I know—but I do know. How about the reward?"

"Half to you, the other half to me," replied Conquest.

"But I can hardly think it possible."

"You wait; if he is in the house he shall come here."

Kelly at once started, and met Zeph as he went downstairs.

"Tom Conquest is in the house; that infernal Dulliah has betrayed us," he said. "Your purse—meet me at the old Oak Ridge."

"All right," replied Zeph.

Kelly wasted no time. It was about the hour to meet the young Irish policeman.

He started off, and after waiting a few minutes saw the man coming.

He touched his hat.

Kelly putted the horse, which at once neighed in a peculiar way.

"Horse seems to know you."

"Animal likes me, was the return."

He invited the policeman to drink. Nothing loth, he took the bottle.

Kelly paid a boy to take care of the horse.

"Walk him up and down and keep him cool," he said;

"feed of corn—that'll content him."

"No," said the Irishman.

And they went in. Kelly now proposed a lunch such as is taken in the colonies.

A big dinner in England.

There were all sorts of delicacies, and a bottle of whisky, the whole laid in front of the bar.

Ned Kelly presently filled the police-officer's glass again, and the genial Irishman continued the conversation. He was as communicative as most of his countrymen.

"Of course you take care of the beauty at night?" remarked the bushranger.

It was a most beautiful view of her first baby, my jewel. Sorrow, one of us has half the dressing, and feedin', an' coaxin' of that dumb beast. Bedad, he's almost a Christian already, only he's too 'cute to speak—I believe he could if he chose."

"Well, what would he say if he could 'speak,' as you call it?"
"Why, aren't we, he'd just say to you, 'Pat Logan's mighty dry about the throat.'"

"Oh, I say," said Kelly. "Come in then and have a liquor. But where is this wonderful 'hair trunk' you're talking about?"

"Sings as Father Murphy's cat forenests the fire on a winter's midnight. Sure, he's up to his nose in straw in the stables behind the Station!"

Kelly had heard all he wanted. After a final drink, he and the garrulous officer parted. Kelly retired to an obscure part of the town, where he easily found a killing place until night came on, when he procured the costume of a superior class of digger, which he donned, and sold the other dress.

Then he got another man to write a letter addressed to Captain Zeph, under an assumed name, with these simple words inside:

"Wear hawks. Sold by the Count Wragge-Wragge."

This he posted, satisfied that Tom Conquest would not betray his knowledge until his presumed return to the hotel.

It was midnight when he left the place of shelter he had selected. He had no luggage. A brace of pistols, a knife, and an ample supply of money was all he carried.

The police-station was in rather a conspicuous position, but the hook, in which the stables were intersected overlooked a small open space surrounded by outbuildings. All was silent and deserted, but the wall was ten feet high.

How to get inside, and then with Marco Polo get outside again, was a difficulty not easily overcome. But the ruffian was fertile of resources, and unscrupulous in his carrying them out. He resolved to scale the wall, and thus he did it.

He had a rope with him, and at the end of it was a powerful iron hook.

This he threw up and fastened on the top of the wall. Once fixed on in the brick-work, he soon pulled himself up to a level with the hook, which was easily done, as the rope, being knotted throughout, afforded foot and hand hold.

Once on the top, he silently descended, but was awfully disgusted when, creeping up to the stables where Marco, the 'friend of his youth,' was 'in clover,' he saw a trooper asleep on the ground at the door of the stable!

What was he to do? He never could lead Marco out without awakening the sleeper.

And no time was to be lost, as daylight in these latitudes comes, as the song says, "so early in the morning," namely, about three o'clock.

Well, now or never something must be done. So, quietly, he first inspected the gateway, which was with the carelessness of colonial discipline, unbarred.

Seeing this, he softly entered the stable.

The beast turned his head, and appeared by his movements to recognise his old master, as he gently whinnied.

But as the stable was almost in darkness, he could not have seen Kelly.

So some other sense must have led him to prick forward his ears, and, as Kelly subsequently said when recounting the matter, rubbed his nose and head against Kelly's hand as gently as a favourite Tom-cat.

Putting a bridle on Marco, and adding threeto a saddle, he loosed them from the stall and turned his head towards the door.

Kelly then deliberately lit a match, set fire to the straw in the neighbouring stables, and saw the whole place in a blaze before five minutes had elapsed.

Immediately the inmates of the station were rushing about the place, when confusion reigned supreme, and fire and smoke filled everyone.

The troopers rushed to save the horses. Kelly made himself very busy as a " helmsman," and in the utmost confusion led his friend Marco into the open.

He was quickly on his back, and as quickly out of sight.

He had made up his mind that the police should have no clue whatever to the route he had taken.

He would pass through no inhabited districts, keeping well to the Bush, and trusting for food to shepherds and stockkeepers, who were only too glad to harbour the popular freebooter. He certainly did not want to tire his horse, as there might be occasions when he would have to depend upon his pluck and endurance.

Kelly always had his wits about him, as, unlike most of his kind, he never drank when on the "road," or when he had any little game on hand.

A long night's ride tired both man and horse, so he resolved at the first quiet spot to pull up and give himself a "soil" as he called it, and Marco a feed of grass, of which there was plenty about.

Just as he mounted the top of a hill and daylight had fairly broken, he saw a small volume of smoke quietly ascending.

"Hallo!" he mentally cried, "there's breakfast there, and I'm going to have some, and chance it!"

He grasped a pistol in his right hand, and rode as bold as brass up to the spot indicated.

Here he saw four men, Squatters, sitting round a large fire, frying chops and preparing the morning's meal.

Seeing the men were gentlemen Squatters, he knew he would be hospitably received, but he was so cautious that though he dismounted to partake of the breakfast offered him, he kept tight hold of the bridle.

He certainly did not want to tire his horse, as there might be occasions when he would have to depend on the animal (whose description was given in full) would be recognised if ever seen, the more especially as he had a white star in the centre of his forehead.

When thoroughly refreshed Kelly remounted to pursue his path, which was a long one indeed.

He was making for the colony of Victoria, six hundred miles distant, and prudently avoided the beaten track, as it was supposed had simply got out of his stable in the midst of the general confusion and was, no doubt, quietly grazing within a mile or two of the station.

It was expected that Marco would be found in the next Pound, but, as day after day went by, and no news of the "Government" horse turned up, the matter passed out of the public mind, excepting that the mention in the advertisement of the missing horse having once belonged to the notorious Ned Kelly made it certain that the animal (whose description was given in full) would be recognised if ever seen, the more especially as he had a white star in the centre of his forehead.

When thoroughly refreshed Kelly remounted to pursue his path, which was a long one indeed.

He was making for the colony of Victoria, six hundred miles distant, and prudently avoided the beaten track, as he felt his own company would be about the safest he could indulge in at present.

He was tireless work, from daylight to sundown, jog, jog, jog, about five miles an hour, startling an occasional long black snake basking in the sun, or putting to flight myriad of white cockatoos, who congregated in thousands, and, when disturbed, made a screaming, abominable tumult, boisterous enough to wake the dead bone and quarter time.

Ned did not feel his own company on reflection, very enlivening.

Reflection was "not in his line." He panted for action—but not the action of a six-hundred-mile ride through bush with hooted or bored.
The latter he got at out-station huts, the former à la belle époque—Anglice, under the sky, the superfluous climate rend­ering this sort of "beading-out" not disagreeable.

For two days neither man nor beast had tasted food or water.

Ned had lost the track, and in taking a "short cut" had made off a mistake in each case. Towards the third sun­down he approached a deep ravine called the Great Sydney Pass.

Still no sign of water, and he listened in vain for "the honest watch-dog's bark."

The bay of the shepherd's dogs when the sheep come homewards is often in this still-aired climate, heard a mile or so off.

For the first time Ned began to feel that he was in a predicament.

The great pass or gully seemed to be "the Great Divide" between him and the living world.

Hungry, thirsty, fatigued, he was dispirited. The ravine was two hundred feet deep, and, in the exhausted condition of Marco Polo, he was afraid the noble animal must succumb at last. The white foam already fell in flakes from his pro­pahed mouth; notwithstanding he carried his burden stoutly and willingly.

Both had just turned a bend in the path of descent, when Kelly's quick sight detected a form stretched upon the grass.

Fearing treachery he pulled up. Then, cautiously approach­ing, he beheld the dead body of a man, who had evidently been lost in the bush, and perished for the want of food or water.

By his side Kelly found a small leather pocket filled with rough gold, which he speedily transferred to his own pocket.

Have he beheld the picture of what his own fate might become by no means uncommon in Australia?

Horrifying out of sight of the corpse he managed to cross to the opposite side of the pass. It was all he could do.

Marco began to show signs of giving in. This perplexed Ned.

What would he do without the gallant steed? If he could have lived on the blood of the animal he would no doubt have made a repast on it—but after!

Thoroughly beaten by fatigue, hunger, and thirst, as well as the awful prospect of death by starvation, he jumped off the back of the poor beast and exclaimed—

"The game's up Ned! pay your stake like a man, and don't flinch. With if I must go, that's so much. Marco would suffer too. He's done his best, poor devil! One of us shall have a chance for life; so here goes, old fellow, the rest if not the only friend I ever had."

So saying, with a sigh, he took off the saddle and bridle, and turned Marco "love" for his life.

He lay down himself, and listlessly looked up into the sky that has not its rival for beauty and splendour.

What his thoughts were God knows, but before he was long in the clouds he heard a whinny, then a second, and, springing to his feet, saw Marco, not twenty yards distant, with his nose thrust under a lot of reeds.

He knew at once what it was.

Marco had found water, foul and stagnant perhaps, but cool to his thirst and his master.

Both drank as only the parched could do drink.

To Kelly, whose lips, palate, and throat were as dry as hot iron, the liquid seemed delicious.

He recognised in it the breath of life, his resurrection from the grave, and absolutely embraced Marco, who was too busily engaged in having his fill to show any recognition of his master's affection.

No wretch reprieved from the gallows felt more re­joiced. He had escaped a dreadful fate and a lingering one.

He remembered the body he had just left, and from which a carrion crow lazily rose as he came in view, showing clearly the unholy repast he had been making.

"Ned's himself again," he soliloquised, attributing his deliverance to no higher influence than chance.

After resting until daybreak he remounted his resuscitated horse and pursued his way towards the township of Wagga-Wagga, which was in his route, and where he was totally unknown.

Yet, at grey dawn, he was in the saddle once more, having by a miracle escaped a fate he shuddered to think of.

That lone corpse in the forest haunted his imagination.

He was rather faint and exhausted, but his horse was thoroughly refreshed, and that was the great point for him.

On the springy, ever-verdant turf Marco went along easily and almost gaily.

"All right," the mail replied, laughing, "you're welcome to what I've got, and that won't win chic and champagne, you know. There's the hut about half-a-mile off. I'll leave my collie with the flock and go along with you."

Ned Kelly was too tired to talk; so he followed the shep­herd, who had built his hut in a sheltered spot, near a small spring.

He had, as usual, nothing but tea, but the restorative effect of this beverage is well known. For this purpose it beats alcohol "all to pieces."

However, there was an inn no great distance off, which Kelly intended to visit, and to reconnoitres before doing so.

(To be continued.)
well known that for many years Ned Kelly had made himself notorious by a series of crimes wholly incompatible with the civilization of the nineteenth century. Ned Kelly's celebrated steed, Marco Polo, is as well known at the Antipodes as Dick Turpin's Black Bess in these islands. 

"The history of Ned Kelly and his celebrated black horse, Marco Polo, will ever live in the recollections of the Australian public. The deeds of Dick Turpin, and the performances of Black Bess, are tame beside those of "Ned and his Nag"; in addition to which Ned's history is true, and Turpin's is pure fiction."

_Needed_ July.

CHAPTER CIX.—Continued.

"What sort of a crib is the whisky-shop?" asked Ned Kelly.

"Roughish sort of den," replied the man; "but the liquor ain't bad. Swells don't patronise it much."

"Well, after our feed can you spare an hour to fetch some more 'straight tip'?" asked Ned, pulling out a sovereign. "I should like to rest my carcass till it's cool."

"All serene, my lad," said the man, as they sat down to a meal which though rough was indeed welcome. Ned soon felt himself again, and, after lighting a pipe, lay down to sleep, while the shepherd started off to a general store where he could usually get anything he wanted.

These storekeepers are not allowed to sell spirits, otherwise every shepherd and stock-keeper in the vicinity for twenty miles round would be perpetually drunk, and the publicans lose the valuable custom of these men, who will "knock down" a year's wages in a week in drink.

The shepherd returned without anything but tobacco. Kelly had given the man a sovereign, and refused the change.

After an hour's rest he was up and off. His host regarded him earnestly, and, as he mounted Marco, said to himself—

"Ned Kelly, or I'm a duffer! He's one o' the right sort, too. I wonder where's the swell who would hand out a sovereign and not ask for change. I wish there was more Ned Kellys, I do."

And back to his sheep he slowly walked, the solitude of his life having been agreeably varied by his strange visitor. "No business of mine," he muttered as he walked along.

CHAPTER CX.

KELLY'S INTERVIEW WITH THE CLAIMANT.

Kelly rode on without meeting any adventures of interest.

He met a few travellers, but none apparently he had any reason to dread. Of course, unless Tom Conquest had some inkling of the course he had taken, he had little or nothing to fear from him.

He was far from Sydney—hundreds of miles away.

The moment Captain Zeph and Salmon Roe received his letter they would make themselves scarce.

His absenting himself for a night would excite no suspicion until the discovery was made of the loss of the horse.

So he pressed on, determined to enjoy himself in compensation for the hardships he had gone through.

Early one morning he found himself in a rather wild district of scrub.

Nothing was to be heard save the song of birds.

Suddenly there arose on the air a cry which no one can ever mistake, that of a horse in extreme pain.

Kelly looked in the direction, and his surprise was great when he came upon a scene which for a moment he was at a loss to understand.

A horse was tied to a tree, while a stout, heavy, ponderous man, with heavy cheeks, and a butcher's blue apron on, was standing beside him with a frying-pan, red hot, which he had just applied to the poor animal's flank.

"What's up, mate?" asked Kelly.

"What's that to you? Can't a feller brand his hoss without having someone looking himpertinent questions?" surly replied the big man.

"Dry up, you darned fool. D'ye think I don't know your game?" said Kelly, laughing. "I'm up to your dodge. The frying-pan brand is as old as Adam."

The horse roared, plunged, and uttered a strange, shrill cry.

"What's up, mate?" asked Kelly.

"What's that to you? Can't a feller brand his hoss without having someone looking himpertinent questions?" surly replied the big man.

"Dry up, you damned fool. Do you think I don't know your game?" and Kelly, laughing, "I'm up to your dodge. The frying-pan brand is as old as Adam."

It was a common one.

In the colony most horses bear the brand of the owner, and the first thing a thief does is to efface that compromising mark with the frying-pan.

The fat man looked knowingly at Kelly, and seemed to read him like a book.
Well, isn't your hose, is it?" he asked, with a broad grin.

"Not likely," answered Kelly, "and not my business neither. Am I right for Wagga-Wagga?"

"Wagga-Wagga?" the other went on. "Yes; it's a good fifteen mile yet. You seem a right sort; won't you wet your biggins?"

And he threw his frying-pan in the direction of a thicket.

"Right you are," laughed Kelly, alighting and following his new acquaintance to where he found another powerful horse carefully tethered.

Looking at Kelly suspiciously, Orton (for it was that unscrupulous villain in proprio persona) said—

"I think I've heard of you before, mate, and of your deck hair, eh?"

Kelly's hand played with the handle of his pistol.

"Don't be galled, lad," replied Orton; "I ain't likely to split."

"Look here, mate," said Kelly, "I'm not curious myself, and don't like those who are. I don't ask you whose horse you're nobbling, and don't you ask me what you need to know, but you may know this, that we may be able to work together, you understand?"

"I'm fly," returned Orton, "You're one of my sort. Some has money and no brains, some has brains and no money. Now I'm one of the last flock, but I mean to have the money somehow, and I'm on a heavy lay just now."

"Blow your lay!" said Kelly, "I'm as dry as a hot wind. Is there never a 'public' in this tarnation dry-looking desert?"

"Yes, at Wagga-Wagga, about five miles off."

"Then I'm on for Wagga-Wagga," said Kelly. "Not a big place, eh? Not too many police about?"

"Not one, just now," said Orton. "If there was I can square the lot. But, I say, just look here, mate, I'm fixed in that respect and mind, if I turn up, you've never seen me before, mind that."

"Mum as a dead man in a worked-out pit," said Neil.

Then receiving minute directions from his new acquaintance he rode off.

They was the first meeting between Ned Kelly and Arthur Orton, which was to lead to such marvellous results.

After leaving his new comrade, the bushranger, who had given his name as Wilson, engaged a room and ordered dinner.

An hour later the fat butcher came in and asked for the guest.

The landlord pointed to a back room.

"Going for to try his palaver on him," said mine host with a grin, as he prepared a drink for the pondeous butcher.

Castro went across and seated himself in a huge armchair, which appeared to be cut out for him. He gave a deep sigh as he gazed before him.

"Prospecting," he asked, "like most folks? I've no 'ard work for me, and I oughtn't to work at nothing, as I'm soon going to get back my rights."

"Your rights? What's up?"

"I mean I'm a Barrington in my own right, with lots of tin hanging to it, that I'm kept out of."

"What!" was the exclamation that came from Kelly's lips. "Drunk or mad, which, old man?"

"Neither one or the other, as I mean to prove. I've got all the hardtack out and dry, and a lawyer from gratis to work the job."

This was before his fraudulent intentions were known or his game suspected.

He had lots of audacity, and was profoundly ignorant. This latter quality was subsequently construed by the shallow into "cleverness."

His cleverness was sheer bold lying, and the only "cleverness" he exhibited was in simply and calmly sticking to his falsehoods—the consequences were beyond the reach of his mind.

His whole career showed pignheaded stupidity. Had he been a clever plotter he would never have given as the name of the captain of the Osprey that of the captain of the Jessie Miller, in which he originally went in 1862 to Tasmania, and years before the Osprey was heard of.

How could Roger Tichborne have learned the name of the captain of the Jessie Miller? However, he was so persistent that Kelly began to think there might be something in it.

He had heard that someone in the colony had claimed to be a long-missing baronet of high degree and large estates, for whom his family had been looking for years.

He also knew, however, from what he had heard very lately, that he was generally regarded as an impostor.

At all events, he had not found as yet the means of going to England.

"But go I will," said the Chinaman. "Rights is rights, and they ain't a-going to do me. I've led a rough life, 'cause I choosed to, and I've heard Robinson Crusoe was a gent at home."

"Why," said Kelly, "what a howling swell you will be; you won't then forget an old pal will you?"

At this moment the baronet was called to serve a compi-
of pounds of chops, and while the knife and steel were performing a duet, Kelly re-entered the Wagga-Wagga Arms. "Blam um over yonder," said Kelly addressing mine host. "Any truth in your yarn?"

"Can't say; he's been known as Thomas Castro here a goodish bit; says he's a married man, and the man Bastarded. But that's neither here nor there. What's nothing to you or me. She was a decent sort of a gal. She was for some time in my service; her father was Paddy the Plasterer."

"Iah! Iah!" laughed Kelly, "you devil's right down lady—well I am."

"Married a slavey and was has married slaves here. I can tell you; them as have had the iron bracelets on, have had diamonds on the same place afterwards. Some coves hawked advertisements for Sir Roger Tieborne and say Castro's the man."

"It's a queer run," said Kelly, "he seems no fool, and a bad judge of houseleabas."

The man looked with a sly wink at Ned Kelly; it was a revelation however.

"That's it," cried Kelly, and ceased as Thomas Castro came in again.

"Tum, hist," said the butcher, "as we sees strangers down here. You've been in hold England lately?"

"Some months ago," replied Kelly.

"Never mind, you're a man after my own art," continued Castro. "My mission is cooking some supper. Where are you going to feed?"

Nothing loth, Kelly followed Orton and was introduced to a good looking, sweet-faced young woman. She was of course utterly undischarred and consequently looked up to her husband with intense admiration. She considered him one of the cleverest men in the world.

She was very civil to Kelly and made him as comfortable as she could.

There was a really good supper so far as plenty was concerned. With beef and mutton at twopenny a pound a most substantial feast was always at hand. More Colonial constitutions are broken down by over eating, than drinking or smoking. The digestive organs are prostrated by the muscular force of meat.

Mrs. Castro retired leaving pipes and whisky on the table.

Two of the greatest villains on the globe sat down to enjoy themselves.

"And you think you'll pull through," asked Ned Kelly, "and prove your case?"

"I ain't going to funk it," said Thomas Castro. "If that lawyer in Sydney ain't going to do the right, I'll get it. Your little game of the fryingpan ought to fill him with a heart."

"Keep it, as the ocean keeps a lump of lead dropped into it. Own up; what is it?"

"Do you know who you're talking to?"

"No, I don't, and don't care much either, if he's true to me."

"Ned Kelly never sold a pal yet," exclaimed the bushranger.

"Ned Kelly!" exclaimed the Blaster, in a tone of almost fright.

"I'm the bloke; so now we both toe the line."

"Ten thousand pounds for his capture," rushed across the Blaster's mind. The blood rushed into his face when the thought occurred to him.

Kelly saw the prodigious effect his imprudence produced, and showed his face. Orton himself Castro was silent for a moment; his eyes positively glared at Kelly, as the $10,000 reward opened up prospects of a capital for the prosecution of his intended swindle. But he soon recovered his calmness.

Kelly read him like a book. The sudden flush and the eager glances, were not lost upon him; but that any man seeking to establish his claim to a baronetcy should turn informer was a thought that simultaneously struck the two men, and all apprehension vanished.

By way of interlude Kelly related the little incident of the manner in which his friend Joss expiated his good fortune. Whether he stuck to his claim, or whether he told his secret, we can give no version of it.

He was not aware that the gub-mouches of Sydney already had his strange story, and were already subscribing funds.

One fact alone was sufficient—how could Tieborne have acquired the ample of Wagga? But Johanna Southcott, at 70 years of age, received from the British public $100,000 to pay for the expense of her lying-in of the new Messiah. Royalty even sent a cradle for the use of the expected Godhead, worth $20,000.

Little wonder then that the sympathy of the masses (or, as Punch has it, "them-asses") should be enlisted for this Wagga-Wagga "Blaster," as the long-lost heir of the House of Tieborne.

"If you want money," said Kelly, "you know how to get it. Your little game of the fryingpan ought to fill you with a heart."

"Look here, mate," said the Blaster, "as you know my private banker is in the bush" (here he chuckled with glee) "and how my checks is paid, I don't mind trusting you a bit. Will you lend me a hand? It will be all the better for you, you will be in it, and you will get it."

"Just as my line. Out with it—no secrets amongst pals, or we can't run in the same harness together. You've told me a secret, now I'll tell you one. Can you keep it as well as I can your horse-standing job?"

This hint was given to prove that Kelly had him in his power in case of treachery.

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There was a widespread cry in the colony. Women and children in many houses were in the possession of such a large number of owners, it was difficult for anyone to swear to any one particular animal.

And yet horse-stealing was regarded with almost as much anger as in the outlying districts in America. Scant chance for one found red-handed. A bullet or a rope was the response, and in regions frequented by such owners, it was difficult for anyone to swear to any one particular animal. A bullet or a rope was the response, and in regions frequented by such owners, it was difficult for anyone to swear to any one particular animal.

Nothing else was talked of. Ned Kelly listened and made no remark. He was no fool, and had very strong common sense.

The man's manner was vulgar and impertinent, but his meaning was evident.

"Time for a drink?" asked Kelly.

"Oh, yes. I shoved 'em on the wrong track; but you'd better make tracks pretty soon," the fellow went on.

In truth, the go-between did not want any trouble, but to make money both sides.

While the drinks were being made, Kelly felt in his pockets and brought out some gold, which speedily disappeared in some private corner of the other's garments. This transaction over, Kelly mounted and made a hasty retreat to the back of the inn, and guided, by the information given him, easily got once more into the bush.

Thomson, Kelly, and the assistant, Kelly and the coming Claimant, sat on their horses, drew the horses, and started on their way.

Two of them were on their way, and the other two were in hiding.

They had cleared out at once, on receipt of his warning.
with their valuables, and had neither seen nor heard any­thing of Tom Conquest.

A conference was now held. Their return to the colony
was known, and the bush would be secured in every direc­tion for them.

It was to be a new precaution to remain very quiet for a
time.

After some conversation Kelly proposed first a visit to
Melbourne, where, after remaining some time, they could
take boat to Sydney.

Kelly hankered to be revenged on the treacherous Count
and his associate, the Frenchwoman, who had betrayed his
identity to Conquest.

The other desperadoes had no objection; anything was
their game.

Now, their plans were doomed to be upset.

The second evening after the return of Kelly from
Albany, the butcher informed him that his presence in
Wagga-Wagga was being talked about.

His identity was not suspected, but he was thought to
be the stealer of the four horses belonging to Mr. Horsfall.

Kelly at once determined to depart without beat of
drum.

He and his two comrades accordingly started into the
bush, promising to revisit the Claimant at some future
period.

Kelly's plan was to make for the Murray river and go
down to Adelaide by a flat steamer, whence he could again
take the mail boat for Sydney.

Finding himself on his way further in the neighbourhood
of his sister's shanty inn, Kelly thought he would pay her
a visit.

To his great surprise, he found her a widow.

Her husband had fallen in a scrimmage with some im­
pudent customer.

The widow had made money, and was ambitious. She
wished to try her hand at something larger in one of the
towns, and was delighted to see and consult with her brother.

Now, Kelly's sister was a fine handsome young woman,
one of those pecuniously attractive in a bar; and Kelly,
when he found she had a good purse saved, advised her at
once.

"Sell your sticks to the first comer," he said, "and get
down to Sydney; you'll do fine in a bar, and maybe, lass,
we may both work together."

Kate Kelly, as we shall now call her, at once caught at
the idea.

Her ideas of men and trumps were on a par with those
of her brother, to whom it may be observed she was
sincerely attached.

A customer was easily found, and with a few clothes
and her money she prepared for a start, making an appoint­
ment in Sydney with Ned.

He and his friends then left her, to make their own
way to the river.

After some hard riding they reached a small hamlet
Aline the flat bottomed steamboats started.

Now came the question as to Marco Polo.

In various capacities he had been everywhere, in the
east and the west, the north and the south, leaving some
track behind.

He was standing now under an awning in conversation
with a Frenchman.

The latter was a short, bullet-headed fellow, with a face
of little expression but that of cunning. He had no
whiskers, and a short, stubbly moustache.

A word here about the French convict settlement of New
Caledonia.

Nothing more atrocious can be conceived than the
atrocious conduct of the convicts, male and female, by their
jailors.

Torture, shooting, villanies of all kinds, were of con­
tinued occurrence, and connived at by those in high places.

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atrocious conduct of the convicts, male and female, by their
jailors.
He had an agent on the island who was completely in
his power.

Before this, he knew the island well.

Some hours passed, and then night fell on the scene.
The schooner still lay quite motionless.

A boat was put out ready for action.

Then came the flash of three muskets from the shore,
and the (unseen) agent was discovered.

It ran upon the beach, where a party of eight awaited
them, besides a jailor.

With this man Jean Ribault went on one side, and they
had a brief conversation.

Money then passed, and they parted.

"Allons, mes enfants," cried the agent, as soon as the
business was settled, "no time to lose!"

The escaped victims gladly obeyed.

Re-capture meant much worse than death.

The boat was ready.

All chambered in, and away they went, the men bending
manfully to their oars.

The schooner was ready to slip her anchor at a moment's
notice.

She had been selected for her swiftness.

The beautiful model and elegant tapering spars seemed
to indicate American origin.

Anyone on board that day could have seen in what per­
fected order she was.

Her masts were clean scraped; her topmasts,
her cross-trees, caps, and even running-blocks were painted
white.

In every point she wore the appearance of being under
the control of seamanship and strict discipline.

As soon as the order was given the crew were immedi­
ately on the alert.

The sailings were furled. She slipped her cable, for
the noise of weighing the anchor might have been heard
shore, and was quietly towed out of the harbour by a
boat lowered for that purpose.

Her canvas was soon shaken out, and in the steady soft
breeze she walked the waters like a thing of life.

The breeze freshened, and the schooner darted through
the smooth water with the impetuosity of a dolphin after
its prey.

The incessant jabbering for which our Gallic neighbours
were so famous was as loud and discordant as that of the
white paroquets of Australia when disturbed in the
bush.

The victims of their own crimes and the harshness of
English and American vessels had a hand in it was known,
by whose friends the schooner
was hired, had all the best accommodation to themselves.

Provisions had been taken on in abundance, and the
ex-prisoners revelled in them.

After dinner they hastened to perform another duty;
that was to get rid of their prison dress and assume other
shams, men who would have murdered the twelve Apostles
for five centimes, and burnt a church with everyone in it
and picked the crosstrees, caps, and even running-blocks were painted
white.

She could be plainly made out, and, it was clear, sailed
well.

"It won't do," muttered Leary, "to get caught, it
means losing my light little craft."

And calling his first officer they held a long consultation,
which terminated in the keen examination of the ropes and
sails.

At this time the wind increased.

"That's the ticket," cried Jack Leary; "we'll show
her a clean pair of heels after all."

Again an hour of deep anxiety passed, and then once
more they examined the chase.

The hull, which an hour before was plainly to be dis­
covered, could now no longer be seen.

When dawn came not a trace of her was in view.

The victims of their own crimes and the lachrymess
of others had escaped.

The next thing to be considered was how to land them
in Sydney.

The Kate was chary about showing herself very openly.
In Sydney she would decidedly attract too much at­
ention.

Besides, they wanted to keep the mystery, if possible,
of their organised escape from New Caledonia. That some
English and American vessels had a hand in it was known,
After some consideration it was resolved to work by a Sydney-bound steamer, half a day from the port, and say these eight foreigners had been picked up in an open boat without luggage and with very little money.

Of course they would not be refused.

And so matters came about.

A vessel was hailed, the escaped convicts taken on board, their story believed, and pitied.

Of course they were taken on without the slightest hesitation. A collection even was made for them.

Thus they landed in glory and in clover. They were evidently not aware that they would be free the moment they landed on British soil, and would not be surrendered.

They went to a quiet hotel, and began to purchase what they required.

There seven of them disappeared from our view. Most likely they got mixed up in the seething vortex of crime which at this time swept like a torrent over the colony.

Marie Franconnet, after making her toilet one morning with more than ordinary care, went to call on Madame Ribillard, the agent for governesses.

She received Madame Ribillard, the agent for governesses, with great cordiality. Her friend, M. Jean Ribault had spoken of her, and she would do her best.

After some conversation, Madame Ribillard examined her books.

"I have a very fine situation," she said, "but what about papers and references?"

"All lost upon that unfortunate ship," said the girl in a dejected tone.

"Well, the situation I recommend is at Government House," she continued. "Lady Belmont has two daughters who speak French a little, and who want someone to perfect them. I will lay the case before her ladyship, and you shall hear from me."

And so Marie Franconnet went away rejoicing. Thus Marie Franconnet, really Françoise Benoît, the petroleuse, was promised a situation in the house of an English nobleman.

The Earl of Beimont was governor of the colony, a high and mighty personage.

Next day Madame Ribillard wrote to Marie to attend to Government House. Meanwhile, of course, the girl lived in the house of the agent for governesses.

The residence of Madame Ribillard was in the old part of Sydney, which in no wise resembles the magnificent capital erected on Port Jackson, one of the finest natural harbours in the world.

The houses are chiefly built of wood.

The good woman had been terribly alarmed for her lodger, and she did not understand it. The houses are chiefly built of wood.

As these arose the roof of the house fell in, and all knew what would have been the fate of the girl if he had not had the courage to save her.

"This way," said several voices, and then they took him through the dense crowd, which made way without hesitation to where a shop had been opened for the reception of Madame Ribillard.

The Earl of Beimont was government of the colony, a high and mighty personage.

As he did so, he yelled to the crowd below some orders.

The crowd pushed the ladder nearer the house, as directed by the man, and he was able to enter the chamber. Clutching a blanket, he wrapped up the semi-insensible form in it, and, being of powerful frame, contrived to reach the ladder with his burden.

Once on the ladder, he kept a firm hold with both hands, one to his burden, the other to the ladder.

Under the influence of restoratives, Marie soon recovered, and then tried to thank her brave deliverer.

But Madame Ribillard had to translate.

The rough-and-ready individual who had risked his life to save Madame Franconnet, was no other than Ned Kelly.

Though coarse, his was a manly physique which the petroleuse admired.

As she thanked him with tears in her eyes, the bushranger thought he had never seen anyone so beautiful.

He resolved to renew the acquaintance, but how took his farewell.

When he went out, greatly to his annoyance he received an ovation.

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When he went out, greatly to his annoyance he received an ovation.

A neighbouring drinking saloon had been opened on the strength of the fire, and was driving a rare trade.

Here Kelly was taken, and forced to imbibe several drinks before he could get away.

Such was the first meeting between Ned Kelly and Marie Franconnet, which was to lead to so many and such notable results.

Kelly and his pals had been passing at the time and had stayed to witness the scene.

When it became known that a girl had appeared at a window above, the bushranger was forced by a desire to distinguish himself.

Zeph and Salmon Roe would have held him back, but opposition always roused him.

He would ascend, and ascend he did, to the great advantage of Marie Franconnet.

The house was gutted and several others were injured, but Madame Ribillard was insured, so it mattered little to her.
CHAPTER CXIII.
AN EARTHLY PARADISE.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, Sydney, is one of the most beautifully-situated palaces in the world.
It is placed on a height overlooking lovely grounds, styled Hyde-park, and a bay only equalled for beauty by that of Rio.

When we say "bay," we should rather describe a succession of bays, one opening out of the other, dotted with fertile islands covered with timber.

Out of these bays start coves of equally deep water—sixty feet in depth—penetrating into the forests, and overhung by the branches of almost primeval trees—a scene of sylvan beauty unrivalled in the world.

Government House is built of white stone, and is a superb residence for any potentate.

It is said that the noble earl, the Governor aforesaid, was almost dumb with astonishment when he entered the capital of a colony not a hundred years old, and founded by successive cangoes of the vilest of England's criminals.

It is no longer a penal settlement.

To this place Madame Ribillard took Marie Franconnet in a vehicle.

The history of the girl was never exactly known, nor how she came to be mixed up with the ferocious group of coupe-georges and other wretches who did their utmost to ruin Paris.

Her origin remained a myth. That she was well-nurtured, well-educated, and gentle in manners, was very clear.

Probably like many others, carried away by a wild and false enthusiasm, she had made an idol of one of the red Republican leaders, and had fought by his side.

Lady Belmont had already given orders, so that when M. Ribillard sent in her name she was at once admitted to a small reception-room, where Lady Belmont, a fine, aristocratic-looking woman, soon joined them.

She received Madame Ribillard, whom she knew and esteemed, graciously.

She then turned to Marie Franconnet, whom he did not as yet recognise as the girl he had paved, and believing, like many ignorant Englishmen, that French girls are ever ready and willing to speak to anyone, especially if well-dressed and rich, he had tried to make her acquaintance.

He had failed, but he in no way felt faint hearted.

That one glance had inflamed his rather peppery imagination, and he determined to follow the matter up. He would scrape an introduction in some way or other.

He followed her home, and soon found means to ascertain her name.

His plan was to get his sister to call, make up some story and thus strive for her acquaintance.

He was a young fellow of about twenty. He had met his sister, who, partly by his aid and the countess most graciously, "give you a fair trial. You will live with us, and be the constant companion of young girls."

The salary was exceedingly liberal, and Marie Franconnet was very good-looking, very impressionable, and very foppish, and not overburdened with brains.

She had numerous letters of introduction, all of which she had noticed, stated that, having lost her friends and her small fortune, she had been advised to try Australia, where there was a demand for her qualifications.

She had music-masters, drawing-masters, everything that could be thought of to make them accomplished and lady-like.

She remembered only two names, Monsieur Jean Ribillard and Madame Ribillard.

M. Jean Ribillard had spoken to madame, and she hoped she would give her a fair trial.

"I will," said the countess most graciously, "give you a fair trial. You will live with us, and be the constant companion of young girls."

The family was exceedingly liberal, and Marie Franconnet was very delighted, and inwardly thinking how easily their indolent ladies of rank and title would be hoodwinked.

She went out, bought a couple of boxes and some very simple necessaries, and then, putting on a very plain dress, wearing a veil, took her walks abroad.

She was quite surprised at the sight of a city so well built, so different from anything she had seen, except that one she had had in her utmost to destroy.

She went down towards the shipping.

She noticed that many turned to look after her neat and dainty figure, but no one attempted to speak to her.

Once or twice he remarked that a man well-dressed gave her a glance.

He was a bold, handsome man, with a rather forbidding countenance.

But he was of those who command, and Marie Franconnet admired that sort of man.

Still she was not going to give him encouragement.

She knew his place too well, so that when his salutation became rather too annoying, she hastily returned to her hotel.

The good-looking, though rough, stranger followed close on her heels, took note of the name and situation, and retired with a self-satisfied and somewhat sarcastic grin on his lips.

It was Ned Kelly, now domiciled in Sydney, carefully disguised, who was determined, before he ventured again into Melbourne, to hear what report was true about Tom Conquest.

He had met his sister, who, partly by his aid and the influence of her own sharpness and good looks, had got a position as barmaid in an hotel, the luncheon-bar of which was frequented by numerous swells, among others, by the officers of the constabulary, who had been in the army.

As the pay is good and the service active, many dashing young fellows had volunteered.

Among these was one Captain Lionel Henschaw, who had already taken some notice of Mary Meadows as Kate Kelly called herself.

"Stick to him, my girl," cried Kelly; "who knows what may happen? Anyway, you can pump him."

And Mary promised.

Fascinating young women are the ones to work secrets from susceptible young men.

Kelly chuckled excessively.

Happening to get a glimpse of the face of Marie Franconnet, whom he did not as yet recognise as the girl he had paved, and believing, like many ignorant Englishmen, that French girls are ever ready and willing to speak to anyone, especially if well-dressed and rich, he had tried to make her acquaintance.

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His plan was to get his sister to call, make up some story and thus strive for her acquaintance.

But when Miss Mary Meadows called next day, rather gorgeously arrayed, she found she had done. She had flitted to Government House, where Mary could not follow.

The daughters of the Earl of Belmont were two, Blanche and Violet, sixteen and eighteen.

They had music-masters, drawing-masters, everything that could be thought of to make them accomplished and lady-like.

Madame Franconnet was only to speak French. She would accompany them in their walks, and except on public days take her meals with them.

The earl and countess liked to practise French, and found no great opportunity in the colony.

There were a great many public dinners and dinners to house families.

These she did not attend.

Now there was in the family the Honourable Percy Boyd, private secretary, nephew, and heir to the earl.

He was a young fellow of about twenty and twenty. He was very good-looking, very impressionable, and very foppish, and not overburdened with brains.

The first dinner at which he sat, he was opposite Marie Franconnet, and that cute young lady at once saw that she had made a deep if not a lasting impression.

But she was careful to show no knowledge of the other's evident admiration.

Marie had to play a waiting game, to ingratiate herself with the family, and this could only be done by playing the part of a modest and retiring girl.

It was almost too bullheaded—she, the petrified and the daughter of the late Louis Jambert, shot on the barricades.

She then turned to Marie Franconnet, who, on being questioned, stated that, having lost her friends and her small fortune, she had been advised to try Australia, where there was a demand for her qualifications.
to be looked on as fit to associate with young ladies of
rank.

But this Honourable Percy Boyd might be worth winning.
Her first duty to herself, she said, was to learn English.
She would never be able to get on without that.
Her employers all spoke French, but she did not wish to
confine herself to associating with them only.
Some day English might prove useful. But she had an
idea it was very hard work.
Still she would persevere.
Marie Franconnet had great liberty. She had to be
present at all the meals of the young ladies, to walk certain
hours with them, to drive also. The rest of her time was
her own.
She would remain in her room and do as she thought
proper.
It was not difficult to get out.
At the back of the Government House were the gardens,
and at the extremity of these was a double turnstile turn­
ing, and another.
This Marie knew and determined to avail herself of it.
Next day, after breakfast, the young ladies went to take
their music and drawing lessons, which would occupy them
until lunch.
Then Marie Franconnet selected a book from one of her boxes,
and began the reading of her novel, that is to say, a prou­nounced character, which she took
with her to a shady part of the grounds.
Here she seated herself in a position where she could
see anyone approaching before they could get close to her.
She then opened her book and was soon deep in its
contents.
Presently she started.
She heard footsteps, and saw the Hon. Percy Boyd ap­proaching.
She did once concealed her book in a capacious pocket,
and assumed a half-sleepy, half-languid attitude.
Percy Boyd saw her flushed face with pleasure, and ap­proached hurriedly.
He was no roue, no profligate—he was deeply respectful
to all women.
He spoke French perfectly, and when Marie looked up
she saw him bowing with polished grace.
"You are indeed a welcome addition to the colony," he
said, after some brief courtesy.
"You flatter, I answer. " I thought you English
never condescended to do so."
"We never flatter, we tell the truth," was the response.
Marie laughed, and said nothing when he seated himself
close to her.
The young man had seen a little of the world and that
was all.
He was scarcely more than a boy, but he was warm­
hearted, and the sprightly French girl, with her smattering
knowledge of French literature, delighted him.
She was of good family, if poor.
She went to her room very vain and triumphant.
Marie Franconnet went to her room to make some little
changes in her toilette.
Where was she born and where was she bred, that she
looked so much like a princess in mien, though so petite
in size and make?
The Hon. Percy Boyd was expected to marry his elder
cousin, Violet.
It was an old family arrangement.
But nothing had been formally decided.
Violet was too young, her parents thought, while her
cousin was in no hurry.
Still Percy Boyd knew what was expected of him, and
could not make love to Marie before his semi-affianced
cousin's face.
Still he could be polite and attentive.
All were surprised at the playing and voice of the young
Frenchwoman, who, though only looking eighteen, was
twenty-three.
"Where were you taught, my child?" asked the Coun­
tee of Belmont kindly.
"In the College of the Sacre Cceur," replied Marie
lowering her eyes.
"Indeed," said the countess, well pleased, as she must,
in that case, have been of good family.
And so the evening went on.
Marie went to her room very vain and triumphant.
Next day she had another hour in the grounds with the
Hon. Percy Boyd, the nephew, who was very tender.
Still he did not say anything to alarm the most fasti­
duous mind.
The young man, heir to an earldom and to a high posi­
tion in society, had to think the matter over very seri­
ously.
He had no father or mother, but he had a guardian in
the shape of an uncle.
He felt that such a marriage as he contemplated would
never be allowed by the latter.
Still he was young, and determined to win this par­
 Bryce girl if he could.
What he heard the night before had helped to give him
hope.
She was of good family, if poor.
And that goes a long way, even when the person spoken
of is French.
Marie Franconnet determined to be very cautious.
She would excite no suspicion in the eyes of any of the
Marie Franconnet ordered tea and entered an arbour.
Then she saw him bowing with polished grace.
"You are indeed a welcome addition to the colony," he
said, after some brief courtesy.
"You flatter, I answer. " I thought you English
never condescended to do so."
"We never flatter, we tell the truth," was the response.
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And that goes a long way, even when the person spoken
of is French.
Marie Franconnet determined to be very cautious.
She would excite no suspicion in the eyes of any of the
family.
She begged the Hon. Percy Boyd not to make a point
of meeting her every day, as that might excite comment.
"No one comes here of a morning," he said laughingly,
"and I am not to be defrauded of my morning's lesson."
And he again wished her good morning.
After lunch Lady Belmont intimated her intention of
taking her daughters out for a drive, so that Marie had
her time for a stroll.
Again she put on a simple dress, and a veil that did not
wholly conceal her beauty.
She went out, determined to see as much of Sydney as
possible.
In the course of her walk she noticed that the man she
had already remarked was following her again on the arm
of a rather handsome female. She was tolerably good­
looking, but coarse.
They were evidently bent on speaking to her, but Marie
was determined they should not.
She saw a kind of tea-garden attached to an hotel.
Seeking a female waiter, evidently French, Marie Fran­
connet ordered tea and entered an arbour.
Kelly and his sister—for it was they—followed, and
took up a table close at hand.
The woman tried to speak, but Marie, with a haughty
look, shook her head.
Then the waiter came.
"Tell those people I do not speak English, and do not want to be talked to," she said, rather sharply. The two exchanged glances, but bowed politely, and ordered refreshments.

Marie laughed to herself, then she stepped out, with a look out of the corner of her eye that electrified Kelly.

"She's a stunner," cried Kelly as she left. "I should like to know more of her."

"Not while she lives at Government House," replied Kate Kelly, "you can have no chance."

"She's only a paid governess," retorted Kelly. "Nothing so very wonderful."

"You'll marry her, I suppose," sneered his sister—"that useless creature?"

"If she'd have me," answered the man, hotly. "But I'm a bit too rough for her. I want a wife as can work—like you."

"More your sort," replied Kate, laughing.

And shortly after she returned to her hotel, and made her appearance in the bar, where Ned Kelly was a constant visitor.

They were mere casual acquaintances, and Kelly was very chary of what he said to him.

Besides, he needed to disguise his voice, which was peculiar, and to keep that up constantly was hard work. Still, they drank and smoked together, and spoke of the news.

They even alluded to Kelly, but Captain Lionel Henshaw was new in the police, and knew very little of him as yet.

"I've been told to communicate with Tom Conquest, the new Chief Constable of Melbourne," he said. "I have written to him, and shall know more about the fellow soon."

Kelly and his sister exchanged glances. Such information was well worth picking up.

And then, with a nod to the barmaid, he went away, leaving the field clear to the captain of the mounted police.

"Hope to catch Kelly, sir?" she asked presently, in a careless kind of way.

"I joined the force for no other purpose," was the reply. "I mean to see him hung; besides, £10,000 is a good stake to run for."

"Many have tried," she remarked, "but none have succeeded."

"Yes; but it can't go on for ever," he said. "And then, besides ridding the colony of an accursed fiend, I get enough to start me in marriage."

And he looked at Kate Kelly with a peculiar glance, which meant "chaff," nothing more—and so she read it.

He was soon at her stand, and Kelly was there in conversation with Captain Lionel Henshaw.

They were mere casual acquaintances, and Kelly was very chary of what he said to him.

Besides, he needed to disguise his voice, which was peculiar, and to keep that up constantly was hard work. Still, they drank and smoked together, and spoke of the news. She was, however, very careful not to let her intentions be guessed at.

The young secretary was watching her, and she knew it perfectly well.

Her manner was inimitable. She listened to Michael Eldred, answered his questions with apparent timidity, and then when Percy Boyd came to lead her to the piano, she gave him a sweet smile and a curtsey that were charming.

The Australian squatter was delighted with the music, and went away charmed and desperately in love.

He knew she was only a governess, but she would not be received on the terms she was by his Excellency and his lady had not her character been perfect.

Percy Boyd had not been blind to the admiration of the squatter, one of the richest and most influential men in the colony.

He knew him to be impulsive and generous.

Next morning as usual he met Marie in the grounds.

There were a few lover-like embraces, and then he spoke.

"I wish you were not such a flirt," he said, half sultrily.

"I?" she cried, looking up with a glance of the most innocent and infantine surprise.

"You, mademoiselle!"

"Oh, mademoiselle!"

"You, mademoiselle!"

"You, mademoiselle!"

"You, mademoiselle!"

"You, mademoiselle!"

"You, mademoiselle!"

"And yet he cannot be mine."

"Quelle horreur!"

"I am only joking," he went on, "but he is handsome, rich, and young.""

"There is only one man in the world for me," she said sadly, "and yet he cannot be mine."

"Why?" he asked, looking somewhat puzzled.

"Your friends will never consent," she went on in a sweet plaintive voice. "I am noble, but I am poor."

"I shall have enough for both," he answered, "so cheer up, cherie, and all will be well."

She did cheer up considerably, and they chatted away pleasantly for the small time, when duty summoned him away.

Marie remained alone.

She was in deep thought. Should the colonist prove to be in earnest, should she accept him at once?

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Them. and looking up saw Kelly before her, accompanied by a
lative, and lose him his place.
stances.
spectfully, "my master only wants to say two words to you,
you. He is rich and ready to make you his wife."
K
ed.
with a stranger. Let him obtain a proper introduction,"
ng.
mean an introduction to his excellency."
" that I am honoured by his offer—but I cannot converse
"I am listening," she said coldly.
"Monsieur has only seen you once, but already he loves
you. He is rich and ready to make you his wife."

Kelly, who knew the meaning of the word sa femme,
nodded.
"Tell the gentleman," she answered in a dignified tone,
"I that I am honored by his offer—but I cannot convers-
with a stranger. "Let him obtain a proper introduction,"
she continued, "and I shall be happy to receive him—I
mean an introduction to his excellency."

And with the air of a duchess she curtsied and left
them.
"High and mighty," growled Kelly, as he repeated the
incident to Zeph; "but I'll tame the she-cat. That young
girl has a history. I'll find it out."

Kelly little thought how near he was speaking the truth
of Marie, alias the petroleuse.

Still he must hide his time.

He did not stop long when the handsome captain was
there in conversation with the attendant Hebe.

He continued, however, to have frequent conversations
with the all-admired barmaid.

One morning the Captain spoke to the girl in an
undertone.

"Any news?" she asked.

"Yes," replied the captain. "I have heard that Kelly
is about. A man professed to have met him not long
ago. He did not stop at the time, he said, but,
after thinking where he had seen the face before, he
remembered."

"Ned Kelly in Sydney?" said the girl, with a hoarse
laugh. "Impossible!"

"Yes," holding out his hand, "I'm the very fellow him-
self."

"I did not come of my own accord," said the other,
who was no other than the man known to us as captain of
the Kate, John Leary, but better known by his sobriquet
of "Kit the Cruiser."

"You needn't be squeamish with me," replied the bush-

ranger, "I ain't easily made such. You said just now you
had a brother, and that you were not ashamed of him."

"I did," replied Kit Kelly, alias John Leary; "and I
say it again. He's every inch a man, from sky-scraper to
his lower undershirt, and I like a fellow that's got the grit
in him."

"Have you ever seen him?" said Ned.

"No, I haven't. No such luck! Want a pal he'd make!
By the living Jingo!—as the Yankees say—we'd sweep
creation!"

Then just look before you, lad. I'm Ned Kelly, and
ain't ashamed to own it to a man, for I see you are built
of the stuff I like."

"You?" gasped the other.

"Yes," holding out his hand, "I'm the very fellow him-
self—your brother, as you say."

"The younger man could scarcely believe the evidence of
his senses.

"You are not joking?" he falied.

Kely looked at him in wild perplexity.

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of the "Black Angel."
Leaves, Treason, or the Two Privateers.

I din't ashamed of it, neither," the other went on, "and
would give anything to see him, if only once."

"Nobody," she answered; "it is quite at your ser-
vice."

"Send us in two goes," he cried. "If you've no objec-
tion I should like a chat."

The stranger nodded carelessly and followed his new
acquaintance.

As soon as they were alone the retable bushranger
seated himself.

"I never heard as Ned Kelly ever had a brother," he
remarked.

"He does not know it himself," was the answer.

"Soon after my birth my mother had some money left
her and went to England. She never saw my father again.
It was only when dying she told me the truth. With
all his faults and crimes she remained faithful to his
memory."

"How did you come out here?" the bushranger asked
curiously.

The man blushed slightly.

"I did not come of my own accord," said the other,
who was no other than the man known to us as captain of
the Kate, John Leary, but better known by his sobriquet
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(Ko be continued.)

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Andrew Lovett. Robert, the Rover.

The Mutiny of the "Thunder.
CHAPTER CXIV.—Continued.

"I'm no joker," was the dry response.

And the two shook hands again as the girl brought in their drinks.

"We're as snug here as a flea in a mat," said Kelly, "so spit out your yarn."

"I don't mind it, you do," said the other; "but oh, lad, who'd a thought it?"

And he told his story.

CHAPTER CXV.

KIT KELLY'S YARN.

"Of my mother's relations with our father I know nothing. I believe he married her, though, whether the marriage was legal or not, I cannot say.

"My mother lived in the East-end of London, where she kept a shop for the supply of sailors—a ship-chandler's it was called.

"She sent me to a very good school, and I went on fairly enough until I was fourteen. I was fond of reading, and improved myself by the better class of books.

"My mother was then very good-looking, but that mattered not. She was sure of plenty of sailors even if she had been ugly.

"She was very well-to-do; still for a long time she resisted all attempts to make her renew matrimonial relations. But there came one, Obadiah Helpmate, as he called himself, the pastor of a Little Bethel which my mother attended.

"He was a sleek, obsequious individual, with a snuffle, and all the usual pious jargon. He used to come to tea, and his consumption of food was wonderful.

"He was very kind to me, which helped him much with my mother. He always brought me presents, but though his books were rather too goody-goody for me, I never objected.

"I had no suspicion of his object; or, young as I was, I should have circumvented him, I believe.

"When I knew of it, it was too late. I was told of it only four days before the wedding.

"It was useless to object. So my mother, who had been the wife of Tom Kelly the renowned bushranger, became Mrs. Obadiah Helpmate.

"I doubt if our father was as bad as the hypocritical monster of Little Bethel.

"I and an aunt took care of the shop during the honeymoon.

"It only lasted a week, and then they came home to the shop in Thames-street. I was at the door.

"A cab drove up, and my mother, looking years older than a month ago, alighted, followed by the Rev. Obadiah Helpmate—drunk.

"My mother walked straight into the shop, and kissed me with a sob.

"'Let that cub alone, woman,' said my pious stepfather.

"'Who are you talking to like that? I asked.

"'To my wife, you whelp.'

"He had been a sailor, and aimed a blow at me.

"I evaded it, and sent him sprawling. He got into a furious passion, and a nose not at all suitable to a pastor.

"From that hour he threw off the mask.

"He had gained his end, and Little Bethel might go to a warm place.

"His brutality to my mother was excessive, but he feared me.

"I was tall and powerful for my age.

"I knocked him down twice and damaged his optics, so that he was confined to the house for some days.

"Then he changed his tactics.

"He became suave and bland, and persuaded my mother that I was wholly in fault.

"He had a friend, a shipping agent, who would get me a first-class berth as a midshipman bound for India.

"My... and gave him the money for..."
"I laughed at them.

"Return to that vile slavery, I never would. That I was determined.

When I was nineteen, I reached the port of London from China, and had some days leisure and plenty of money.

I contrived to find that my stepfather was always out, at dancing-matrons, music-halls, &c.

I was a man now, and feared him not, so I went home.

My mother was very ill, nearly dying. The brute had ill-used her because she refused to make a will in his favour.

She had left everything to me. I was furiously indignant, and spoke in no measured terms of his misconduct.

"So," said a malignant voice, that of the collier captain, as he touched my arm.

"I was eating some cold meat and bread my mother put before me.

I had a knife in my hand, and struck at him, mechanically, meaning to knock him down and escape.

But as ill-luck would have it, I know not how, the knife entered his body, and unintentionally I was a murderer.

I was arrested after a fearful scene with my mother, and, after some days, committed for trial for wilful murder.

"At the trial, my stepfather swore hard and fast that I coolly and deliberately stabbed his brother, though he knew it was a pure accident.

"I was condemned to death, but my sentence, on account of my youth, was commuted to penal servitude for life.

"I'll though my mother was, she was allowed to see me before I was sent away.

Then it was that, impelled by some impulse she could not restrain, she told me the secret of my birth.

"She told me something else.

"She could not make a will in my favour now, but she would transfer the money to a lawyer she believed in, in trust for John Morgan.

"If my sentence should be shortened, or if I escaped, the life of the convict, I believe I could claim the money.

And so we parted. Before we left England I heard she was dead.

We were taken to Norfolk Island, as you are aware, the worst of penal colonies.

"Why I should have been there is a matter beyond my comprehension.

"The place itself is charming, but man has made of it a hell upon earth."

Norfolk Island was discovered by Captain Cook. It was then uninhabited, and it is believed that the well-known navy-ship and her people were the first who ever trod upon its soil.

It was and is a most beautiful region; but, nearly everywhere iron-bound.

From the top of Mount Pitt every acre of this land can be seen as on a map.

It seems strange in alluding to a penal settlement to speak of the magnificent Norfolk island pine, with its bright foliage, the pear tree with its softness green, the orange and lemon groves, and numerous gum-trees.

"For the convenience of the officers we slept on board a hulk moored about a hundred yards from shore."

"The intervening water was bright and beautiful, but beneath the waters were concealed some of the most dangerous and ravenous sharks known in those seas."

"A swim would not have been pleasant."

"The officer in command of this gang was a fellow named Captain Blood."

"If ever there was a fiend in human shape it was this villain."

"His power, of course, was despotic, and we poor devils were made to feel it."

"His cruelties were dreadful, some of them scarcely credible."

"Blood was omnipotent."

"He could do what he liked, and to whom he liked."

"He always carried loaded pistols, as he knew how intolerably he was hated, and that, given the opportunity, there wasn't a prisoner on the island who would not have murdered him in cold blood."

"The triangles ran with blood daily."

"Men were 'tied up,' for a look, and Blood stood by gloating over the agony inflicted by the cat, which, if not killed on with a will, subjected the flogger (a convict) to the same punishment."
"Byron rails at 'Man's inhumanity to man.'

He would have known what that could amount to if he had witnessed the 'bloody assay' daily held on an island which, for climate and natural beauty, is unequalled on the face of the earth.

There was no appeal.

We worked in gangs, watched by armed men, while outside of the hulk was an armed revenue cutter with her guns always run out and ready for action.

But we felt that there must be an end to this.

One of our men was a powerful Irishman, Dan Regan.

He came in for more than his full share of punishment.

How he cursed and threatened, and tried to induce his fellows to rebel, but for a long time in vain.

We were forty unarmed wretches, while they were eight active, armed men.

One morning Captain Blood, who, though not actually intoxicated, was always shuffling with drink, was unusually abusive and surly.

He came aboard the hulk with several warders to take off his book.

He cursed us all round—swore he'd flog the lot 'till our lives were bare,' and, just to show his brutal nature, violently kicked a man who was passing him to descend into the boat, when, with a yell and a bound like a tiger, Dan Regan roared out:

"Take that!" and hit him on the head with a marling-spoke.

I saw at once that it was a planned thing, for the men flew at the warders, who were preparing to descend to the boats.

Taken by surprise, they were hustled into the boats, and some disarmed.

Then to work we all went to get rid of our bracelets, still she was well armed.

Dan Regan had planned his rising with great sagacity.

He had been off and on years on board that hulk.

As soon as we were free he broke open a chest of carpenters' tools, and then attacked an arm chest, in which there was a supply of muskets for the use of our masters.

There was not much ammunition, but still enough to suit desperate men.

When we went on deck, where lay the dead body of Captain Blood, we found the revenue cutter within hoisting distance.

"Seem!" shouted the young lieutenant, or I'll blow you out of the water!"

"Blow away!" roared Dan Regan. "Better go up than down among the sharks."

And he and the armed men fired a volley.

This was answered by a broadside, which was kept up, while the boats put out with all the force they could make.

They were fewer in number than ourselves, but well armed.

Dan Regan and his intimates held a conference, and decided on a plan of action.

"It was communicated to us all."

It must be confessed the plan was both daring and ingenious as detailed by Kit, whose recital we must curtail

"There was only one thing to do now: send Her Majesty's servants ashore, and use the cutter to reach more friendly shores.

Kit was a good seaman, and two of the captured crew offered to join him, provided he told the Government that he was sending ashore, they went on compulsion.

The cutter was a good deal damaged, but not so as to render her unserviceable.

Being in the Pacific Ocean, and no great distance from the Fiji Islands (then not colonised by Englishmen), they could easily send the cutter to the bottom and land in the long boat, whose name and colour would first be changed.

When they first landed they were in constant danger of being murdered by these savages, but by keeping together they were too strong to be molested.

Kit subsequently got off in a whaler.

His companions preferred to "chance it" with the natives rather than run the risk of the rope that awaited them elsewhere, if captured.

This accounts for the number of half-caste children existing in the island when recently annexed by the British Government.

It is quite possible the character of their progenitors was suspected, but the Colonial Government that erected, on the sly, their pill-hides into the unsuspecting Australian Colonies, did not wish to be burdened with the cost of the support of forty criminals whom they would have been compelled to bring back to England, as the convict settlements in Australia had been abolished.

After relating this adventure, Kit (or Capt. Leary) continued—

"I went to England, and after some hesitation visited the lawyer. He proved to be an honest man.

"My mother had imbued him with a belief in my innocence and he paid me the money. I did not squander it, but still lived as home in travelling."

"I wished my personal appearance to change as much as possible, and so went to hot countries like Spain and Mexico."

"I went to England, and after some hesitation visited the lawyer. He proved to be an honest man.

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KATE KELLY, or Mary Meadows as she called herself, had a very good berth of it. As she was very attractive, brought in customers and plenty of grist to the mill, she was not only well paid but had plenty of leisure.

She bought a habit, and horses were easily hired. Occasionally Ned, strictly made up for the occasion, would accompany her. On these occasions he affected an elderly wig and moustache, which was not exceptionally large.

He found her rather agitated.

"Anything up, wench?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, "that lieutenant stared at me last night.

And she told him what had passed. He came in elated and excited.

"Miss Meadows," he said in a whisper—she made a confidant of no one else—"I have certain news that Kelly is in Sydney."

"Indeed?" cried the girl, incredulously.

"Yes, he's been seen by two persons," was the answer; "one who was robbed and ill-used by him knows that next time he meets him he'll never leave him, but track him home."

"Why doesn't he catch him himself?" was Kate Kelly's contemptuous reply.

"He's afraid to," was the laughing answer; "he's no match for him and is afraid."

"Oh!" said Kate Kelly.

The gallant police officer then explained that the man meant in some way to worm himself into his confidence, and then betray him.

"Scoondrel!" cried Kate Kelly, involuntarily.

"Why do you say so?" asked the surprised captain.

"Kelly is a fearful vagabond."

"But I hate treachery," she replied, and so the subject dropped.

"Now, Ned," said the girl, "you must make yourself scarce—or keep close.

"I'm blowed if I does," replied Ned. "I'm going to the races—and go I will.

"It's an awful risk," urged his sister.

"I never back, cried the ruffian, "and I ain't a-going to begin."

"Remember, I'd be alone in the world," she said, mournfully. "Do be careful."

"I'm worth too good a man yet, Kate, darling," cried Kelly, and began to assume his disguise.

But to please Kate he took an unusual and less public direction for their ride. They returned without any suspicious event occurring.

Before going to her business Kate again begged his brother to be very careful, and to leave Sydney for a while. He bluntly declined.

"But tare an' 'oun's, Kate," he said, laughing; "I'll tell you a dodge. "I'll ride side-saddle to the races.

"You can't do that."

"I'll do it."

"I'll ride side-saddle to the races. You'll lend me your habit—you're pretty plump."

"Get out with you!" she said, laughing; but so it was finally arranged.

Kelly then went to his lodgings, and remained in all day, not showing himself in the streets at all—not even in the evening.

He explained all to Zeph and Salmon Roe, who blamed his foolhardiness.

But Kelly was obstinate.

"Only let me spot this bloke and I'll stop his jaw-tackle," was his savage answer. "If I only could get my hands on him, a knife'd be too good for him!"

He then recorded his determination to visit the races disguised as a woman.

They roared with laughter.

"Impossible!" said Zeph. "You would be spotted at once."

"Don't you make no blooming error," replied Kelly.

"I'll do it."

As his friends were rather afraid of him they held their peace. They would go to the races in any way they could.

They were a recent experiment since the discovery of gold, and were doomed to lead to great things.

Next morning Kelly, after securing a horse well up to his weight and both powerful and swift, went round to his sister's, who had not been idle.

She had got him a wig with curls and a hat to suit his head, which was not exceptionally large.
She had procured a veil which would hide the contours of his face. For the purposes of disguise he was always clean-shaven. He was dressed in a light tight-fitting suit, so that if he should have to throw off his female garb he might easily appear in another disguise.

Kate continued to alter her habit to suit him, and as the skirt was very voluminous, there was no fear of detection.

The veil was thin under his chin, so that nothing was really visible but the mouth. Kelly was in raptures. He was delighted in startling and dangerous adventures that he was in the highest spirits.

"Be careful, Ned," said the girl, in sorrowful alarm.

"I dread that horrid Henshaw!

"Your young man," laughed Kelly.

He then kissed her heartily, and bade her be hospitable and bring out the whisky.

While she was getting this refreshment ready he secreted two pistols and a knife very much like a stiletto. He then seated himself to await the arrival of the horse.

Kate warned him against any awkwardness in mounting. But Kelly was too good a mimic to fear detection. Properly brought up, he might have proved a very good actor.

At half-past eleven the horse came round, and Kelly mounted.

He was very careful to act with becoming modesty. Presently he, or she, was seated side saddle, and trotted off after throwing the man some money.

"He said the boy was a stout one," muttered the ostler.

"And faith, and she's a strapper."

Kate had ladies brown gloves and a whip, and though one or two turned to look at the rather stout party, no one seemed to have the slightest inkling of the truth.

It was too audacious a thing to be suspected. The number of persons going to the races were considerable. All sorts of vehicles to be found in the colony, and they are very much the same as in England, were going.

There was the drag with the Government party, driven by the Hon. Percy Boyd, and among others on the roof was Marie Franceconnet.

There were humbler vehicles, but not that exhibition of utter vulgarity and poor horse flesh so often seen at popular races in England.

The distance from Sydney was not very great, and Kelly had no intention of lunching on the ground. The race might betray him. He knew nothing of the stamina of the horse when urged to a great pace.

Still he persevered. The road turned several times, and he lost sight of them several times.

But he could hear the unmistakable sound of pursuit, and again looked around.

After riding three miles, he came to a bridge over a stream of not very great width. Instead of crossing the bridge, he swerved to the left and dashed towards a mass of thicket near which was a hut.

He had intended to leap the stream and take a cross cut. But on reaching the hut, he found there was a plank over the river to serve the purpose of a bridge.

Kelly had no intention of delaying on the ground. He might betray him. He found Zeph and Salmon Roe smoking over their whisky and tobacco, took his way towards Sydney, which was now in sight.

He disengaged himself from the crowd and rode off, the Government grounds.

Just as one of the races was over, he saw Zeph and Salmon Roe looking anxiously around.

Dissatisfied, he joined himself to the crowd and rode off to meet them.

"Off's the word," said Salmon Roe. "Captain Henshaw is looking for you everywhere. I have kept close to him all day. A man has just rushed to him, and declared you are in the disguise of a woman."

"— him?" said Kelly, with a fearful curse, and turned away quietly.

He did not, however, try his horse's speed at first. He made for the road that led to Sydney. But he had not gone far when he heard shouts, and looking behind saw a confused mass of men, all mounted, following.

At their head, easily distinguished by his height and stalwart frame, was Captain Henshaw. They were about a quarter-of-a-mile behind.

The whole question depended on the speed of his horse. It was bony and powerful, and Kelly had tolerable confidence in it.

Still the troopers, having to cope with such characters as they did, were well mounted.

On, on, on, sped Kelly, looking warily to the right and left.

He soon discovered that those in the rear were quite his equals.

They might prove his superiors. He knew nothing of the stamina of the horse when urged to a great pace.

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He had intended to leap the stream and take a cross cut.

But on reaching the hut, he found there was a plank over the river to serve the purpose of a bridge. He dismounted, let his horse go loose, threw off his feminine habiliments, and dashed across, casting the plank into the water when he reached the other side.

He then hurried away.

When Captain Henshaw and his party came up, they found a hat, veil, habit, and a horse, but no sign of their rider.

Kate took his whiskers and nose from his pocket, in which was also a cap.

Thus equipped, he followed a rough-beaten path until he came to an obscure slanty inn, where a few shepherds and stock-keepers were drinking.

Here he procured refreshments, and taking a supply of whisky and tobacco, took his way towards Sydney, which he entered in the dusk.

He found Zeph and Salmon Roe smoking over their pipes, and very anxious.

Captain Kit had been with them some time, but had gone away.

"Let us start at once," cried Zeph.

"No," said Kelly. "I'm Innoced if I do until I've seen that there Frenchwoman."

It was useless reasoning with him; he must submit to his fate.

CHAPTER CXVII.

KIT'S POWER OVER MABEL.

At ten o'clock the two met, and went in the direction of the Government grounds.
There was aturnstile by means of which the grounds could be both entered and left, but they were only for the use of those who lived in Government House. No one ever ventured to break the rule; Kelly, of course, was an exception.

Proving about in his usual cat-like way, he had discovered Marie's habit of meeting the governor's nephew of a morning. Leading his brother to a thicket, he concealed himself to await the departure of the young man. A moment after they were behind the trees, the lovers came in sight.

Captain Kit was very nearly whistling. "Come away, Ned," he said, "there will be no kidnapping."

And he drew his astonished brother swiftly. Not until they were in a retired place did the younger man speak.

That girl's an escaped convict," he then said; "no one can do anything to her, but if her real character was known she would be ruined."

"Stark mad! that high-flyer a convict!" exclaimed Kit.

"It isn't likely," he replied, "but it is—and when we're at home, I'll tell you all about it."

Ned Kelly's astonishment when he heard the truth was something ludicrous to behold. All the time he was listening, he was plotting. Greed and avance were more powerful incentives to him than passion.

The girl was in his power, and in Government House there must be many valuables. "Well—that is a start," he cried, when Kit's yarn was over; "did you pick up any parcels too in your travels?"

"A fair smattering," replied Kit.

Then went and told her ladyship she must come here, if she don't want the sack," said Kelly.

"What do you intend doing?" asked Kit.

"I mean to have that girl under my thumb, to make her fetch and carry just as I please;" he continued, brutally, "the wench shall be in my power—you'll see.

And he unfolded a plan, cunning and daring, by which she should join in a daring robbery. "We'll take the swag on board your brig," he continued, "and show him the place where the valuables are kept."

"They are under lock and key," said Marie, sobbing in utter consternation.

"Never mind that," was the sardonic answer. "And, despite the girl's resistance, she was compelled ultimately to yield."

It was agreed that she should meet Kelly in the grounds. There was a side door leading to an escaille or service, which was generally left open, to facilitate the exit and entrance of the servants who stopped out late.

Marie went away in a state of mind most truly pitiable. What should she do? To tell the truth meant social ruin, and the end of all her hopes.

This, then, was not to be thought of. She must resign herself to her cruel fate. It was long past midnight ere she entered the grounds. Kelly was there dressed very plainly. He wore his favourite disguise of nose and whiskers. Not a word was spoken. She led the way. All was still. Presently they reached a retired part of the building.

She pointed to a door, and there would have moved away, but Kelly grasped a knife he wore in his belt, and looked at her with such fierce and menacing eyes that she trembled. He then produced a bunch of strange keys, and soon had the door open.

He drew her in and closed the door. The plate chest was not even locked, and Kelly easily filled a bag. He however, after a long search, found no money.

Marie believed his Excellency kept his money in his study, which was next to his bedroom. This he entered a second time.

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"Great heavens!" the man cried, "whatever can I do? It is all gone!"
CHAPTER CXVIII.

Marie makes a bold stroke.

The governor in a light and airy way spoke of his loss at dinner, apologising for the absence of the plate, but as that did not detract from the goodness of the dinner, everybody smiled and the dinner went on.

The young secretary and nephew of the governor could not very well pay marked attention to Marie before people.

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After dinner there was a reception and music, and the orchestra was playing it was easy to find a corner where one was safe from interruption.

Not the faintest suspicion occurred as to the means by which the robbery was effected. Because when Marie Franconnet appeared at breakfast, her eyes were heavy and her cheeks pale, no one thought of connecting that fact with the robbery.

Lady Belmont kindly asked what was the matter, and headache was given as an excuse.

There was nothing to be done but send for the police and set them on the track.

Such valuable plate with crests and other marks indicated its origin. But in all communities there are reputable people who will buy anything without asking its origin.

Marks are not difficult to obliterate, and then the melting-pot does the rest.

Maria Franconnet was humiliated and terrified. That she should have conceived a passing admiration for a man of Kelly's character was humiliating.

But it was still more miserable for her to know herself to a certain extent in his power.

How could she get out of it? Not by remaining in Sydney, for she could always find her.

She must make a bold stroke for a husband, and yet even that would take time.

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The young secretary and nephew of the governor could not very well pay marked attention to Marie before people. On the contrary he had to attend to others, and especially to his cousin Violet, who certainly looked upon him as very stiff and cold to what he had been.

Marie on this occasion was seated beside the wealthy squatter, who appeared to admire her more and more every time he saw her.

Marie's tactics were very clever. She was quiet and timid, doing nothing to draw out her lover and yet not repelling him.

Percy Boyd looked on with a frowning brow, though seeking to conceal his jealousy and his infatuation.

Violet and her sister began to have a very slight inkling of the truth—at all events, that Percy admired the squatter, while Marie played, sat apart.

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“Consider my position—that of a forlorn girl—without any relatives—dependent on a few kind friends,” she said, in tones of deep emotion, “and I fear me, I am behaving very ungratefully.”

“Give me time,” he begged.

“We will speak of it to-morrow again,” she said, “if we can.”

And she allowed him to take her departure.

Then she walked back to Government House and went to her room, where she made a seemingly simple, but really very elaborate costume.

As she expected, she received a summons to attend Lady Belmore in her boudoir. Here, as she expected, she found the countess in conversation with the squatter.

“Sit down, mademoiselle,” remarked the countess, “I have something very important to say to you.”

Marie bowed low, and seated herself in the chair pointed out by the countess.

“This gentleman,” began the countess, “has rather surprised me by informing me that, without having actually proposed, he has given you a hint as to his wish to make you his wife, and that you have referred him to me.”

“Madame la Comtesse,” said the girl, in accents which thrilled the listener’s heart, they were so plaintive and sad, “I have no father, no mother; and, madame, I have dared to hope you would be my friend, to advise me, if I dare ask you.”

“Certainly, my dear,” was the answer of the kindly countess. “It is a serious step to take, and I shall be sorry to lose you. But you are poor and an orphan, and monsieur, who is a good man, rich, well known to my husband—”

The squatter, at a sign from the countess, had moved away.

“And you think you can love him and be happy?” asked the countess, kindly.

“I know not much of love,” she answered, with well-acted timidity—the Petroleuse, who had abandoned family and society, for a handsome Communist—“but I think him a good man, and will make me a good husband.”

The countess laughed a sweet ripple of womanly laughter, and then turned to the squatter.

“You’ve won the day,” she said, looking at her watch. “I’ll give you five minutes to settle matters, as lunch will be ready, and then we can settle the particulars, as your return to the Murray river is to be so soon.”

And she rose.

Marie could make no objection to an early marriage. She lived in constant dread of the reappearance of Kelly, and—sacrificed her happiness for the present—within a fortnight.

Money of course was not wanting, and exactly a fortnight after she was wedded, Marie Francomeet became Mrs. Eldred.

Here we leave them. We shall find them again before long.

CHAPTER CXIX.
WHERE TO MEET IT.

CAPTAIN Kit knew those seas well, and as he was well aware that Ned Kelly would be the better for an absence of some duration from the colony, he proposed making a voyage to Hong-Kong.

There they could get rid of the plate.

If Chinese and Jews were to be found ready and willing to buy everything and ask no questions.

At all events, in order to run no risk, it was decided to take out the crew.

Thus there was plenty of time to do.

Captain Kit had not a large crew. He was a cautious man, and did not like to excite suspicion, but he had enough men for his purpose if he fell in with a moderate-sized ship.

As a rule there was little to be gained by assaulting small merchant vessels, as their cargo was bulky and of a kind which would not suit Kit the cruiser; while, as a rule, they had not much money.

So Kit trusted a little to chance and to something turning up.

Though he had plenty of arms on board, he had no cannon.

Captain Kit on board as a skipper was a very different man from what he was on shore.

When on his vessel he was every inch a sailor.

At Hong-Kong he had been more than once, but only in a legitimate way.

The voyage was not a very eventful one, for the weather was fine and nothing came in their way to excite their curiosity.

Either the vessels were too large to attack, or too small to be worth capturing.

In this way they arrived at Hong-Kong.

No one on board had any knowledge of Kelly, Zepi, or Salmon Roe, while Captain Kit had done nothing to bring down the vengeance of the authorities upon him.

So they performed the needed formalities, and went on shore to a lodging-house.

Now came getting the plate on shore. Once the ship was admitted to harbour, very little notice was taken of what was done.

Men went backwards and forwards without much questioning, but should any suspicion be excited, there would, of course, be a rush upon the cruiser.

The plate had been knocked out of shape and beaten into small pieces.

They made a great pretence of looking for a cargo, and so drew off suspicion.

In this way they continued to take their plunder on shore and store it at their temporary residence.

Then Captain Kit, through an acquaintance of his in the settlement, found an introduction to a Chinese general merchant.

The man was a small innkeeper, who depended alto-
gather on sailors, and who assured them that Chi-he was not only trustworthy, but able to buy anything from a ship to a ship's anchor.

Like most of his countrymen he kept up no appearance; all he cared about was to make money.

The heathen Chinese acted with the most perfect coolness tested the precious metals, and then, weighing them, paid in notes and gold.

That he made more than fair profit on them was not to be doubted.

Men selling under the circumstances seldom ask questions, being only too glad of the value for their swag.

It now became a question as to what should be done.

Kelly had no wish to return to Sydney at present. He knew that the suspicions of Lieutenant Henshaw might have been very seriously aroused.

He had vanity enough to think that the audacious robbery committed at Government House would be ascribed to him, and had no wish to run the chance of being accused of the crime.

Besides he knew not how far he could trust the Frenchwoman. She might try and take time by the forelock and denounce him even at her own peril.

Women, he thought, were very artful, and she could easily make up some story to clear herself and implicate him.

All this he did not think Sydney a safe place, neither was Melbourne, as he knew that Tom Conquest would never rest until he effected his capture.

He did not see much to be got by revisiting his new friend the Wagga-Wagga butcher, as really and truly he did not believe in his story.

An arrant rogue himself Kelly was no fool, and could see discrepancies in the other's story which made him doubtful.

Kelly and Kit had a long talk as to what might be done, and could come to no conclusion, when a vessel, with a valuable cargo, put into port to refit.

She had passed through a severe storm, lost spars, had heavy leaks opened, and had several of her crew drowned.

She had a valuable cargo of silk, indigo, and tea.

Of course she would be of no use to the owner of Captain Kit's cruiser, even if they could capture her.

But Zeph hit upon a plan.

"Crews are scarce; men desert from here as elsewhere," he began; "let us ship as sailors."

"What's the use of going in for hard work when we've got the treasure?" growled Kelly.

"You ain't half alive, Ned. I'll show you how we can make a pile. We ship aboard as able seamen. She starts in two hours.

"What's your other motive?"

"To have her docked."

"All was settled, and the Duncan sailed on a fine day, with every hope of a prosperous voyage.

Kit's cruiser lay quiet in harbour for six hours after the Duncan started, and then departed also.

The Duncan, though she had a valuable cargo of indigo, silk, and tea, was not a large vessel. She had a moderate crew and only a few passengers.

There were only two state rooms, one of which had been secured by Kelly, the other by a rather saturnine individual who called himself a planter, and his name was entered on the ship books as Errol.

The passengers were all business men and numbered twelve.

Kelly, alias Bernard, made himself very agreeable. He had travelled, seen a good deal of the world, and could in his rough and ready way tell good stories.

In those days, when a large number of the travellers of the world consisted of the bagman class, coarseness went a long way for humour, and vulgarity for wit.

In such society as that Kelly could pass for a very smart and clever fellow.

He toned down his oaths to the finest point, he used as little slang as possible, and thus passed muster.

The individual who occupied the opposite state room to him, was somewhat of a mystery to him and to everybody else.

He was rather rough, but he had money. He appeared to possess a chronic cold and was always warmly wrapped up.

On the first occasion they met at dinner, the two eyed each other curiously.

There seemed to be something familiar to each in the expression of the face.

Both discarded the idea, and yet they were convinced somehow that they had met before.

Neither, however, made any remark, and after dinner smoked, drank, and played a game of dominos without making the slightest allusion to their mutual suspicion.

The strange passenger, who called himself Rintoul, had also joined at Hong-Kong, where he had been remaining some time as an invalid.

It was only when the vessel offered him a rapid passage that Rintoul determined to start for England.

What was his other motive? Certainly he had been for several nights in the company of Mr. Bernard (Kelly), and had noticed that he had plenty of money.

Whatever his ultimate motive was, this induced him to go aboard the same ship.

Kelly's luggage consisted of just what an extempore traveller required, and a portmanteau for immediate use.

Kelly knew very well that any attempt to save his general luggage when the climax came would be useless.

He therefore decided to have merely what he required ready and no more.

The third evening out, Kit's cruiser well in sight, Zeph entered on the ship books as Errol.

As the Duncan's crew were all dressed in their civilian dress, Zeph had no difficulty in finding his way to the state room which Captain Kit had taken.

The captain's cabin was close at hand.

Kelly had him by the collar of the coat in an instant.

He was as stout as himself, but a struggle under the circumstances would have been simply folly.

The captain in his cabin was close at hand.

There was no necessity.

The minute the stranger saw the occupant of the state room in his deshabille, he recognised him.
been played, could not, I tell why Kelly kept such a sharp eye on the sea. He had taken a passage.

His object was to reach England and then work his way up the coast. He expected every day to see the vessels appear in sight.

He was very fond of sitting for hours on the end of the jetty, looking at the sea. He had been diving about these two years on my last stake, and things were getting warm for me in my last place, so I shushed up another small pile, and took passage as a non-

"But what did you want a sneaking in here?" asked Kelly, now recognised his old pal.

"Well," grumbled Morgan. "I thought I'd just let you know—just for old acquaintance sake—that I spotted you, old man!"

"All right," answered Ned. "You may be wanted, but not now, my buck. When I'm asleep, none of your larks here."

"We'll have a jaw to-morrow," answered Morgan, who saw that his comrade was sulky-natured. Kelly was not at all pleased with this meeting. He did not like his personality to be known to too many people.

He finished his task, secured all he cared for in a kind of wallet, and then retired. He slept heavily, nor awakened until a sudden uproar awoke him.

He hurried on deck, bag in hand, and found the captain and crew in a state of the utmost alarm. Captain Kit and officers saw that it was a mere question of time.

She might float hours, but she must sink in the end. She might even go down at any moment. They were numerous and well-appointed, and with such weather as they had, they had nothing to fear. So they started for Hong-Kong, in their hurry not noticing a vessel hovering at some distance, too far to see the fact that Zeph and Salmon Roe were missing.

As soon as the boats were at some distance, Captain Kit hurried up and a gang went on board. A number were put to the pumps, but from the first, the captain and officers saw that it was a mere question of time. She might float hours, but she must sink in the end. She might even go down at any moment.

The captain determined to take to the boats. They were numerous and well-appointed, and with such weather as they had, they had nothing to fear. So they started for Hong-Kong, in their hurry not noticing a vessel hovering at some distance, too far to see the fact that Zeph and Salmon Roe were missing.

As soon as the boats were at some distance, Captain Kit hurried up and a gang went on board. A number were put to the pumps, but from the first, the captain and officers saw that it was a mere question of time. She might float hours, but she must sink in the end.

They had not met for some time. The vessel and its contents were fully insured, so, after all, they would be underwriters would suffer.

Kelly and Morgan had struck up a certain kind of intimacy, though neither had full confidence in the other. They had not met for some time. Morgan after one of his feasts, which consisted always of atrocious murders and robberies, had made a good habit. To escape from pursuit he had sailed away and led a wandering life for more than two years.

The man whom he addressed was one of those men who are always to be seen hanging round such localities, peering through glasses without any or reasonable object that anyone knows of.

"You've good eyes, mate," he cried, "but it are the Duncan!"

The news spread like wild-fire through the town. Kelly modestly retired.

The Duncan was in company with the schooner Kate, which had left the harbour about the same time. Soon the two came in, and the captain and Lloyd's agent went on board. Captain Kit's story was simple. While pursuing his voyage, he had come upon the Duncan water-logged. He had gone on board, and, knowing the vessel to be valuable, he had determined to save her. He had put every man who could work at the pumps, while the carpenter had searched for the leaks. Fortunately he found them and was able to stop them up.

They were strange leaks, being some small holes, under the bales, which they had to remove to get at them. They were however successfully stopped, and then the vessel brought into harbour. The delight of the underwriters was great indeed.

Captain Kit, or John Leary as he was called on the ship's papers, was decidedly entitled, with his crew, to large salvage. But Captain Leary objected to abide the decision of Courts of Law.

He had no time to waste. The agent for Lloyd's said that he had a certain licence in the matter, and could pay him a sum down in draughts on London, which any banker would cash. Then after communications with the owners he could have the balance at a future time. After some pretended hesitation Leary accepted, the draughts were signed by the captain and agent, cashed by the bankers, and the schooner Kate took her departure to be seen no more in Hong-Kong.

It was now determined by the captain and the Lloyd's agent to overhaul the Duncan. A large part of her cargo was damaged. This was sold at a rummage sale, the rest put in bond.

Then the secret came out. The vessel had been settled—but by whom? They remarked that two of their crew had been missing when they took to their boats, while the two state-room passengers had also disappeared. Then could be but one explanation. They had been the victims of a foul conspiracy. But it was too late to unmask the vile perpetrators of the cruel crime.

CHAPTER CXXI.

**KELLY MEETS AN OLD FRIEND.***

NED KELLY had never been partial to the sea. On board a vessel, large or small, he was not king of the castle. He therefore informed his brother of his desire to be placed on shore at Adelaide, where once more he could take one of the flat-bottomed streamers which go up the Murray river, and go in search of his horse.

Captain Kit agreed, but hoped that now they had met they would not entirely separate.

Kelly responded that his adventurous life would pro...
happily bring him to Sydney again, but that he should keep away from it for some time.

Kelly bade his brother keep up constant communication when in Sydney with the barmahd, known as Mary Mead, through whom, if he knew of any pal going to Sydney, he would send him messages.

This settled, the voyage was continued; and, finally, Kelly, Zeph, and Salmon Roe lugged at Adelaide in illus' dresses, and were soon lost in the crowd.

Captain Kit continued on his way. The three confederates, having discovered the date of the departure of a flat-bottomed steamer, secured passages, and then kept quiet, going out for an hour or so in the evening.

They amused themselves on board in the usual way with cards, smoking, and drinking; and finally reached the landing-place.

There they made their way to the paddocks where they had left Marco Polo.

The owner of the paddocks was very much surprised to see Kelly after so long an absence, but on being paid all arrears readily gave up the animal.

The men, well-mounted, well-armed, and well-provided, started in search of further adventures.

It had been decided, however, to do nothing to draw immediate attention to their return. Their plunder had been chary turned into notes.

Spending money freely in the colony was too common a practice for anyone to notice it.

They would simply amuse themselves in their own way, until necessity and the prospect of a great coup made them yield to temptation.

At last they, after a night of gambling, in which they had been looked upon with suspicion, made up their minds to remove.

No bushman is ever encumbered with luggage. They were now costumed as rough, but respectable diggers.

Their destination was a certain spot on the Murray river, where, while there were hiding-places enough, there were also pastures here and there inns, frequented by shepherds, stock-keepers, and stockkeepers, where they could obtain all their requirements.

They travelled slowly, as there was nothing to hurry for. The country was thickly peopled for the colony, that is, by bullock-drivers and others, so that the business was easy.

In that district were some of the largest estates of the squatters scattered far and wide, and consequently rude huts existed for the use of their employees.

Kelly had no desire to draw attention, and so he and his companions found a safe hiding-place in the bush, where they could camp within a reasonable distance of the inn.

In these places no explanation was required, and no questions were asked. They, therefore, after arranging their camp and securing their horses, walked down to the inn.

It was a rude one-storied building, with some rough tables and seats in front.

But rough and ready as it was, the accommodation was good. There was little that could not be procured there from rum to champagne, in which in their mad fits, even stockkeepers would indulge when in funds.

The inn was on a cross road, and was much frequented by bullock-drivers and others, so that the business was tolerably flourishing.

The men spoke in a hoarse stage-whisper, but Kelly’s ears were almost supernaturally keen.

Kelly never moved a muscle. Presently Ned Kelly heard his own name mentioned.

"I tell you, mate, I ain’t a-going for to say as that is Kelly, but I says as that is Kelly’s horse; know’d him afore he stole him," the man was saying.

"What’s your game?" "Police-station ain’t a mile off," the other answered.

"I’ll step out at the back." "Right you are," replied the other.

Kelly never moved a muscle. He looked at his comrades, and then slowly turned his head just in time to see the men who had been at the window move away.

(In to be continued.)
CHAPTER CXX.—Continued.

Not a moment was to be lost.

His comrades understood Kelly's warning look, and at once mounted.

At first they rode slowly, but when out of sight of the inn they hurried.

Kelly now told them what had induced him to leave so abruptly.

He determined to put a long distance between himself and that spot ere he halted.

Presently they came to a cross road again, one being the main road, such as it was, to Geelong; the other had a bullock-track.

"They'll only squint at my beauty" said Kelly; "you've nothing to fear. I'll play 'possum for a day or two; you can spy, so that when we meet you'll have news."

They always obeyed Kelly, and so, after appointing a meeting in the first drinking-shop in the scattered village they were going to, he rode away.

The road he followed was a bullock-track, with many marks of wheels and also of horses.

Kelly knew he was going in the direction of a station.

He had no doubt that he might find some temporary shelter near it.

The traps would look for him the way his friends had taken, so that a few days might put them off the track.

As he went on he found all the signs of an extensive sheep-run.

At last, after a hard and heavy ride, he came in sight of the home station.

It was an extensive one, with the usual one-storied principal building, and out-buildings and paddocks for the horses.

In the verandah in front sat a lady, reclining in a rocking-chair, with a book in her hand.

She looked up at the sound of a horse stopping, and gave a faint shriek.

The recognition was mutual.

_She knew him to be the man who had saved her from the fire, but who held her secret._

What unlucky chance had brought him there?

It was a dreadful affair, but it must be faced.

Kelly alighted and approached her with an awkward pretence of politeness.

"Madam, we meet again," he said.

"Yes," she answered in good English, "how is it so, why do you come here?"

"Pure accident, ma'am," he went on. "I'm travelling—looking for a spot to settle on. Lost my way," he continued, laughing meaningly.

"My husband is out," she faltered, and then explained that he would soon be in to dinner—would he walk in and wait?

"Say I'm related—what you like—I wants a little shelter for a little time," said Kelly, thinking he would be as safe there as anywhere else.

"I'll tell my husband," she said, "you saved my life from fire—that will be enough."

And Kelly entered after Marie had ordered a boy to take his horse to the paddock.

Marie desired another boy to show Kelly to a room, comfortable, though simply furnished.

She then retired to bemoan the cruel fate which had brought this man to her quiet and happy home.

Though love for her husband was out of the question, she was happy and contented to a certain extent. He was kindness itself, and gave her every comfort and indulgence.

All that wealth could command was hers, and her room had been furnished regardless of expense.

She had a bullock load of things brought up, with a piano and other luxuries.

After her stormy and terrible career she had found repose.

She was alone, she had believed her crimes and sins could never find her.

And now this man by some fearful fatality had come like a ghost of the past.
That he was coarse and rough would be nothing to her husband.

He had saved her life under perilous circumstances.

He knew the whole story, and his gratitude was very great towards the man, who had really done a brave and gallant act.

She did not believe in his having reached the station by accident.

She believed he had tracked her out to gain some end.

He was to a certain extent in his power, but she could only expose him, and force him to fly.

She ran down at once, looking bright and happy, and at once told him of her unexpected visitor.

He was delighted to welcome the man who had saved his darling.

"No matter if he is rough," he said, in answer to his wife, "he did a bold and gallant thing—and I thank him."

"I ain't one of your polite swells," said Kelly, "and I want you to please him so far as to let him alone."

She saw that Kelly had some evil notion working in his head, and she knew the taste of Government rations, and she laughed.

She locked up.

With his many shoulders against one of the pillars of the verandah, his legs crossed, his hands thrust into his breeches-pockets, and his pipe sticking out of one corner of his mouth, stood Captain Higgins, alias Ned Kelly.

"Look here, Marie," resumed Ned, "this is, as I was saying, a very decent crib, eh?"

"Yes," she answered slowly, "I am very comfortable here."

"Yes; it's a decent crib, a very decent crib."

"There was another interval of silence."

"Marie locked up into Kelly's face to find his eye fixed on her with an evil, gloating look, the meaning of which she could read only too plainly.

"And you figure at the head of it very well, very well indeed. There's no denying," he continued in a meditative tone, "that you women get the pull of us chap* again.

"Yes," she replied.

"And you figure at the head of it very well, very well indeed."

"And you figure at the head of it very well, very well indeed."

"What is it you will?" asked Kelly, looking about in the hope of settling. He had no taste for gold-digging.

"Well, yes," he said slowly, watching her as a tiger

CHAPTER CXXI.

A STRANGE wooing.

Sycamored at full length in a Mexican hammock, slung beneath the creepers-provided verandah running round her husband's dwelling-house, Marie Franconnet, now Marie Eldred, was musing on the good things of this life, and the advantages of virtue.
of an explanation. Do you recollect how you and I first met at Sydney?"

"Yes."

"How I plucked you like a brand from the burning, as Holy Joe used to say, eh?"

"Well, I admit I owe you my life."

"Oh, you don't. Well that gives me a fair ground to start on, anyway. Now don't you feel all a swelling and a bursting with feelings of gratitude towards me?"

"Gratitude? Yes; bad as I have been, I thank you from my heart for saving my life."

"Very good. Now I want a little practical proof of that gratitude."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, you see, I am thinking of shifting my quarters and lying close for a week or two on the upper waters of the Murray. I know one or two tidy little spots where one can lie snug and comfortable. But I am not to feel lone-

some at times, and I think I should feel all the better for your company."

"Vait!" she almost screamed, "you want me to—"

"To pass a pretty little honeymoon with yours truly, as the letter-writers put it, and he chuckled.

The woman was horror-stricken. Bad as she had been, she was far from being utterly reproved.

His Kelly merely asked her to betray her husband, she would have hesitated, for she had learned to respect Michael Eldred, if not to love him, and had beside a dawning consciousness of what was due to herself in her rehabilitated position to oppose to the powerful levers, fear and gratitude, by means of which the bushranger could work upon her feelings.

But to leave her home, to court shame and disgra-

mend, to voluntarily abandon the high position she was beginning to realise, and all her dreams of future grandeur?

It was too much.

Self-interest is the strongest motive in the human heart, and self-interest told her to say "nay" to Kelly's proposition.

Only she was too wise to say "nay" openly.

Whilst she paused, seeking for a reply, the bushranger had kept his bloodshot eyes fixed on her steadily.

Cruel, brutal, and ignorant as Kelly was, he had a knack of reading human nature.

It was this that helped him to his supremacy over his pawns.

"Look here, my wench," he broke in, suddenly changing his tone from one of coarse banter to that of menace, "you know who am I. I am Ned Kelly, who never let man, woman, or child thwart him in any mortal thing he set his heart on. The day after to-morrow I start for the upper waters of the Murray, and you set out with me, either curtailing by me on that pretty little grey mare of yours or strapped hand and foot across the pommel of Marco Polo's saddle like a sheep. And, by —, if you don't behave yourself, you'll run a very fair chance of having your throat cut like a sheep's at the end of the journey."

Marie looked at him with a glance of horror.

The blood seemed to freeze in her veins as he hissed out these last words, with his face close to hers and his eyes riveted on her own.

At that moment the bushranger's keen ear caught the thud of approaching hoofs on the stretch of turf extending around after pay-day, in order to get rid of their six months' earnings with the utmost possible speed.

On such occasions a week of Pandemonium is the only companion to be made with the scene presented.

But ordinarily the spot was dull and quiet enough, and it might be wondered how Gibson could pick up a living.

On the morning after his interview with Marie, Ned Kelly rose in a restless, unsettled humour.

At last she seemed to hit upon a plan that seemed to promise success.

She resolved to write a note to the nearest police station to inform the authorities of Kelly's presence on the station and meanwhile to refrain acquaintance in the latter's plan.

Letters to or from the station were left to be called for at a small roadside public-house about five miles from the house, kept by a man named Gibson.

The difficulty was to get the letters there.

If she asked him to take and to hand him, he would naturally question the address ask why she was in correspondence with the police, and an explanation, which she wished above all things to avoid, must ensue.

Moreover, she felt she could not trust any one of the hands to take it.

Tall there was and is a widespread sympathy with what are called the dangerous classes in Australia, and the odds were that an episode to the police would, if handed to one of the shepherds for transmission, be lost in transit.

Such things were continually happening.

Suddenly the bright idea crossed her of making use of a tame black, who used to hover about the station and pick up a living by tracking a lost sheep or any similar job.

It would be certain to come prowling about the kitchen-door some time the next morning.

So before retiring to rest, she hastily scribbled a few lines to the police, and thrust them into an envelope in readiness.

Her spirits rose when this was done.

"Ah! Monsieur Kelly," she said to herself as she sought her couch, "you are very big, very brave, very strong, and am only a little weak woman, but I think that I — que je ne sois que minable femme dans votre écurie."

CHAPTER CXXII.

THE LONE INN.

The inn kept by Gibson was one of the class already described in this work.

It was rudely but strongly built of timber.

It stood by the roadside, but depended less upon the few chance customers travelling by that route than upon the station-hands who used to come flocking in for miles around after pay-day, in order to get rid of their six months' earnings with the utmost possible speed.

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was urging for a pipe and glass of grog, and a hand at cards with some more congenial companions.

He resolved to ride up to Gibson's and see if his wish could not be gratified.

With some notion in his head that Marco knew might be recognised he left him in the stable, and, selecting a meek-looking chestnut of his host's, was soon歌声ing across the five miles of open country lying between the station and the late-renamed Eldred's had to start at daybreak for one of the outlying huts in the opposite direction, and Kelly on leaving the five miles of open country lying between the station and the bushranger could not read writing, but for the moment he resolved to keep that discovery to himself.

In daily and hourly peril, accustomed to read danger in a thousand things that to other men would have been so many unconsidered trikes, he divined at once that the letter was connected with himself.

Marie was the only lady at the station, and if she has written to the police it could only be to betray him. It was necessary that, at all costs, he should become acquainted with the contents of the letter.

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But how?

That was the question.

"I should just like to know what's inside that letter," he said, with the same air of jovial good humour that he had put on ever since he had entered the inn.

Gibson laughed, thinking he was only joking, and placed the document on a shelf behind the bar.

Then he resumed his place in front of Kelly, and took up the cards.

The bushranger was on thorns.

He was racking his brains for a method of learning what Marie had written.

It would have been easy enough to have put upon a plan of filching the letter and destroying it, so as to prevent it from reaching its destination, but this was not enough for him.

He wanted to learn what was inside it, and he could only do this with another's help.

Despite his iron will, he could not help stealing a glance at it now and then from where he sat, and it needed all his power to keep his attention fixed on the game.

"Fill up again," he said, noticing the tumblers were emptied.

And as Gibson rose to do so, he followed him to the bar.

"Look here, mate," he said, leaning against the counter.

"I'm blamed if I shouldn't like a squint into that bit of writing.

Gibson looked at him curiously.

"The deuce you would," he answered, seeing that Kelly was in earnest.

"Yes.

The two men looked steadily at one another for half-a-minute.

Kelly was a good judge of character, and he read the genuine written plainly on Gibson's face.

"Look here," he said bluntly, extending his arm and taking the letter, "I am going to find out what's inside there.

"Surely," brake the other, "I can't allow that.

"I am sworn to the Post Office, and shall get into no end of a row.

"I'll make it worth your while if you choose to help me," said Kelly, with a tone of firmness that awed the other.

"Well, I'm not the man to refuse to lend a hand to a pal," he said, with a grin, as he noticed Kelly take out a bag which he guessed contained gold.

"Now just listen," said the bushranger, laying the mouth of the bag and taking out a reusable-sized nugget, which he placed on the counter, "there's yours if I find out what's inside the letter.

"Stop a bit," said Gibson. "You only want to know what's inside it, do you?"

"That's all.

"Oh, well, we can soon fake that, and no harm done."
"What do you mean?"

"Just you wait and see," said Gibson, with a chuckle.

As he spoke he went to the fireplace, where there was a pile of smouldering ashes.

Puffing at them for a few instants he brought them to a red glow, and unhooking a kettle slung above them, placed it in their midst.

In a few minutes the kettle began to sing, and a cloud of steam issued from the spout.

"Give me the letter," said Gibson.

Kelly obeyed, watching him closely. His hand was yet divining the other's intention.

"If he means to burn it, I'll have his liver," he muttered, for he did not quite trust his companion.

But such an idea was very far from Gibson's mind.

After going to the door and glancing round so as to be sure that no new comer was likely to interrupt them, he closed it and approached the fire.

He placed the envelope in the jet of steam issuing from the kettle.

In a few minutes the gum that held down the adhesive flap was softened.

Then, removing it, he opened the envelope with ease.

This was done with an assurance and dexterity that were evidently the result of long practice.

It was obvious that it was not his first attempt at tampering with the correspondence that passed through his hands, and the ghost of Sir James Graham must have smiled upon the correspondence that passed through his hands, for he did not quite trust his companion.

This was done with an assurance and dexterity that were evidently the result of long practice.

Kelly took it and unfolded it.

He noticed the other glance at his hand and guessed the trap above their heads.

Then fumbling in his pocket—

"Well, I'm bl---t," ejaculated Kelly in amazement.

Gibson held out the billet to him.

"There you are, uncle," he said, with a grin.

Kelly took it and unfolded it.

Then fumbling in his pocket—

"Well, now, would you believe it?" said he, "I've missed my spectacles, so I must trouble you just to cast your eye over it and tell me what is written there." And he held out the open page towards Gibson.

So naturally was this said that Gibson, not dreaming that Kelly could not read writing, glanced down the page and repeated the contents aloud.

They were brief:

"SIR,—A notorious robber hides himself at my husband's station. Have the kindness to send men to effect his arrest at once. He goes to-morrow.

"Then fumbling in his pocket—

"P.S.—He is very dangerous; send six men."

As he spoke he went to the fireplace, where there was a pile of smouldering ashes.

"What do you mean?" asked Gibson, with a chuckling laugh.

Kelly's face was unmoved, but in his heart he vowed a bitter vengeance on Marie.

"No you don't, my tulip," he muttered to himself, "I hope my hands may rot off at the wrists if she gets loose whooping a glass of her."

Meanwhile Gibson had been quietly replacing the letter in the envelope and fastening it up again, but without losing sight of Kelly.

He was pretty well used to putting two and two together.

Kelly's eagerness to learn the contents of the letter and the paragraph about the "notorious robber" were two things that struck him.

Suddenly a thought flashed across him. He had noticed Kelly's hand as they sat down to play.

He glanced at it again.

Yes, there was the scar across the back.

He divined the truth at once.

It was Kelly who was before him!

Sharp as he was Kelly was sharper.

He noticed the other glance at his hand and guessed the very thoughts passing in his mind.

"If you are right, my blooming swell," he said coolly, "I am Ned Kelly."

"Ned Kelly!" exclaimed Gibson, with feigned amazement.

"Ay, Ned Kelly, who never forgets an injury or forgives a traitor. You know me. Take a good look at me. I am worth looking at. This head of mine alone is worth ten thousand pounds at any police station. But," and as he spoke he gripped Gibson by the arm and placing his face close to the innkeeper's hissed out the words between his teeth, "the man who tries to earn that ten thousand pounds will never live to spend it. If I were lying in the condemned cell to-morrow with a hundredweight of iron on each wrist, he would not be safe from my vengeance. If I only lifted a finger he would have a dozen knives in him. And, by Jingo, if I was bowing in eternal flames I'd come back to see it done, though all the devils in hell stood round to lar my way."

"Good Lord! mate, no need to talk like that," said Gibson, confusedly, "I ain't the chap to think of preaching on a pal. So you are Ned Kelly, are you? Well, I've heard a good deal about you and am glad to see you. Proud to have you in my crib. Come, let's have another nobbier. Here's luck to you."

As he rattled off these sentences, Kelly continued to watch him narrowly.

The bushranger could not get over the sense of mistrust inspired by his new friend.

They resumed their game however, and now Gibson was racking his mind how to betray Kelly with safety to himself.

He felt uncommonly nervous, but a man will do a good deal for the value of ten thousand pounds in the way of risk.

At last he hit upon a plan.

He would focus Kelly.

It was not the first time he had played such a trick upon his customers, and the materials were at hand in the case.

"Look here, old pal," he began with a drunken air of confidence that was admirably put on, "such a regular ripper as you are, must have a mug of the best. I've got a bottle or two of the best stuff that ever trickled out of a still-worm stowed away below. I'm dashed if we won't have one in honour of this glorious occasion."

"What's the tipple?" asked Kelly, with assumed carelessness.

"Whisky, man, whisky!" said Gibson, speaking thickly and with great verbosity, "real, genuine, not, still with the true flavour of the turf clinging to it. Devil a drop could Roe or Jamieson turn out to match it. So I'll step down and get it at once."

As he spoke he advanced to one corner of the room, and after pulling a bolt, lifted a trap-door, along the top of a flight of steps.

Lighting a candle he prepared to descend.

Kelly was all on the alert for signs of treachery.

To him the change in Gibson's manner was suspicious and he had come to the resolve not to lose sight of him for a moment.

The thought occurred to him that there might be some other way of exit from the cellar by which Gibson meant to escape and make his way to the police station.

"No you don't, my tulp," he muttered to himself, and he staggered after the innkeeper, growing out—

"Let's have a squint into that underground den of yours, it might be a handy place to stow away a bit of swag."

Gibson had no objection, for the drugged liquor he was in search of was done up in bottles in a way to disarm all suspicion.

"Come along, then," he said, and descended the ladder, closely followed by Ned.

At the foot of the ladder was a sort of landing of earth.

From this another short flight of steps led into the cellar itself.

Gibson raised the light, and Ned, looking down, saw that the cellar was a spacious place, but almost filled up with piles of rubbish, barrels, stacks of bottles, and the like.

Suddenly, as the two men were standing side by side the trap above their heads closed with a tremendous crash.

Then came the sound of the shooting of the bolt, followed by a chuckling laugh.
CHAPTER CXXIII

THE CELLAR.

No sooner had the two men disappeared down the steps than the inner door of the room, in which they had been sitting, opened.

A face peered cautiously round it.

"Then a spare, lean figure glided cautiously across the floor.

"I swear I'll go and draw ten thousand quid. They must settle matters down below there as they can," he muttered.

And, after locking the outer doors of the house and putting the keys in his pocket, he mounted Kelly's chest—

"I don't know," gasped Gibson, who was himself equally bewildered.

Releasing him Kelly bounded past him up the steps and tried to raise the trap with the idea it might have fallen by accident.

But he at once discovered that it was fastened.

With rage he sprang down the ladder again and seized on Gibson.

"You cursed skunk, you mean, sneaking hound of a spy, so you think to trap Ned Kelly, do you? By all the holies, there won't be much of you left in five minutes to stagger.

As he spoke he stumbled against a barrel. He had selected a spot close to a pile of empty bottles-

"You miserable viper! I'll drink your blood, I'll rip your liver out," he foamed, grappling with Gibson and striving to throw him.

The innkeeper was a powerful man, and was, he felt, far too maddened to listen to him.

But Kelly was far too unaided to listen to him.

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"You miserable viper! I'll drink your blood, I'll rip your liver out," he foamed, grappling with Gibson and striving to throw him.
It would have to be a contest of skill, not brute force.

"Steady, Ned, my boy!" he said to himself, "you're not going to let this red-bearded Judas get the better of you. Not if you know it!"

Acting on this resolve, he lay quite quiet, though a bottle flew every now and then in his direction.

Gibson was discerned by this.

He knew by the noise of Ned's fall, that he had bowled him over, and came to the conclusion that he had stunned him.

He resolved to profit by this, bind him hand and foot before he recovered, and on the arrival of the police, for he guessed the line of conduct Sam had taken, to hand him over to them and claim the reward.

Cautiously and carefully he stole forward in the darkness.

Inch by inch, putting his foot down with the utmost caution, he advanced.

Suddenly he trod, as he thought, on a toad.

Something firm and elastic.

The next instant there was a mangled cry of pain and ferocious joy, and something gripped his ankle like a vise.

Before he could make an effort to free himself, his legs were jerked from under him, and he was thrown violently on his back.

He had stepped on to Kelly's outstretched hand.

A frightful struggle ensued as the two men rolled over and over amidst the fragments of broken glass, which tore their clothes and gashed their flesh.

"You may kill me," gasped Gibson, as Kelly at last succeeded in getting his antagonist undermost, "but you'll never get out of here alive without me."

Kelly made no answer.

One hand was occupied, despite the pain inflicted on his wounded fingers, in clutching Gibson's throat like a band of iron.

With the other he felt in his pockets for his knife, his only weapon.

He found it, and carrying it to his mouth opened it with his teeth.

Then he raised it.

He had not the power to move his movements in the darkness, but he heard the click of the opening blade, and guessed the fate impending over him.

"Mercy! It was not me, Sam the ostler; I am innocent. Show the way out," he gurgled.

Then, down came the knife.

There was a low groan, a convulsive jerk, the grip with which Gibson had strained to keep off his adversary relaxed, his arms fell to his sides, and he moaned some incoherent words.

Kelly staggered to his feet.

His head and face were terribly cut by the glass, but he had sustained no material injury.

"I must get out of this," he muttered.

Searching his pockets he found some matches, and lighted one of them and staggered towards the steps.

Ascending the first flight he picked up the candle that Gibson had dropped, lit it, and sat down on the bottom rung of the ladder leading to the trap, to recover his wind and collect his thoughts.

Gibson, though frightfully wounded, was not dead.

As soon as Kelly left him, he managed to roll up his handkerchief, and held it with one hand against his wound, whilst he followed the bushranger with his glaring eyes.

Having recovered his breath, Kelly ascended the ladder and made an effort to lift the trap.

He soon recognised the impossibility of this.

He descended into the cave again, to see if there existed any other issue.

The last remarks of Gibson seemed to imply that there was, and for a moment he regretted not having listened to the innkeeper.

Gibbings in his direction, he saw that Gibson was still alive, but presenting a horrible aspect.

His face, cut to pieces by the broken glass during their struggle, was one immense wound, and his whole figure was deluged with blood.

"Look here, mate," said Kelly, "perhaps I have been a bit hasty with you, after all. But I don't think there's much damage done, and if you'll tell me the way to get out of this infernal hole, why, I'll try and patch you up a bit, and no doubt you'll pull round."

Something like a smile flitted across the hideously-mangled face of Gibson.

Gibson, though mortally wounded, and had not an hour to live.

"Come now, are you going to show me the way out?"

Still no answer.

"Curse you!" yelled Ned, seeing that persuasion was no use, "if you don't speak I'll treat you in such a way that, when you're in blazes, it shall seem a pleasant relief to you. I'll make your last moments on earth warm for you. Blinded if I don't roast you alive."

As he spoke the last words Gibson's glaring eyes seemed to light up.

"All right," he gasped, in an almost inaudible whisper.

"Is there a way out?" roared Ned.

"Yes," gasped the other.

"Will you show it me?"

"Yes. Lift me up."

Despite all Kelly's nerve, it was even to him a horrible task to raise the mangled form of his victim into a sitting position.

"Over there—by that—row of—barrels," continued the innkeeper.

Kelly understood him, and half-carried, half-dragged him to the spot in question.

"Start—the—bungs—of—those—two!" gasped Gibson, every one of whose words seemed to be forced out at the cost of a particle of his life.

Wonderingly, Kelly looked round, picked up a mallet, and drove in the bungs.

A rush of spirits followed, flooding the floor.

"What the devil is this?" asked the bushranger.

"All right. Now—carry me—to—that—corner," and he pointed to where Kelly had left the light.

Wonderingly, Kelly obeyed.

"Now—over there—an iron—lever."

No sooner had he turned to go than Gibson, stretching out his hand, seized the light and held it over the pool of liquid flame, in the midst of which Gibson was writhing and, in the excess of his passion, dealt his foe a blow with his iron lever.

"Kelly!:" he gasped.

"Yes," said the bushranger, who had just laid his hand on the implement of which the other had spoken.

"You—said—I'd—burn but—we—both!"

As he spoke the last words he sank forward, exhausted, whilst the spirits, excelling light, lit up the whole cellar.

Kelly turned round.

The floor of the cellar was converted into a lake of liquid flame, in the midst of which Gibson was writhing convulsively.

Mad with rage at being tricked, Kelly dashed forward, and, in the excess of his passion, dealt his foe a blow with the lever that put an end to his existence.

The next moment he repeated of what was really an act of mercy.

His own situation was a terrible one.

The heat and the terrible vapour of the burning spirit would in a few moments be fatal to him.

He rushed to the farther end of the cellar, but the flames pursued him.

Another barrel burst, and the flood rose higher.

He grasped wildly around. Suddenly he caught sight of a door in the opposite wall, now revealed for the first time by the light of the flames.

The only way to it, however, was through the lake of fire.
Maddened by the prospect of certain death, he dashed into it.

The flames leaped round him, burning his hair and beard, and singeing his garments, while the broken glass, amongst which he stumbled twice, cut his hands and knees.

He reached the door.

It was locked.

With all the fury of despair, he attacked it with his crowbar, and, wrenching off the lock, tore it open. It merely led into an inner cellar.

Here, however, for a moment or so, was safety. As he glanced round it, he perceived a kind of shutter in the upper part of the wall.

He tore this down.

Oh, blessed sight! The light of day streamed in upon him once more, through an opening about three feet square. He staggered back, almost blinded by the light.

But oh, horror!—between him and light and air, and freedom and safety, there was a range of iron bars.

And through the open door behind him a stream of liquid flame, like a fiery serpent, had begun to steal into the room, and was spreading swiftly and surely over the floor.

Inch by inch it crept towards him. The iron bars were immovable, but the wooden frame in which they were embedded looked old and dilapidated.

Driving the claw end of his crowbar into this, he wrenched away splinter after splinter, till the lower ends of the bars were laid bare.

Then, seeing one of these, he tugged at it with all his might.

His strength, naturally Herculean, was tripled by the sense of danger.

The first blow he struck to his heels, just as by a superhuman effort, he bent two of the bars aside sufficiently to allow him to pass.

With his last remaining strength he dragged himself through the opening, and sunk, scorched, blackened, and insensible, on the turf outside.

As he did so, a fresh sound of explosion was heard, and the cellar he had just lett become one pit of raging flame.

CHAPTER CXXXIV.

SWIFT VENGEANCE.

MEANWHILE the day had worn on at the squatter's station.

Dinner-time came, but, to Marie's surprise, neither Michael Eldred nor Kelly made their appearance.

She was not alarmed about the former, who was frequently detained at one of the outlying tents by some business connected with the station, but the latter's absence rendered her uneasy.

A sense of impending evil beset her, and seemed to increase as the hours went on.

At last she got so restless she felt she could not remain in the house any longer.

She had her horse saddled, and rode off in the direction she had merely intended the ride as a distraction to tier thoughts, and had taken this direction almost unconsciously.

Suddenly she noticed a column of smoke on the horizon.

She was on the alert at once.

Michael Eldred had frequently spoken to her of the danger of bush fires, and warned her never to neglect any indication of them.

She was naturally brave, however, and was, besides, able to reason.

The air was quite calm, and she had learnt that the only danger to anyone mounted was when a strong wind was blowing.

So she resolved to push on a little further, and ascertain the cause of the conflagration.

After all it might only be an unusually large campfire.

She had to traverse a belt of scrub in order to reach her destination.

Her growth in patches interspersed with tracks of sandy soil.

She had got halfway through it, when suddenly she heard a rustling sound some distance ahead.

She drew rein and listened.

Someone or something was evidently forcing its way in her direction.

Nearer and nearer came the sound.

Suddenly, through the purled bushwood, there broke upon her startled gaze a figure that froze her very soul with horror.

With hair and beard singed to a matted stubble, with face blackened with smoke and soot, and, as by a mask, with caked and clotted gore, with bloodshot eyes and parched, cracking lips, with garments hanging in sooty and tattered ribbons from his frame, Ned Kelly stood before her.

Less like a man at that moment than some fiend newly vomited from the lowest depths of Pandemonium.

As she gazed at him aghast, the ghastly vision darted forward, and, with a hoarse and choking cry of recognition, seized her bridle.

For ten seconds or so he stood confronting her.

Then clutching her wrist with his disengaged hand he calculated the command.

"Get down!"

She remained motionless.

"Get down!" he roared, forcing the words with difficulty through his parched and blistered lips, and at the same time accentuating them with a jerk at her wrist that almost tore her from the saddle.

There was nothing to do but to comply with the invitation, for the grasp on wrist and bridle was one of iron.

Disengaging her foot from the stirrup and her leg from the pommel, she slid down and stood facing him.

"You Jezebel! You spawn of hell!" he began, but even as he spoke he tottered and sunk forward on his knees, releasing her wrist as he did so.

His frightful struggle in the cellar, and his mad course on foot towards the station, had exhausted him.

Marie sprang back out of his reach.

In swift succession a train of ideas darted with lightning-like rapidity through her mind.

He had discovered her in the cellar, and her mad course on foot towards the station, had exhausted him.

Marie sprang back out of his reach.

In swift succession a train of ideas darted with lightning-like rapidity through her mind.

Flight was impossible, for in falling he had managed to slip his arms through the reins, and her horse was therefore in his power.

It was a moment in which it was no use recollecting before any extremity.

Marie carried a pistol, as she had been instructed by her husband to do on all occasions.

A woman riding alone in the bush is exposed to certain contingencies against which it is always well to be prepared.

She had had some experience in handling firearms during the fighting that marked the fall of the Commune, and since her marriage Michael Eldred had made her practiced at a mask in the garden almost daily.

For, as he had told her, a woman had need to know how to defend both her life and her honour.

As Ned knelt before her, incapable for the moment of rising, she drew her weapon and levelled it full at his head.

"Villain!" she said, somewhat melodramatically, "so lose my horse and let me pass, or I will kill you."

Ned stared at her as though stupefied.
Then with a groan he sank forward on his hands with the roses still retained by his arm. He moaned feebly, foam at the mouth, and rolled his eyes wildly, as though about to have a fit.

Wretch as he was, the woman would not help feeling some pity for such a ghastly object. She hesitated, despite his evil intentions towards herself, to shoot him down, as he lay, in cold blood.

Better for her and for many another had she done so there and then.

"Listen to me," she said, "if you can. Ah! do not move," she continued, "as he seemed to be about to make an effort to rise, or I will fire."

Her pistol cowed him and he sank down again.

"You had some talk with me the other day," she went on; "you told me I was to do certain things because it was your will. Now it is my turn. You are in my power. If I shoot you now everyone will say I do well. But I do not want to hurt you. No. Not if you will be wise. You will get up, you will let go my horse, I will ride home, and you will go to "Gibson's, eh? And from this time we are strangers. Will that suit you?"

As she stood over him cutting him with each word like a whip-lash, he grovelled almost at her feet, his eyes now wildly, as though about to have a fit.

"Do you agree?" she continued, with a stamp of her foot, and with the pistol still levelled straight at his head.

He looked up hopelessly, with his fingers still clutching and crumbling the sand, and gathered his legs under him. "If—if you," he began falteringly, raising his hands still full of sand, in a deprecating manner, like the paws of a dog who begs, "I will only listen to—reason a bit. Just look at it in a fair light. Now, how can I possibly—"

Wishful.

His hands shot out straight before him and two hands-full of sand were snatched into her face.

Bravo as ever, blinded but undaunted, she realised her peril and fired.

But just as she had ordered he was flat on the ground again, and then up like a serpent springing from its coil.

The next moment she was down on her back with one of his hands clenched round her throat, the other over her mouth, whilst one knee crushed her bosom, and the other pinned down her pistol arm.

"You serpent!" croaked Kelly in a voice scarcely visible.

"You told me I was to do certain things because it was your will. Now it is my turn. You are in my power."

"What's the matter?"

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"If—if you," he began falteringly, raising his hands still full of sand, in a deprecating manner, like the paws of a dog who begs, "I will only listen to—reason a bit. Just look at it in a fair light. Now, how can I possibly—"

Wishful.

"You serpent!" croaked Kelly in a voice scarcely visible.

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Wishful.
Two of them pulled up and began to get their carbines ready, while the remainder galloped on at full speed.

Ned's position seemed somewhat critical.

To the right of him were the stables, and to the left the house.

In front was a kind of paddock of about a couple of acres, the further side of which was bounded by a stiff post and rail.

The only method was to cross this, as the approaching troop was cut off all attempts to escape in the rear.

With a shake of the rein he got Marco Polo into motion, but, before the matchless steed could settle into his stride, the foremost trooper had considerably lessened the distance between them.

Whine, whine! a couple of carbine bullets whizzed harmlessly past his ears, for a sharp gallop was by no means a useless pastime.

Without looking back Ned headed Marco Polo straight at the fence, came steadily up to it, lifted his horse, rose in the air with a yell of defiance, and the next instant was scouring across the stretch of boundless plain extending towards the upper waters of the Murray.

**CHAPTER CXXV.**

**THE PURSUIT.**

The troopers one and all paused at the fence and drew bridle.

A brief consultation took place amongst them.

"By all that's blue, the scoundrel is getting a long start of us!" said one of them, lifting his cap and mopping his forehead, as he watched the fast-receding form of Ned.

"Quite so," said the sergeant, who thought it would be just as well not to lose sight of such a slippery customer as Master Sam evidently was; and accordingly a steady was poised for the outlet.

The two hands had helped Michael Eldred to convey Marie to the house, the little trooper got under way.

Skirting the paddock in order to avoid the fence that had already baffled them, they struck out across the plain after Kelly, whose figure now appeared a mere dot on the horizon in the rear.

Meanwhile Ned, with a grim chuckle of satisfaction at the fact of the fence putting a temporary stopper on the pursuit, was riding along merrily, Marco Polo having settled down into the long sweeping stride his rider knew so well.

Ever and anon, however, the fugitive turned his head to see whether the first check had sufficed to baffle his pursuers, or whether they were not yet shaken off.

"If they do try it, it will not make much difference," he muttered, "their 'prads' are pretty well blown, and a sharp burst will crack 'em up like so many tea-cups!"

As he spoke he glanced back again, and his eye caught the moving gleam of the troopers' accoutrements, as they skirted the paddock.

"So you've not given it up, after all, have you? Well, I've a fancy for giving you a pretty little bit of a devil's dance! I guess some of you will be a trifle saddle-galled before I've done with you!"

With reckless bravado he slowed down Marco Polo, and suffered his pursuers to gain on him.

"It would be a blessed lark to string them, and pick them off one by one! If I did, it would be a lesson to them.

None of the cursed traps would be in such a hurry to follow me after this!"

He continued at the same slackened pace, and every moment the pursuers gained ground.

"One, two, three, four, five, not six of them," thought Kelly, "who is the chap in plain clothes? Old Eldred, I suppose. No, he ain't tall enough. By Goosh! that's his grey gelding the first of them is on. Curse me for being a fool, but I never thought of that. The swine have changed horses at the station. I've a tougher job on hand than I thought for."

And so it soon proved.

Sergeant Whitwell had wondered at the foolishness of the bushranger in thus allowing them to gain on him when he might have pushed on and ridden clear out of sight, but he was shrewd enough to profit by it.

He ran his eye over the little troop.

An excellent judge of horses he picked out at a glance the two worst horses of the five he and his men had appropriated.

"Attention!" he rang out. "Casson and Whitwell, ride on ahead as hard as ever you can post. Keep neck and neck, or the beggar may try to settle you single-handed. But what you must do is to rattle after him till his horse is blown or yours are. We'll come slinging along stealthily, and in the long run are bound to land him."

Casson and Whitwell spurred their beasts, and, shooting ahead of their companions, came on with carbines ready, rushing like a pair of eagles about to pounce on their prey.

As far as the neck they went, Ned Kelly, dead or alive.

Eldred complied, and, by the help of a couple of his hands who rode up to the station during this colloquy, the troopers were mounted on five fresh horses.

"Lock here, governor," said Sam; "I put you on this bay, and I have a right to have the swag. It's only fair and proper I should go along with you!"
Still the steady of the troopers seemed fleet and staunch, and if they could only continue to force the pace a little longer the ultimate success of their counsels would be assured.

Half-an-hour elapsed and the relative positions of pursuers and pursued were unchanged.

Ned kept about a quarter of a mile ahead of Casson and Whitwell; and the remainder of his foes were almost eight times that distance in the rear.

All round stretched the flat unbroken plain, save right ahead where the crests of a line of timber were visible.

Towards these the bushranger was making his way.

"We must do the job before he gains cover," said Sam to Casson, in jesting tones to his comrade, "or he will be able to play us off like parrots on a bough. Come, are you ready for a spurt?"

"Yes."

"Here you are then, ride every halfpenny you know."

Diggng in their spurs, the two men urged their almost exhausted animals on at racing speed.

Ned glanced anxiously rear and ahead.

He noted the distance of the timber and the rate of his pursuers.

"Marco can live the pace and stay the distance," he thought, and in turn touched his horse with the spur.

He nursed and spurred him as much as possible, bringing into use every trick by which a good rider helps and eases his horse.

A shout and a clatter behind warn him that the troopers are gaining.

"Now for it old man," and for ten minutes he urges Marco to the utmost.

The sound of pursuit grow fainter again.

The wood is nearer and nearer.

It is a range of blue gums, and Ned guesses that they mark the course of a stream.

A faint cry far in the rear marks that his followers are distressed and that some mishap has befallen them.

A carbine-shot rings out as a parting salute, as he plunges beneath the sheltering timber.

But the bullet is wide, and in another instant he is swallowed up in the timber.

Twenty minutes or so later the sergeant and his compan­ion, who have been riding steadily within themselves, come up with their advanced guard.

Casson is lying on the turf with his head bandaged, and his horse with dropped head and outstretched legs is standing by him the very embodiment of grogginess.

Whitwell is attending to his animal, whose heaving sides betray he is in little better plight.

"What's up?" asks the sergeant.

"Casson's horse dropped and threw him just as that fellow gained the timber," was the answer; "and I don't think mine can go any further yet awhile."

"Are you hurt, Casson?" was the next question.

"No, only a bit shaken."

"Get your carbines ready and come on steadily," said the sergeant, "we must do the job before he gains cover," ejaculated Anderson, "he may be waiting to have a pop at us from the cover yonder."

They reached the edge of the stream to which Kelly's tracks led.

"Halt!" commanded the sergeant, "this is just the place where such a varmint would try to double. Anderson, ride across and see if there are any traces of his getting out at the other side.

Anderson rode cautiously.

The water, however, did not come much above his horse's knees, for the stream broadened considerably.

"No," he reported from the other side, "there are several tracks leaving the water, but they are two days old at least."

"Just as I thought; he has doubled up or down stream. But we were just too cunning for him," and as he spoke he chuckled in his own conceit; "I'll unearth him yet."

He gave orders, and the party separated.

Entering the stream, two proceeded to follow its course upwards and two downwards.

With their eyes riveted on the banks and their carbines in readiness, they scaled cautiously along scrutinising every twig and shrub, every inch of soil, for the trace of Kelly's passage.

(To be continued.)

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"It is notorious that the robbery of Mr. Steward's corpse was mainly performed by the assistance of NED KELLY'S BOTHEK, the Captain of what was neither more nor less than a pirate ship."—Times, July.

"The history of NED KELLY and his celebrated black horse, Marco Polo, will ever live in the recollections of the Australian public. The deeds of Dick Turpin, and the performances of Black Bess, are tame beside those of 'Ned AND HIS NAG,' in addition to which Ned's history is true, and Turpin's is pure fiction."—Press, July.

CHAPTER CXXV.—Continued.

Two hours later the party that had gone up stream returned.

They had failed to discover the slightest trace of Kelly's progress, and had found further advance barred by a cataract falling some ten feet over a shelf of rocks, up which it was impossible to scramble.

On either side the stream was bordered by walls of perpendicular rock, so it was quite impossible for Kelly to have escaped that way.

Ten minutes later the sergeant and Whitwell, who had ridden down stream, returned.

They had had no better luck.

A few hundred yards the stream broaden into a swamp, to traverse which was certain destruction.

Indeed, they had themselves had a narrow escape from being engulfed, and it was patent that the bushranger could not have gone that way.

But there were his marks plainly enough leading into the stream, and there was not the slightest trace of his having left it.

"I'm blessed!" growled the sergeant, "but unless he's been and dived into the mud like a turtle, or flown up into the air like a bird, I can't see where the deuce he can have vanished to."

The others were equally amazed.

Whilst they were debating, Casson and Sam, whose horses had recovered sufficiently for them to make a start, came slowly up.

The state of affairs was explained to them.

The ostler, who was an old bushranger, remained for some time lost in thought.

Then he rode into the stream. He crossed the ford, scrutinising the ground as he did so.

"You infernal blind fools! don't you see how it is? He's crossed here and backed his horse out of the river!"

CHAPTER CXXVI.

TWO KINDRED SPIRITS.

Sam was right in his surmise.

Kelly had ridden into the stream, and, on nearing the opposite bank had turned Marco Polo, and backed him out of it.

By this device the track he left appeared to be the hoof-marks of a horse entering the stream from the farther side, and had been taken for such by Anderson.

The bushranger had continued to back his horse till he reached the dense patches of scrub dotting the farther slope, in which it would be a work of time and difficulty to lift his trail.

Once arrived here he had turned Marco Polo round and galloped off, feeling sure of having gained a good start on his pursuers.

He had settled his destination in his own mind.

Some twenty miles off was a safe hiding-place.

Some twenty miles off was a safe hiding-place.

Lomax had at one time been a well-to-do man, but a couple of dry seasons and the failure of a bank reduced him to beggary, after which he quietly proceeded to drink himself to death.

He had almost accomplished this when the thought probably occurred to him that there was a quicker method of leaving the world.

At any rate, he cut his throat during a fit of the horrors.

This brought the place into somewhat evil odour.

The run was gradually occupied by neighbouring squatters, and the house and buildings were falling into ruins, when they were taken possession of by a man named Appleby, who converted them into a kind of gin-grog-shop, the general house of such as all the outlaws of the district.

Only as the district happened to be rather sparsely populated, and the percentage of scoundrels not much above the average, he could not boast of a very extended custom.
Still, Appleby's was known far and near as one of those places where a gentleman could be lost, and "no questions asked," by any gentleman who might find it awkward to thrust his nose into an ordinary hostelry. 

Ned had closed as Ned rode up to Appleby's.

"I don't think you will, sir," said a clear, ringing voice, "Hi, Appleby, blow you! What's up, that you keep a, the bridle reins over one of the posts always fringing the drawing room, all in one. Mareo followed Ned like a pet-

Ned glanced up in amazement, "I'll burn your cursed old dog-kennel about your ears." "Yes," said the unknown, "you bear his brand, sure and Tur, and had accordingly come to act as housekeeper to her at the large room which served as hall and dining and drawing room, all in one. Mareo followed Ned like a pedig, and seemed no way surprised at his new quarters. "That would be enough to get me to open the door to Old Nick." The silt was closed, and next moment Ned heard the fastenings of the huge outer door being undone. "True enough. Now, suppose I told you that we buried it to the south of the third gun-tree on the left after crossing the creek?"

"That would be enough to get me to open the door to Old Nick." The silt was closed, and next moment Ned heard the fastenings of the huge outer door being undone. "Then it swung back, revealing on the threshold the figure of a young girl holding a light in one hand and a pistol in the other. "Welcome, Mr. Kelly," she said, in the same confident tone. "Still, Appleby's was known far and near as one of those places where a gentleman could be lost, and "no questions asked," by any gentleman who might find it awkward to thrust his nose into an ordinary hostelry. 

At sixteen Miss Jessie had emancipated herself from her aunt's care, and started life on her own account. It is with deep regret we have to mention that in a very short time her career became of a somewhat prominent character, and led to her being brought into contact on several occasions with the Sydney police. 

On her release she judged a change of air advisable, and had accordingly come to act as housekeeper to her father at Lamar's old station. "Well, yes, a girl about eighteen or twenty, whom nineteen men out of twenty would have styled handsome, and ninety-nine women out of a hundred a fright. Hair of a reddish chestnut, falling in thick masses over a square forehead, a straight nose, a pale complexion, a full and round and supple limbs, were better light you to it?"

"Yes," said the unknown, "you bear his brand, sure and Tur, and had accordingly come to act as housekeeper to her at the large room which served as hall and dining and drawing room, all in one. Mareo followed Ned like a pedig, and seemed no way surprised at his new quarters. "That would be enough to get me to open the door to Old Nick." The silt was closed, and next moment Ned heard the fastenings of the huge outer door being undone. "Then it swung back, revealing on the threshold the figure of a young girl holding a light in one hand and a pistol in the other. "Welcome, Mr. Kelly," she said, in the same confident tone. "Still, Appleby's was known far and near as one of those places where a gentleman could be lost, and "no questions asked," by any gentleman who might find it awkward to thrust his nose into an ordinary hostelry. 

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On her release she judged a change of air advisable, and had accordingly come to act as housekeeper to her father at Lamar's old station. "Well, you do seem a good plucked um," said Kelly in tones of unsung admiration. "How about your horse?" asked the girl, paying no attention to the compliment. "There is very good shelter for him in the stable, it is better than it looks. Shall I show you to it?" 

"No," answered Kelly with equal composure, and an air as if the whole place belonged to him. "Mareo Poli and I don't care about being separated, and I guess I can find him quarters here. Besides, I may want him sooner than you think—though I hope not, for he's as quiet as a Christian, and a great deal better than most of them—gentle as a cat but as strong as a tiger." 

Saying this he went out, and led the way up the steps into the large room which served as hall and dining and drawing room, all in one. Mareo followed Ned like a pedig, and seemed no way surprised at his new quarters. "Oh, what a beauty I cried the girl in admiration. "Yes, there ain't two like him under the southern cross," said Kelly with equal enthusiasm.
“Get in there and make yourself comfortable,” said Jess, indicating a large room opening off the right of the hall.

“No, no beast before man in a case like this,” was the bushranger’s answer. “Marco’s heels may have to save my neck before daylight, and looking after him is only taking care of number one. Is there any fodder on the premises?”

“Plenty,” answered Jess, leading the way to a back room.

Soon a corner of the hall was comfortably littered down for Marco Polo’s reception, and, tired as he was, Ned proceeded to give the gallant animal a thorough rubbing down before leaving him to repose and the enjoyment of a feed of corn.

The girl aided him with approving eyes.

“You’re the right sort,” she observed, leading the way to the room she had already indicated.

It was roughly, but not uncomfortably furnished, and Ned casting his broad hat into a huge American chair, and thrusting his feet out in front of him, heaved a grunt of satisfaction, for the day had been a terribly trying one to even his strength, and, in his own words, he felt “pretty well played out.”

Jesuit proceeded to set food and drink on the table and called on him to fall to.

As he cast aside his broad hat before commencing his meal, and revealed his scared and plastered face and the burnt stubble of his hair and beard, the girl gave a start of surprise.

“Ned laughed.

“I don’t look much of a beauty, do I?” said he.

“No, you don’t.”

“Oh! you see me at my worst. Just wait a week or so, till my hair grows and I get rid of these scratches, and I’ll astonish you.”

“How? I always heard Ned Kelly was a very handsome fellow, but you can hardly pass muster as that.”

“Just wait a bit, and you’ll change your mind. But come, are you going to have a mouthful along with me?”

The girl sat down at the table, and the conversation between the pair soon became brisk and lively, rather too lively, perhaps, for good taste.

Each recognised in the other a congenial spirit, and the bond of sympathy between them grew stronger every minute.

Fatigue, a hearty meal, and two or three stiff tumblers of yarrow, quam by here I” (horse marks here).

“Pretty well done up, oh?” said the girl.

“Rather!” was the reply: “I’ve got through a hard job of work since sunrise.”

“Well, you’d better roll yourself up in a rug and take a call on the ground.”

“And you?” he asked with a grin.

“Never mind about me,” she answered, significantly.

Ned pondered for a minute.

“Then the Countess and Marie was of a nature to give him some right in feeling mistrustful as regarded the fair sex. But on reflection he came to the conclusion that Jessie Appleby was a girl to be trusted.

“She knows me, and I don’t think she’d go back on her father’s pal,” he muttered, and, wrapping himself in the rug, stretched himself at full length on the floor, and was soon fast asleep, with his saddle under his head and his pistol gripped in his hand.

The girl sat watching him for some time, with a look of interest on her features.

To her, with her training, Ned Kelly was not a villain but a hero.

No young lady of Illa’s Church proclivities ever gazed on a youth more admiringly at a young caddie; no feminine worshippers ever watched with greater interest the slumber of an apostle of aestheticism.

Then she rose, and, passing into the hall, gave another to the comforts of Marco Polo.

Returning to the sitting-room, she resumed her silent vigil.

The hours passed on, the stars faded and the light of a new day began to steal over the plain, and still the rooster slept and the girl watched over his slumber.

Suddenly a shot, followed by a thundering noise at the outer door, made Ned spring to his feet, pistol in hand.

CHAPTER CXXVII.

“First catch your hare.”

When Sergeant Whitwell found the trick that had been played on him by Kelly at the ford, his fury knew no bounds.

To be done in any way was bad enough, but to be made to look small in the eyes of those subordinates to whom he had been laying down the law was unbearable.

In his heart, he cursed Kelly, and vowed if ever he had the chance of a shot at him he would not hesitate.

After blowing off as much steam as he could in abusing Anderson, upon whom he laid the whole blame, and whom he threatened to put under arrest, he proceeded to resume pursuit.

It was a work of no small difficulty to find Ned’s trail, and to follow it to the swamp.

“Is there a chance of getting hold of a black fellow hereabouts?” he enquired of Sam.

“If there is, there are over twoscore about Eldred’s station,” replied that worthy. “There’s a shepherd’s hut somewhere about a couple of miles to the northward, and I fancy he might be able to help us.”

Sam and one of the troopers were despatched in quest of this worthy, the rest of the party endeavouring to follow Ned’s trail, which was by no means an easy job, as it was lost in the marshy ground.

Finally they had to give it up, and await the return of their messengers.

At length these made their appearances, accompanied by the shepherd and a black boy of about sixteen, and provided, moreover, with a fresh mount.

Night was indeed fast coming on.

The black, like all his tribe, had a great objection to be abroad in the dark, but threats, promises, the company of white men, and the light, helped to overcome his terror.

So soon as the black was made, with some difficulty, to comprehend the doings of Kelly, he hastened upon his pursuers, he directed the party to separate, and skirt the marshy swamp into which Kelly’s tracks were followed, and thus find the spot at which he had debouched and started squarely on his journey. The black’s advice was immediately followed, the sergeant impressing his own stupidity in not having thought of this self-evident proceeding instead of being indebted to a “nigger” for the suggestion. The police divided their forces, each taking the half-circle skirt round the edge of the swamp. Keeping a good look-out (the moon shining as it only does shine in Australia, and illuminating the ground as clearly as an English sun) the said “nigger” was the first to detect the marks of Marco’s hoofs, which important fact he heralded by loud gutteral chuckles, and exclamations of “Yarrow-yarrow, quam by here I!” (horse marks here).

“Got him at last, by Jingo!” shouted the sergeant, exultingly. “Now, my beauty, if I don’t run you to earth and get a pile for your brush, why my head’s only fit for cold meat.”

“I should say, sergeant,” said Casson, “from the course he has evidently taken, that he’s making his way to Lomax’s old station. That chap Appleby, who’s squatting there now, is a bad egg, if ever there was one, and would be sure to help him at a pinch.”

“First catch your hare,” answered Whitwell. “Come, we can push on pretty smartly. There’s no doubt but that’s where he’s making for.”

They stuck to Marco’s tracks, which the black followed like a beaten road.

Despite their hurry, however, it was broad daylight...
before the old station stood revealed to them in all its
desolation.

Before they approached it they halted, and a kind of
terrible chill ran down their spines.

The black refused to advance any further.

In common with his tribe he firmly believed the spot
haunted by the ghost of Lomax, and neither threats nor
promises could induce him to venture within its clutches.

The shepherd was, he frankly admitted, a non-combatant,
and Master Sam showed a decided reluctance to
entrusting his ugly carcass within pistol-shot of the man
he had betrayed to the police, and whom he knew was a
dead shot at twenty paces.

The five troopers resolved therefore to surround the
house, after first riding round it in a wide circuit with the
black, in order to verify the fact that there was no trail
leading away from the station.

Dismounting and leaving their horses under the care of
Sam and the shepherd, they stole cautiously forward to the
house, with orders to shoot down Kelly if he attempted
to leave it.

They set out no earlier than ever. As they ascended the
steps of the veranda,

"If he's here," he observed, "we shall nab him to a
certainty."

And placing the muzzle of his carbine to the keyhole he
blew the lock to flinders.

After which, he and his comrades commenced a vigorous
assault on the door with the but-ends of their carbines.

It might have been more in accordance with the laws of
warfare to have summoned the garrison to surrender; but
the sergeant, knowing from Marco's tracks up to the
main building,

the door and let us in, or we'll find a way to smoke you
out of your hole."

A laugh was the only answer.

"Hammer away, lad," cried the sergeant. "We'll have
this door down in a brace of shakes, and then that
joker'll laugh on the wrong side of his mouth."

Suddenly the panel in the shutter flew open, a pistol
shot rang out, and with a low moan the sergeant dropped
out of range.

Before the other two could well realise whence the
thundering din produced no response.

Suddenly a hoarse voice was heard within, demanding
who the devil it was hammering at the door in that fashion.

"All right, Master Kelly," cried Whitwell. "Just open
the door and let us in, or we'll find a way to smoke you
out of your hole."

A laugh was the only answer.

"Hammer away, lad," cried the sergeant. "We'll have
this door down in a brace of shakes, and then that
joker'll laugh on the wrong side of his mouth."

Suddenly the panel in the shutter flew open, a pistol
shot rang out, and with a low moan the sergeant dropped
in his tracks.

Before the other two could well realise whence the
attack came, a second shot was fired, the ball passing
through Whitwell's arm, and, ere he and his companions
could turn their carbines against their foe, the panel was
re-closed.

A second shot was heard, and, fairly turning tail, they trotted
from the verandah like startled rabbits, and did not halt
till they had gained the shelter of the mined outbuildings.

Another shot, and a cry from their companions in the
rear of the house warned them that they too were in equal
peril, and next minute they saw them falling back.

Ere, however, they could gain shelter a fourth shot was
fired from the house, and the bullet lodging in Casson's
leg brought him to the ground.

Holmes, his companion, seized him in his arms, and,
swinging him on to his shoulder, succeeded in bearing him
out of range.

Matters were evidently critical. With two of their number
hors de combat, and a third wounded, their chance of capturing Kelly seemed farther
off than ever.

Holmes and his wounded companion having rejoined
them, they took counsel.

"Look here," said Whitwell, whose wound on examination
was found not to be so serious as they had at first
imagined, "we must turn this stage into a blockade. We
can't storm the house, but the fellow inside is in as equally
tight a fix, for if he ventures into the open we can knock
him over like a rabbit."

"That's so," said Holmes.

"Well, all we've got to do is to keep a sharp lookout,
and, meanwhile, send back the shepherd for help."

"Yes, that's all very well," growled Anderson, whose
temper had not been improved by the sergeant's rating
concerning his oversight at the first, but if the captain
comes up with the rest of the police, he'll get the reward,
and we shall run all the risk in the meantime."

"Something in that," remarked Holmes.

"I don't like this job over much," resumed Anderson.

"If five of us couldn't come to the end of the fellow,
I'm blessed if I see how two and a half, for that's all we
are, can. How are we to keep watch on all sides of the
house?"

"Oh, as to that," said Casson, pluckily. "I am not
quite done for. My leg hurts awful, but I think I could
manage to shoot straight, in spite of it. Only just let me
have a fair crack at that beggar, and I'll lay odds he won't
forget me."

"But how about the sergeant?" asked Whitwell. "I
don't think he's dead."

"Ain't there a way of luring Kelly out into the open?"
said Holmes. "If we could only manage that, we could
shoot him over easily. He's got no horse."

"Where the devil has he hid his horse?" asked Anderson.

"Somewhere in these sheds, I expect. Hullo!"

This last remark was called forth by a startling
incident. About fifty yards intervened between the shed in
which they had ensconced themselves and the dwelling-house.

Suddenly the door of the latter opened. They sprang to their
arms, expecting to see the form of the bushranger cross the threshold.

Instead of this, however, they merely saw a pole fitted
at the end with a hook, thrust forth by some invisible
hand.

Before they could advance, the hook was fastened in the
garments of their fallen leader, the sergeant; he was jerked
swiftly into the house, and the door was again closed.

Two minutes later, the same pole with a dirty white
apron fastened at the end was thrust through the panel
and waved in invitation.

"It's a flag of truce," said Holmes.

"Who's going to answer it?" asked Anderson.

"Why, I don't mind," said Whitwell, pluckily. "I am
hit already, and it would be better for me to some to grief
than one of you fellows. Besides, I believe Kelly
will keep his word."

Fastening a banister on the end of a stick, Whitwell
advanced towards the door.

"Stop there!" yelled Ned, as soon as he was within ten
yards of the door. "Or I'll fire at you."

"What do you want?" asked the undaunted trooper.

"I want to know how long you fellows are going to
keep holding up the premises," was the pacifying
answer.

"Till you come out!"

"If I do come out I'll give you a lesson you won't
forget in a hurry. But I'm willing to do it."

"Oh!"

"Yes, if you'll give me a chance."

"What do you mean?"

"Why just this. In the first place, I've got your
sergeant in here."

"Well?"

"Well, he ain't dead, but he'll tell you he's blessed
soon will be, unless you give me a chance of taking. And I'll
tell you something more, if you don't give me the chance
I ask for. I'm blessed if you won't turn him alive over a
slow fire before you get in this crib."
"Go on,"

"It's just this. I'm not going to wait till you've sent off an express and crossed the country, which will be your little game next, I guess."

"Oh, you're as deep as a lawyer, you are!"

"Right you are. Now, what I want is this. You and your mates shall fan back a hundred and fifty yards from the house. I don't think there's any chance of your missing me at a hundred and fifty yards," he continued reflectively, "but to make matters quite safe we'll say two hundred."

"One of us is wounded and can't walk."

"Well, he can stay."

"What about the other?"

"Your horses must be tethered out of sight, so that they cannot be brought up to you before I get my start. Say yes or no. Sharp's the word. Neither Ned or the sergeant shall be taken alive."

"I will fall back and consult my comrades. I see nothing to disagree with, myself; and if they agree, I'll step out and wave this flag twice. You may trust me."

"I know I can. You are a brave fellow to trust yourself within pistol-shot of me, and I know you're the sort to keep your word."

Whirwell rejoined his comrades, and after a brief consultation it was agreed to accept Ned's terms.

It was evident he wanted to get a start, and trust to his fleetness of foot to escape into the neighbouring scrub. But they felt sure of baffling him.

Holmes proceeded to the men in charge of the horses, which were grouped on a little knoll some five hundred yards to the left of the house.

In obedience to his orders Sam, the shepherd, and the black fellow picked their chargers, and then fell back a hundred yards further.

Holmes rejoined his companions, and after Whirwell had stepped forward and waved his flag as a signal, the whole, with the exception of Casson, fell back to the distance indicated.

The position was then as follows:

The troopers were two hundred yards in front but to the left of the house. Their horses were five hundred yards behind them. Consequently, they were about three hundred yards apart.

Kelly, on the other hand, was only two hundred from the advanced guard.

But then the shepherd, Sam, and the black fellow were only a hundred yards from the horses, and their orders were to dismount, throw the door open, to run like the wind with them and gallop off with them to the troopers, who would surely be able to overtake Kelly who, on foot, could not keep up racing-pace very long.

Meanwhile, Ned had been completing his preparations. After duffelling the insensible sergeant of his uniform, he had locked him in the room in which he had himself passed the night. Then saddling Marco Polo he led him quietly up to the front door.

He softly undid the bars.

Jesse was watching him with the utmost interest.

"Now, lass, it's your turn," he said.

She evidently understood him, for she stepped forward with a couple of silk handkerchiefs in her hand.

One of these he proceeded to tie over her mouth after hobbling her with a rope. Then he picked up her legs and crouched flat on the horse's neck. "Now," he said.

The would-be captors of Kelly were in an agony of expectation and excitement, expecting to see the re executable banditti walk into the net, but they little knew the resource and ingenuity of the man they thought was within their grasp. They remembered that the fellow seemed to bear as much as Manhood, both to be slain by—" No man of woman born!"

He had been shot at, but stood invulnerable, the bullets rattling off his body as harmless as pebbles off a crocodile's back. His enemies little knew that they wasted their pellets upon an "ironclad," for Kelly always wore in his breastplate a bulletproof, with open mouth and strained eyes they stared at the door by which they expected to see Ned escape. They were not long kept in suspense. Suddenly the door was rapidly thrown open, and disclosed Kelly mounted on Marco Polo, who the next moment was seen to clear the steps at a bound, with his tail as straight as a fence in a gale of wind, and his eyes as bright as lightning-flashes, as if he knew he bore Caesar and his fortune on his back. Whoav! on he came, as Jonathan would say, like pressed lightning, Kelly's loud defiant laugh ringing out clearly, while, waving his hat triumphantly, he shouted his enemies with contemptuous sarcasm to "come and take him," to "get up behind," and promising to square up with Sam before many months were over that worthy's head.

Down and over the steps, as he was taking a stream in his stride, the gallant animal answered the heel and hooves of his daring rider. The hooves of the police horses were tethered, and drawing the policeman's sword, with which, as with his uniform, he was furnished, proceeded with a few furious slashes to hough—in other words, to hamstring—the unfortunate brutes, and thus render pursuit for the present impossible. The troopers looked on perfectly stupefied, and, if truth must be told, not a little dismayed. They knew that if able to come up with Kelly while white in his barbarous, but to him necessary, onslaught, the foremost arrivals would certainly be "dead meat," and Kelly's escape (being mounted) was prevented.

Now, you blooming cowards," he roared out, awakening the echoes of the forest, "such carrion as you will never put the danderas on Ned Kelly. Take my blessing before I show you a clean pair of heels!" and, with a devilish howl which he meant for laughter, he discharged the contents of his pistol amongst his astonished and, if the fact must be confessed, admiring opponents. They saw his retreating figure, and heard the departing sounds of Marco's hoofs, that, as he flew over the ground with a swishing 20-foot tail in the wind, and looked at one another with something very like silent apprehension. As to Sam, he felt uncommonly uncomfortable, for he knew Kelly would never forget the little game he had played.

Kelly's onslaught on the troopers' horses had been witnessed, and its full significance understood. A very great deal of the troopers looked, and, knowing that the victory obtained by Kelly would find its way into the colonial papers, they feared something worse than the universal ridicule with which they were sure to be overwhelmed.

Pursuit was hopeless, for they were miles from any station where there was the slightest chance of obtaining horses, and the lines of country Ned had selected was one which from its conformation to baffle all attempts at tracing him.

Disheartened and baffled, they returned to the house, in order to get something to eat.

Locked in one room they found the insane-looking form of Sergeant Whirwell.

In another, the key of which was fing in the passage, they found a young damsel bound and gagged, who, on being released, entertained them with a very vivid and highly-coloured account of how the preceding night she had gone to the door on hearing a knock, and had been seized and made secure in this manner by a black-bearded ruffian.
It was Miss Jessie Appley, who, on Ned’s departure, had retired to her room, and, on the troopers entering the house, had quietly turned the key with her bound hands, and then pushed it under the door into the passage, where they found it.

CHAPTER CXXVIII.

FACTOR AND SON—THE LAST RESOURCE.

ARCHBISHOP DOUGLAS KEITH ROTHsay, seventh Earl of Stromness, in the peerage of Scotland, and a representative peer of that ancient kingdom in the Upper House of the British Legislature, a nobleman better off as regards pedigree than possessions.

His blood was of the bluest, but his acres, on the other hand, were of the finest.

Indeed it was a paradox how such a spreading family-tree, with such an extent of roots, branches, and ramifications, could exist on such a scanty patch of soil, overgrown, too, as the latter was, with such a flourishing crop of mortgages.

He was the nominal possessor of two country seats with interesting titles.

But Dunstaffness Castle was a roofless tower, which had been uninhabitable for years, and the miles of moorland around, which annually let in August and southron sportsmen, formed an inconsiderable portion of the earl’s revenue, whilst Kirkwall Palace, on the shores of one of the Northern Isles, was merely a huge, rambling, dilapidated range of one-storey buildings, half of which were uninhabitable, whilst the other half served as a joint residence to Mr. John McCombie, the earl’s “factor,” his household, his cattle, and his pigs.

The earl himself, when not staying with or, as civil-disposed people who will not remember the golden rule of not speaking ill of a hereditary legislator used to style it, scuppering upon his friends, was wont to occupy a first-floor in Clergue-street.

The Stromness family was one of those which bred with the rapidity and fecundity of an insect which enabled Br. Johnson to direct one of his most pointed comparisons against Scotchmen, and Archibald Douglas Keith Rothsay had a number of brothers, sisters, uncles, and aunts, and a perfect army of cousins in the fifteenth degree.

But, strange to say, he had only had the honour of contributing two direct offshoots to the family tree—a son and a daughter.

The latter, the lady Sybil Malva, was happily wedded to Lord Schumacher, Esquire, a worthy millionaire of Hebrew-Germanic extraction and paltry pretensions, out of the income of whom was raised to vast wealth, of a park in Surrey and a mansion at Queen’s gate.

The lady had already learnt the value of aristocratic title on the first page of the prospectus of a joint-stock company, and for some time he and his son-in-law were of great use to one another.

He figured as the director of upwards of a score of pounds, driving tandem, and committing sundry other actions which, though venial in the eyes of everybody, constitute dire offences to the proctorial vision, and the possessor, in addition to vast funded wealth, of a large amount of bills, driving tandem, and committing sundry other actions which, though venial in the eyes of everybody, constitute dire offences to the proctorial vision.

Then he was sent to a crammer establishment, and thence duly gzunted to a cotemporary in the Prince’s Own Rangers.

His career proved a very rapid set of horsemanship, yet even his comrades were surprised how he managed to live the pace anything like so long.

The Prince’s Own was a crack regiment, and the holders of commissions in it managed to get through a great deal of money over bets, horses, balls, dinners, dress, concerts, the drama, and similar objects of attraction, and in all these Kenneth took an interest not exceeded by any of his brother officers.

Till at length even the patience of the most obsequious of tradesmen and the purse of the most accommodating of bill-discounters seemed to be exhausted as far as he was concerned.

Under the old regulations it is probable that he would have had to sell his commission, but the memorable Royal Warrant, by means of which Gladstone checkmated the House of Lords, had put an end to that kind of transaction, and all that was left to him to sell was his creditors.

Things were in this state when a note from his father, requesting him to call the following morning to go into a matter of the highest moment, reached him at Eton, where the Princess’s Own were quartered.

“Wonder what the deuce the governor means?” he muttered, as he took up the letter, blew off his candle, and descended.

He roused himself from his reverie, and proceeded.

“Which will be a pry, for I think I can say, without vanity, we become each other,” he muttered, as he took up his cap, blew off his candle, and descended.

The next morning saw him in presence of his father, a tall, grey-whiskered, hawk-nosed old aristocrat, with a wax-like complexion, a high shirt-collar, a starched necktie, and a pair of the most immaculate-looking hands ever seen out of a glass case.

“Kenneth,” began the earl, with that easy, half-jovial air which some men always assume when talking of another’s misfortune, “you are in an infernal mess—a most infernal mess.”

“Quite so. If it was only to tell me that you sent for me, I am afraid it was a piece of needless trouble on
Well, the long and short of it is, he thinks if you were out of the way his brother would have a chance.

"And what does he propose, for I suppose the truth is that you have already a programme out and tried?"

"Schumacher is not, after all, a bad fellow, Kenneth. He has put certain things in my way, and I am sure he is behaving more to you. Now he offers to pay your debts if you will leave the country. You know I have not penny, and you must smash if you go on as you are going at present."

"Very true."

"Well, I think I can get you an excellent appointment in the Australian police."

"In the what?"

"In the police. Oh, I have learnt all about it, it is quite a different thing from what you fancy. Liberal pay, strictly military force, rank of a field officer. Surely you remember, some men of the best families in England have served in it."

"I'll think of it," said Kenneth.

Which he did; and, seeing the thing was so easy, inevitable, ultimately accepted it.

He resigned his commission, and quietly departed for a few weeks to the Continent.

Schumacher then proceeded to fulfill his promise of paying his debts by buying up all his bills at about seventy-five per cent. discount, and offering his departing tradesmen a composition of half-a-crown in the pound, which, seeing the impossibility of ever getting their money back, they readily accepted.

A week after, they received the appointment of Kenneth to the command of the New South Wales police, and cured their ready acquiescence.

CHAPTER CXXIX.

THE VOYAGE.

Kenneth Rothschild had elected to go to his future home in a clipper rounding the Cape, preferring the fresh breezes of the longer route to that brief acquaintance with the temperature of the infernal regions experienced by those who sail the swift progress and luxurious accommodation of the P. and O. steamers lures into a trip through the Suez Canal and down the Red Sea.

So one fine morning saw the A1 clipper Compostella, bearing him and his fortunes, dropping down the Thames in tow of a couple of snorting steam-tugs, on the top of the ebb.

Kenneth, standing on the poop, was watching the bustle and apparent confusion that marked the first day out of dock, and studying the appearance of his fellow-passengers, when the slight figure of a girl attired in deep mourning caught his attention.

He could not resist strolling with apparent carelessness in her direction, in order to get a better look at her.

The little journey in question was, in his opinion, fully justified by this closer inspection.

She was a young creature, slender and supple as a hazel-twig, plant and graceful as a willow with wide-open, arch, brown eyes, a delicate nose slightly aquiline, a sweet, womanly mouth, crimson and curved, sensitive, and with flickering dimples at the corners, a face of the true oval, and a profusion of chestnut hair lying in rings on the smooth, broad forehead, and in soft clustering curls around the snowy white neck.

In five minutes Kenneth had contrived to render her one of the thousand little services a man can always find to do for a lady on shipboard, and in ten more he was chattering to her like an old acquaintance.

Before the Compostella reached Grovedale, he was fully acquainted with her history, such as it was.

Mary Lynch was the orphan daughter of a poor curate, who had offended his family and lost a perspective living by marrying a young lady engaged as governess in a noble family to the sons of which he was engaged.
He might have, had he chosen, been the rector of Saltcombe-in-Withersby, with an annual stipend of two thousand a year, and a population of six hundred parishes to look after, had he only deigned to respond to the sheep's eyes which the Lady Jane Blenchester kept on casting at him, and to take that somewhat ‘pasée’ and mature beauty to his heart and home.

Instead of which, he rashly persisted in marrying her younger sister's governess—pretty little Ada Craston, the daughter of a deceased naval officer; and, being from that time forward disowned by his own aristocratic connection, and disowned by old Lord Blenchester, who had fondly imagined that he saw a chance of getting rid of Jane, and was sorely disappointed, he obtained the post of curate in a London parish, and within eighteen years was dead of hard work and heartbreak.

His wife had not the sorrow of witnessing this, for the poor thing had died in the third year of their marriage.

Muriel's only relation was a brother of her mother's— a wild scapegrace, who, when a mere boy, had started off to earn his living in the colonies. And, after wearing out the best years of his life teaching, and having accordingly resolved on setting out in search of him.

"I daresay it seems a wild goose chase, Mr. Rothsay," she said to her new acquaintance; "but even if I do not find my uncle in a position to help me, or even if he be dead I shall feel I have not been going abroad. What could I do in England but try to get a situation as governess, and, after wearing out the best years of my life in teaching, have the workhouse before me for my old age? But I am sure in Australia I shall have a far better chance of getting on."

Kenneth could not help admiring the girl's pluck, and an intimacy soon sprang up between them.

There was a fair number of passengers on board the Compostella, and they exhibited a wide divergence of position and character.

Amongst them were several colonials of both sexes returning to Australia after a flying visit to the Old Country.

Kenneth had carefully kept back his real rank and the position awaiting him at Sydney.

He was simply Mr. Rothsay, and, as his manner and appearance showed, almost in spite of himself, his military training, was charitably set down by most of his fellow-passengers as a broken-down officer who, having found it impossible to exist by billiards and betting, varied by an occasional attempt at the wine trade in England, was about to try his luck, as so many of the like kidney have done before, in the colony.

It is true that his genial good nature, winning ways, perfect breeding, and superb personal appearance soon secured for him the affections of all but the most sourly disposed of the passengers.

Poor Miss Lyndhurst had a harder task.

She was dangerously beautiful, and only a governess. Consequently, some of the ladies regarded her as a rival to be extinguished as constantly and systematically as possible, and some of the gentlemen began to pay her compliments that at times became almost equivocal.

Kenneth's chivalrous nature suffered terribly at the sight to which the girl was subjected.

For him to have interfered in person would, of course, only have resulted in their names being coupled together. But he got Mrs. Millington, the wife of a wealthy Melbourne merchant, and one of the most influential ladies on board, to take the girl under her wing, and gently hinted to a young nabob named Hoskins, whose father had shipped him off to Australia with a couple of thousand pounds to start a station, and who, on the strength, gave himself the airs of a being able to buy up the entire colony, that he might feel compelled to drop her gently over the ship's side if he did not leave Miss Lyndhurst alone.

Muriel was deeply grateful for these services, which she quickly divined.

"Mr. Rothsay," she said to him one day, struggling between boldness and timidity as she spoke, "I know well you have done this for me, and from the bottom of my heart I thank you. Some day it may be in my power to prove my gratitude. At present I can only express it.

Under Mrs. Millington's wing Muriel was more at ease, and the good lady, who was a warm admirer of Kenneth, was by no means averse to allowing a fair amount of that flirtation which existed on board ship could hardly be carried on, between the handsome ex-dragon and the fair creature.

So Kenneth and Muriel used to stand side by side, looking over the vessel's quarter, during those lonely moonlight nights that are only encountered in the tropics, and if at times a young woman did steal round a slim young man, it was only natural, as a precaution against those sudden dangerous lurches that will occur under such circumstances.

So the Compostella ploughed her way along day after day, meeting more than usually fine weather, and the feelings with which Kenneth had begun to regard Miss Lyndhurst were very like those of a lover.

The Cape of Good Hope was safely doubled, and the Australian continent sighted.

The Compostella was bound for Sydney, and after passing through Bass's Strait she steered to the northward.

The commander looked anxious, for his keen eye detected unmistakable signs of a coming gale, and knew the dangerous nature of the coast, whilst a thick atmosphere prevented any observations from being taken.

At midnight the wind moved suddenly round to the east and raised the sea to roughness during the whole of the following day, the sun, as during the preceding day, being obscured by clouds.

At night the passengers were somewhat uneasy, but the skippers, Captain Parsons, assured them that there was not the slightest danger, as they had a good oiling, and soon they were all in their bunks and the deck abandoned to the waves.

Suddenly the cry of "Breakers ahead!" rang out from the look-out man.

The captain sprang forward, but before an order could be given the Compostella struck on a reef with a mighty crash.

As the startled passengers, in hastily-assumed garments, rushed in terror to the deck, the billows sweeping over the ship, which lay on her starboard side, carried several of them overboard shrieking in mad despair.

Muriel had like to have met with a similar fate, when an arm of iron was cast around her, and, blinded and half-suffocated by the water, she was borne by Kenneth back to the companion-way.

"Have no fear," he said. "If I reach the shore alive, you shall."

Suddenly the stricken vessel heeled over to the other side and beat repeatedly on the rocks, as though writhing in mortal agony, whilst sea after sea swept over her.

"Cut away the masts," was the captain's order, and scarcely had the standing rigging been severed than the spar snapping off close to the deck plunged with a crash into the sea.

There was a cry for the boats.

Three had been swept away at the beginning of the wreck, and now a maddened throng flocked to the two remaining ones.

"It's not worth risking," said Kenneth to Muriel. "Do you think you can keep up sufficient courage to stand here for a moment whilst I go below?"

The girl's face was very white, but she answered, "Yes." in a firm, low voice.

Darting below, Kenneth reappeared with a life-belt, which he proceeded to strap around Muriel.

"But yourself?" she said.
above water, though from time to time a wave larger than

able moment, lowered into the water.

comparative safety, did not quit her for a moment.

effort can get you out of this peril you are as safe as if you

asunder, a confused mass of riven timbers, splintered

too well did they know that it denoted the foundering of

them.

can't, why, it won't be for the want of hard trying."

the very danger nerved and excited him, "mortal effort

were on shore; and if," he continued in a livelier tone, for

had crowded into them, were, at what seemed a favourable

course, and come in much nearer shore than her captain

position became more tolerable.

The Compostella had evidently deviated from her

Daybreak revealed a melancholy sight.

Her fragments were seen extending for about the same
distance along the reef, and bore melancholy witness to

als day approached the wind gradually sank, and their

Eagerly they longed for day.

A score of human beings, mostly sailors, dinging to

A few floating timbers amidst the breakers alone marked

But between them and that beach were ranges of half-

submerged rocks, amongst which the receding waves hissed /

shreward.

The men in the boat, thinking only of their own safety,
cast off the tow-ropes, and began to try to gain an

offing.

The raft, thus abandoned, was unmanageable in the

current, and drifted each moment nearer shore.

Again Kenneth's arm was placed round Muriel.

The next moment the raft was tossing madly in the

surging sea of breakers.

There was a succession of desperate wrenches, the

strong cords snapped like twine, and it fell anchor like a

house of cards.

Muriel felt the seas go over her head, but the strong

grip never loosened.

There was a desperate struggle of drowning men, seizing

on one another.

A moment or so later, Kenneth, cut, bruised, and

bleeding, felt himself dashed against the shore, still hold­
ing on one another.

"By Jove!" he muttered, rising to his feet and spit­

Then he fell again almost insensible.

"Do you think this could be patched up to carry us?" he

asked of the chief officer.

"What is our best way of reaching the shore?" he

asked, cheerily.

"Miss Lyndhurst," he answered, gravely, "if mortal
effort can get you out of this peril you are as safe as if you

were on shore; and if" "I was afraid to be found in a lived-for life, for the

very danger nerved and excited him, "mortal effort
can't, why, it won't be for the want of hard trying."

Meanwhile the boats, with the frightened throng who

had crowded into them, were, at what seemed a favourable

moment, lowered into the water.

There was an interval of uncertainty.

Their fate was indistinguishable in the pitchy darkness.

Suddenly the appalling death-cry of the drowning rose

to fill all who heard it with startled

There was an awful interval of uncertainty.

Their fate was indistinguishable in the pitchy darkness.

Throughout the rest of that night of horrors Kenneth,

were, at what seemed a favour­

Eagerly they longed for day.

A score of human beings, mostly sailors, dinging to

A few floating timbers amidst the breakers alone marked

But between them and that beach were ranges of half-

submerged rocks, amongst which the receding waves hissed /

shreward.

The men in the boat, thinking only of their own safety,
cast off the tow-ropes, and began to try to gain an

offing.

The raft, thus abandoned, was unmanageable in the

current, and drifted each moment nearer shore.

Again Kenneth's arm was placed round Muriel.

My darling," he murmured, "we will live or die to­
gether."

Even in that awful moment the girl evoked this indirect

avowal of his love.

The next moment the raft was tossing madly in the

surging sea of breakers.

There was a succession of desperate wrenches, the

strong cords snapped like twine, and it fell anchor like a

house of cards.

Muriel felt the seas go over her head, but the strong

grip never loosened.

There was a desperate struggle of drowning men, seizing

on one another.

A moment or so later, Kenneth, cut, bruised, and

bleeding, felt himself dashed against the shore, still hold­
ing on one another.

"By Jove!" he muttered, rising to his feet and spit­

Then he fell again almost insensible.

"Do you think this could be patched up to carry us?" he

asked of the chief officer.

"What is our best way of reaching the shore?" he

asked, cheerily.

"Miss Lyndhurst," he answered, gravely, "if mortal
effort can get you out of this peril you are as safe as if you

were on shore; and if" "I was afraid to be found in a lived-for life, for the

very danger nerved and excited him, "mortal effort
can't, why, it won't be for the want of hard trying."

Meanwhile the boats, with the frightened throng who

had crowded into them, were, at what seemed a favourable

moment, lowered into the water.

There was an interval of uncertainty.

Their fate was indistinguishable in the pitchy darkness.

Suddenly the appalling death-cry of the drowning rose

to fill all who heard it with startled

There was an awful interval of uncertainty.

Their fate was indistinguishable in the pitchy darkness.

Throughout the rest of that night of horrors Kenneth,

were, at what seemed a favour­

Eagerly they longed for day.

A score of human beings, mostly sailors, dinging to

A few floating timbers amidst the breakers alone marked

But between them and that beach were ranges of half-

submerged rocks, amongst which the receding waves hissed /

shreward.

The men in the boat, thinking only of their own safety,
cast off the tow-ropes, and began to try to gain an

offing.

The raft, thus abandoned, was unmanageable in the

current, and drifted each moment nearer shore.

Again Kenneth's arm was placed round Muriel.

My darling," he murmured, "we will live or die to­
together."

Even in that awful moment the girl evoked this indirect

avowal of his love.

The next moment the raft was tossing madly in the

surging sea of breakers.

There was a succession of desperate wrenches, the

strong cords snapped like twine, and it fell anchor like a

house of cards.

Muriel felt the seas go over her head, but the strong

grip never loosened.

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A moment or so later, Kenneth, cut, bruised, and

bleeding, felt himself dashed against the shore, still hold­
ing on one another.

"By Jove!" he muttered, rising to his feet and spit­

Then he fell again almost insensible.
The boat was still striving to gain an offing; but, even as he watched it, a succession of heavy rollers swept in quick succession down upon it, and the next instant it had disappeared, never to rise again.

Alone on that barren shore, Kenneth and Muriel stood, the sole survivors of all who had sailed in the good ship Compostella.

CHAPTER CXX.
AN ARISTOCRATIC SOUNDBELL

At this period, one of the most prominent, if not the most popular, characters in Sydney was a gentleman who bore the time-honored name of Knatchbull—Captain Knatchbull, of the Royal Navy, brother to the esteemed and wealthy baronet of that name. From his childhood, George Knatchbull was like one possessed of the devil; as Tiberius said of Nero, "A thing of blood and mud." He belonged to one of the oldest and most influential families in the county of Kent, but from his childhood upwards behaved as if possessed of an evil spirit.

He was a liar and a thief, and was criminally and malevolently mischievous.

The old people who dwell about his ancestral hall will tell you how, when a mere lad, if he had not a man's orchard stealthily to rob a pear or pine-tree, and found no fruit on it, he would take out his knife and bark the tree all round near the root, and thus kill it, for the sap could not ascend.

He would carry sheep with dogs, and chase cattle till they jumped into clink-pits, and staked themselves in trying to clear fences.

To save him from the ditches of the law, his brother, Sir Edward Knatchbull, had annually to pay a large sum of money to people who would otherwise have prosecuted him.

At nineteen he gazetted as lieutenant, and was appointed to a line-of-battle ship.

Interest had a great deal to do, no doubt, in bringing about his speedy promotion, for his uncle was a Lord of the Admiralty, but it would be unjust to dispute George Knatchbull's merit as either seaman or officer, for a smarter man was never seen to rise again.

The gratings were constantly rigged, the cat was never out of the hands of the boatswain and his mates, and every night Knatchbull might have repeated the words of the captain to the crew above:—"My ship's crew are at the present moment the happiest fellows in the world. I have just flogged half of them, who are delighted that it is over, whilst the other half are rejoicing that they have got off this time at any rate."

When, however, he found the officers could stand this no longer, and were going to take an active part against him, he, one morning, suddenly gave the order to put the ship about, and returned to the Downs.

There was an investigation respecting the alleged mutiny, but the revelations concerning Knatchbull were so damning that the matter was hushed up, and it merely ended in a recommendation that the Hecuba should be put out of commission and paid off, which was done accordingly.

In all there were seven chronometers on board her, in Mr. Treadwell's custody, but on the day on which he had to deliver them up only six could be found.

One had been abstracted from his cabin.

The old man, who had only his scanty pay to live on and a wife and three daughters to support, was unable to make the loss good and, insinuating as Captain Knatchbull, when written to on the subject, falsely represented the old master as "a drunken fellow on whom no dependence could be placed," Mr. Treadwell was ordered to be dismissed from the service.

Numberless were the petitions addressed to the Lords of the Admiralty by this old man, setting forth the hardship of his case, and voluminous were the accompanying certificates signed by the various captains with whom he had sailed during the past thirty years, and bearing testimony to the honesty, sobriety, zeal, and skill of Mr. John Treadwell, late Master R.N.

They were of no avail, and at last the receipt of a petition from John Treadwell was not acknowledged by the officials, who looked upon the poor fellow as that greatest of all horrors in their eyes, namely, a man with a grievance.

As Captain Knatchbull, six months after the Hecuba was paid off he was appointed to the command of a sloop of war, on the Mediterranean station.

Here he remained for two years, and then came home on sick leave in the hope of getting a larger vessel, a hope on the very eve of being realised, when an accident occurred.

Poor old John Treadwell, in almost soleless shoes and, rusty threadbare coat, was one morning walking down Holborn-bill, thinking of his grievance, when he stopped opposite the window of a pawnbroker's, and began abstractedly to look at all the various articles exposed to view.

Suddenly his eyes lighted on a chronometer, which he fancied he recognised as the one that had brought him into so much trouble—which, in fact, had ruined him.

To make sure he entered the shop.

"Is that chronometer for sale?" he asked.

"It is, sir," was the pawnbroker's reply.

"An unredeemed pledge?"

"Yes, sir."

"Its price?"

"A hundred and twenty guineas."

"May I have a look at it?"

"Certainly. You seem to know how to handle a chronometer," continued the pawbroker, as Treadwell took the instrument in his trembling hands and rapidly examined every part of it.

"Yes, and I have handled this one before to-day, and a very bad one it is. Yes, this is the instrument," he said, solemnly.

"Indeed," said the pawbroker, puzzled as to what his strange customer was driving at.

"It belongs to the Government. It was stolen from H.M ship Hecuba, in the Downs."

"I am sorry to hear that. It was pledged here more than two years ago by a man who said he was the captain of a merchant vessel in bad circumstances; and he certainly looked like a seafaring man. I advanced him fifty pounds on it."

"What sort of a man was he?" asked Treadwell eagerly.

"He was an aristocratic scoundrel."
"Well, I could swear to him anywhere, for we were at least three-quarters of an hour haggling over the loan. He wanted seventy-five pounds, and I could not go beyond fifty. He was a shortish, thickset, broad-shouldered fellow, rather bow-legged; broad, flat face, black eyes, black as jet and very sparkling, with a cast in one of them which gave him a very strange expression of countenance and helped to impress his face on my memory. His lower jaw protruded rather, and the bridge of his nose had seemingly been broken.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the old master, "you have described Captain Knatchbull!"

"I have described the man who pawned that instrument.

"You must not part with it till I have seen you again. It will be to-morrow—perhaps this evening," and with these words the old man left the pawnbroker's shop.

He made the best of his way to the Admiralty, where he sent up his name and a note to the First Lord, whom he requested the honour of seeing on a very serious matter.

The First Lord sent back a verbal message to the effect that he would not see Mr. Treadwell, and the messenger when asked to take up a second note refused to do so.

"There is no help for it," said the old man; and from the Admiralty he went his way to Bow-street Police-court.

The presiding functionary at the last-named institution was not so difficult of access as the First Lord.

The old man's statement was taken down, his certificates of which he always carried several about with him, carefully inspected a note made of the names of the pawnbroker and of the famous chronometer-maker in Cornhill, who had supplied the instrument, and certain instructions given to two of the most expert officers of the court.

Then old Mr. Treadwell was requested to be in attendance at the court at noon precisely on the following day.

How the officers obtained Captain Knatchbull's address, bow, when, and where they found him, and how they placed him face to face with the man with whom he left the chronometer in pledge, need not be recapitulated here.

But the next day, when old John Treadwell made his appearance at Bow-street, he was informed that the prisoner was in custody, and that as soon as the night charges were disposed of, the case would be called on.

It was called on, and that very afternoon George Knatchbull, commander R.N., stood committed to take his trial at the Old Bailey.

It was too late for his relation at the Admiralty to think of devising means for averting a felon's doom from a scion of his ancient house.

A reporter's pen had been beforehand with him; the evening papers contained a full account of the transaction, and the public as one man were moved with sympathy with the poor old master who had been so cruelly treated, and with indignation at the conduct of his sounderily superior.

And old John Treadwell stoutly refused to be "bought out of the way," for the insult he had received at the Admiralty when he had last sought an interview with the First Lord rankled in his breast.

Captain Knatchbull was convicted, and sentenced to be transported for fourteen years, and in due course was landed in the colony of New South Wales.

At that time many men who were gentlemen of birth and education, and whose friends in England possessed sufficient influence with the authorities to bring about the result, were treated with great consideration on their arrival in the colony under sentence of transportation.

If they were not emancipated on arrival, they were suffered to be at large, sometimes without the formality of a ticket-ofleave.

Some of them, being amply supplied with funds from their relatives in England, lived in the most comfortable style, and, in more than one instance, shared the hospitality of Government House.

Knatchbull, however, soon forfeited all right to such treatment, and his career in the colony was one of vice and crime.

After suffering slight terms of imprisonment for various offences, he was arraigned before the Supreme Court of Sydney on the charge of forgery, and sentenced to transportation to Norfolk Island.

What life in Norfolk Island was has already been spoken of.

So dreadful were the convicts' sufferings that gangs of them used to toss up which amongst them should be a murderer and which a victim.

The murderer would then put the other to death, and the remainder of the gang would come forward as witnesses with the sole object of being taken for a time from the scene of their daily miseries to appear in court at Sydney, and give evidence against their comrade, though they knew very well that after his execution they would be only reminded to their former haunt of wretchedness.

As to the murderer, he would frankly admit that he had no ill-feeling against the man whose brains he had dashed out, but simply wanted to bring about a happy release for them both.

So notorious did this fact become, that a Legislative enactment was made providing for the trial of criminals on the island by special commission, after which such occurrences became less frequent.

(The to be continued.)
CHAPTER CXXX—Continued.

On one such occasion some prisoners were subpoenaed who could by no possibility have witnessed the crime, the only object being to give them a spell of absence from the island. Some of them had been two or three years there, and, though under thirty-five years of age, their sunken, glazed eyes, dead pale faces, hollow, flesh-less cheeks, and limbs shrivelled and withered up as if by premature old age, created a thrill of horror.

There was not one of them who had not from time to time undergone the punishment of a thousand lashes, though they were as little reclaimable by the lash as if so many drops of water had been poured on their backs.

As one of them said—

"When I landed here I had the heart of a man, but you have plucked it out, and planted the heart of a brute in its stead."

Two men named Champly and Shirley were convicted on circumstantial evidence of a burglary committed at the house of a Mr. Atkinson, at Oldburg, and sentenced to death, but the sentence was commuted to transportation for life to Norfolk Island.

They had been there a year when a bushranger, named Webber, was tried and capitally convicted.

The day before the one fixed for his execution Webber sent the Attorney-General, and confessed to him that he alone had been engaged in the burglary for which Champly and Shirley had been convicted, and substantiated his statement by revealing a hiding-place known only to himself, in which the bulk of the property stolen was found hidden.

In consequence of this disclosure orders were at once given for the two men to be liberated, and an offer was made to Webber that, if he would disclose how he had disposed of the proceeds of the many robberies he had been for years engaged in, his life would be spared.

This suggestion was made to him after his death-warrant had been read to him, and when he had only forty-two hours to live, but his reply was—

"I will disclose nothing. All I should gain by it would be to be sent to Norfolk Island, and I would rather be hanged than go there."

Such was the opinion generally held amongst the convicts of the place to which Capt. Knatchbull had been posted. Some of them had spent years in the Black Bass in these islands.

For although a few years' decent behaviour in the colony would have secured him every privilege and a free passage, his naturally base instincts led him to seek liberty in preference by crime.

Many of the convicts sailing with him had been his companions either in low debaucheries or in the numerous petty crimes he had perpetrated since his arrival in the colony.

Astonished at meeting and treating with him, his naturally base instincts led him to seek liberty in preference by crime.

Many of the convicts sailing with him had been his companions either in low debaucheries or in the numerous petty crimes he had perpetrated since his arrival in the colony.

Amongst them was a man named Crawford, who had been transported for forgery, committed under the most startling circumstances.

He had resorted to the ingenious device of putting a living fly into the mouth of a dead man, and then guiding his hand to trace its signature to a document purporting to be the will of the deceased.

When protest of this was disputed, he swore, with audacious assurance, "that he saw the testator sign the will with his own hand whilst life was in him."

Crawford, since his arrival in the colony, had turned his legal knowledge to account by acting as thieves' attorney, and in this way had become acquainted with all the leading scoundrels of Sydney.

Knatchbull contrived to turn this knowledge to account, and got him to pick out eight of the cleverest and most reckless of the convicts on board, to each of whom in turn the project of the mutiny was imparted.

They were ordered to hold themselves in readiness. The Wellington was within two days' sail of Norfolk Island when Knatchbull contrived to slip down the companion-way to enter the surgeon's cabin and abstract a large quantity of arsenic.

Carefully concealing this about him he regained the deck.

The meals for convicts, crew, and guard were all prepared by the ship's cook and his mate, with the assistance of a couple of convicts.

One of these latter was in the secret, and to him Knatchbull handed the arsenic with instructions how to use it.
The soup and burgoo for the whole of those on board was made in a huge kettle, and into this the next morning the convict slipped the deadly drug.

Dinner-time came, and the various messes had their allowances served out.

Kratshbull, Crawford, and their associates, either pleaded illness or made a pretext of eating, so as not to provoke suspicion.

The captain of the brig, one of the mates, the surgeon, the purser, and the officer in command of the guard, dined together in the cabin.

The meal was hardly over when a spasm of pain shot across the captain's face.

"I feel very queer," he remarked to the surgeon.

The mate also complained, and in a short time the whole party found themselves suddenly prostrate.

A voice was heard at the door, and the mate who had been left in charge of the deck entered the cabin.

"The man at the wheel has fallen down helpless," he gasped, "and one or two of the others are just as bad. I am in fearful pain myself, doctor; for heaven's sake give me something! I fancy it is cholera, for my inside is on fire."

The surgeon strove to rise in order to comply with this request, but sank back in his place with a damp sweat breaking out over his face, which was distorted with agony.

"I cannot move a finger," he said, "but I try to shout."

"I have called to pay you a little visit," said Kratshbull, fully armed, stalked grimly in, followed by a loud splash into the water.

"It's a case of the engineer hoist with his own petard," said the doctor, "and the skipper standing, or, I should say, the skipper and the engineer standing."

It was partly true; but the doctor followed the purser, and the two mates in turn committed to the deep.

The captain, who had partly recovered, moaned feebly for mercy.

"But," said Knatchbull, "I must compliment you on your professional services for the rest of the voyage, but, at the same time, I would have you know, and here his tone changed to one of wolfish ferocity, "that I have held her Majesty's commission as commander in the Royal Navy, and know not times more of seamanship and navigation than such a blind, old, mad, grogging skipper of a rotten-timbered, coasting hulk as yourself. Over with him."

The skipper followed his companions, and then the hatchets were taken off and attention turned to the guard and those of the crew who had been below at the moment of the seizure of the vessel.

Most of them were already dead, and the remainder in a dying condition. Dead and dying were handed on deck and thrown over the side in quick succession.

Even Kratshbull felt the horrible nature of the massacre he had commenced, and bedeviled to joke with his victims.

"And now the others!" he said, when the last rascals had vanished over the side.

But the convicts? Their own pals?

"Curse you, you lily-livered swabs," roared Knatchbull, "do you mean to hang back now? Look here, I am the only man who can get you out of this mess, who can take you all who are not dead now will be made free men and safe from all chance of recapture. Obey me, or, by thunder, I'll blow her up and you with her."

But, "protested one of the men, "can't we give some of them a chance to get round? We are shorts."

"There are quite enough of us, and as to giving them a chance of getting round, all who are not dead now will be in half an hour. So just rout them out sharp, and get it over."
gazed upon the remaining portion of the crew, and convicted them he had resolved should feed the sharks. The truth was that the murderous proceedings of the last hour or so is impossible now to conjecture, but, telling them all to scuttle below, he called two or three of his sailors to hold a council, and it was determined to land the half-dead or dying convicts, crew, and soldiers, left from the middle of the night, on a barren island close to Tristan D'Acunia, where they would soon perish from the absence of everything necessary to sustain life on this island rock. This was done, and from that day to this no record of their fate ever reached human ears.

CHAPTER CXXXII
SHARP PRACTICE.

Finding himself in absolute command of the Wellington, George Knatchbull was not long in making up his mind what to do. Indeed, his plan had been matured from the outset. He had resolutions to run across the Pacific, and, rounding Cape Horn, make for some South American port, where the brig could either be disposed of or fitted out as a privateer in the service of one of the incessantly-squabbling republics.

There was, however, one preliminary difficulty to be overcome. The brig was amply provisioned, but the supply of water on board was not enough to allow of the carrying out of his scheme. Accordingly he determined to bear up for New Zealand, and obtain the requisite amount of fresh water in the Bay of Islands.

As there was a chance, however, of the Wellington being recognised by someone on board the whaling vessels that frequented this spot, he set all hands to work to alter her appearance. Her figurehead, representing the hook-nosed hero of Waterloo, was removed, and replaced by a piece of wood ruddy carved to the semblance of a large fish. Her name was painted out, and the name of the Bonita substituted, and the streak along her sides changed from white to red.

An American flag was manufactured, and the crew set to work to practice speaking with a Yankee accent, it being Knatchbull's intention to represent himself as the skipper of one of those American trading crafts which knock about from port to port in those latitudes.

So that when the brig cast anchor in the Bay of Islands, any stray would have sworn that she hailed from a port in the Bay of Islands.

It happened, however, that a couple of whaling ships were lying at anchor in the bay when the Bonita put in. The skipper of one of them, the Harriet, was a young sailor named Duke, who had for some time been in the employ of the firm that owned the Wellington, and had made several voyages on board her.

As she came to anchor, something in her appearance struck him as being familiar. He had a boat lowered, and was pulled on board the new arrival.

Captain Fitch, as Knatchbull styled himself, received his visitor with great apparent cordiality, and thanked him for his pains and services.

"Duke kept his eyes open during the visit, and felt certain that the Bonita was neither more nor less than his old ship the Wellington.

On leaving her he proceeded back to the Harriet, but at twilight his boat was again lowered, and he went on board the Wellington, the Sunflower, and communicated his suspicions to his captain, an old seaman named Clark.

The two took counsel together, and the following morning Clark went on shore, and had an interview with the missionaries who had established a settlement on the shores of the bay, and who had acquired great influence over the natives.

The missionaries at once summoned a couple of chiefs named Tau Tahi and Touma, and proceeded to concert with them a plan for the recovery of the vessel.

Meanwhile Knatchbull and his crew had been actively engaged in getting water on board.

Such was the influence of the ex-commander over his followers that they had obeyed all his orders without hesitation, and had carefully refrained from any outbreak likely to arouse suspicion.

They had worked well during the day, and Knatchbull calculated that by noon the following day at the latest he would be able to set sail.

At night he was pacing the deck in company with Crawford.

Suddenly his eye caught sight of several boats putting off from the shore and pulling towards the brig.

"What is the meaning of this?" he thought.

The boats continued to approach rapidly, and he could make out that they were all full of men. Stepping to the vessel's side he hailed them.

The answer was returned in the voice of Captain Duke.

"What is it you want?" asked Knatchbull.

The answer was unintelligible.

Knatchbull divined mischief, and gave Crawford orders to quietly round and arm the crew.

But before these could be carried out, the boats had shot alongside the brig.

The next instant Duke and Clark with the greater part of their crew, accompanied by fifty armed New Zealanders, swarmed over her sides.

"What the devil do you mean by this?" asked Knatchbull, boldly.

"Captain Fitch," answered Duke, "this craft of yours is not the Bonita, but the Wellington, of Sydney. I know her well, although you have tried to disguise her. You have got hold of her by some set of piracy or other; so I call on you and your men to surrender her to me and go back to Sydney, or I'll fire her!" bellowed Knatchbull.

"What do you call this but piracy, seizing on a vessel at night? I appeal to the laws of nations, and as he spoke he glanced round to see if there was any chance of an effectual resistance.

But the presence of the New Zealanders had cowed the spirits of his men, and they stood motionless.

Captain Duke proceeded to secure them, and then, after some little difficulty, got rid of his savage allies whom it was no easy task to restrain from plundering the ship throughout, but who carried off, as it was, a lot of victuals whom he had resolved should feed the sharks.

An examination of her clearly established the fact that she was the Wellington, and Duke, after verifying this fact, put Knatchbull and his men in irons, and with the aid of a portion of the crews of the Harriet and Sunflower, succeeded in bringing her safely to Sydney.

During the voyage Knatchbull's mind was not idle, and he soon perceived a plan he thought could be put into execution for his own benefit.

He exerted all his eloquence to persuade his fellow-culpits that there was no direct evidence against them, and that, if they only remained true to one another, their acquittal on the capital charge was almost certain.

They fell into the trap. On reaching Sydney, they firmly refused to give the slightest information as to the way in which the Wellington had been seized, or as to the fate of her crew, the guilty or their companions.

No one at first guessed the terrible tragedy that had taken place, and it was surprised that perhaps the remaining convicts had been put ashore to hide, and that it was the intention of the Bonita's crew to return and pick them up when she was watered.

Hopes, too, were entertained that the lives of them and the guard had been spared.

No sooner, however, were the convicts sepulched, the thought occurred to Crawford that there might be a fair chance of driving a bargain with the authorities.
"If," he thought, "I turn Queen's evidence, I am pretty certain of a pardon."

Accordingly, the following morning he requested an interview with the governor of the jail.

That functionary made his appearance later in the day. The convict, with great mock humility, "I believe you are very desirous of hearing the true story of the mutiny."

"Well, yes, we were," was the answer.

"Oh," thought the convict, "this is feigned indifference, put on to decoy one. And he continued, "I suppose, sir, if anyone gave that information, it would be taken into consideration at his trial?"

"Yes, it might."

"He would be rendering a great service, sir?"

"Certainly."

And in consideration of turning Queen's evidence, would have a chance of a pardon—a good chance?"

"A very good chance."

"Well, sir, if that is the case, I am ready to turn Queen's evidence, and give full particulars of the affair."

"It is a very kind offer on your part," said the governor, "but I regret to say that we cannot avail ourselves of it."

"Not avail yourselves of it?"

"No."

"But you said that the man who would turn Queen's evidence would have a chance of a pardon—a good chance?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am ready."

"Quite so—only you are too late."

"Too late?"

"Yes, one of your companions has already volunteered to be Queen's evidence."

"And in consideration of turning Queen's evidence, would have a chance of a pardon?"

"A very good chance."

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"Quite so—only you are too late."

"Too late?"

"Yes, one of your companions has already volunteered to be Queen's evidence."

"The sneaking hound! Who is it?"

"Knatchbull."

"The treacherous devil! Why was he who tried to make us all promise to hold our tongues?"

"Very probably."

"But he was the worst of us all, sir, the ringleader. I assure you, he planned the whole of it."

"So you say," said the governor, "who imagined this outbreak was merely a bit of spite on Crawford's part on finding himself forestalled in his revelation."

"But I assure you, sir, I swear to God," began the terrified wretch, who began to see the terrible trap into which he had fallen.

"It is no use, my good man," said the governor, "Knatchbull has been accepted as Queen's evidence, and one informer will be quite sufficient."

"And so it proved."

The convict had come to the Canary Bird in confidence, with a message from Ned, who had, however, refused to take an active part in it, and would have been slain with the other convicts for the fact of his skill in seamanship being known to his comrades.

"This is all true," he asserted, "that led them to spare his life, and he insisted that, although nominally in charge of the Bonita, he had been in reality the mere slave of her crew.

Whether the authorities believed this story or not, they pretended to do so.

The consequence was that, despite all the recrimination of his companions, they were found guilty, and the whole nine were hanged.

Not only was Knatchbull rewarded for his share in the crime, but his original sentence of transportation to Norfolk Island was remitted.

He continued to live in Sydney, and had obtained the command of a small coasting craft, with a crew of five or six men.

CHAPTER CXXXIII.

THE CANARY BIRD.

The Canary Bird was the name of an inn situate on the road from Sydney to Goulburn.

It had originally been a common shanty of a grog-seller's, started by a couple of Irish immi‐

dents, and took its name from the fact that when it was first opened one of the chief attractions it offered to its few customers was the presence of a real live canary.

In the early days of the colony, this was a rarity, and men came from a distance for the sake of hearing the bird that reminded them of home in the old country.

The landlord was offered sums comparatively enormous to part with it, but he knew better than to get rid of the goose that laid the golden eggs by listening to such offers.

Gradually, however, as the traffic on the road increased, the little shanty developed into a good-sized one, and was no longer dependent for custom on the Canary Bird.

Canaries too were getting common.

"If," thought the convict, "I turn Queen's evidence, I am pretty certain of a pardon."

Accordingly, the following morning he requested an interview with the governor of the jail.

That functionary made his appearance later in the day. The convict, with great mock humility, "I believe you are very desirous of hearing the true story of the mutiny."

"Well, yes, we were," was the answer.

"Oh," thought the convict, "this is feigned indifference, put on to decoy one. And he continued, "I suppose, sir, if anyone gave that information, it would be taken into consideration at his trial?"

"Yes, it might."

"He would be rendering a great service, sir?"

"Certainly."

And in consideration of turning Queen's evidence, would have a chance of a pardon—a good chance?"

"A very good chance."

"Well, sir, if that is the case, I am ready to turn Queen's evidence, and give full particulars of the affair."

"It is a very kind offer on your part," said the governor, "but I regret to say that we cannot avail ourselves of it."

"Not avail yourselves of it?"

"No."

"But you said that the man who would turn Queen's evidence would have a chance of a pardon—a good chance?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am ready."

"Quite so—only you are too late."

"Too late?"

"Yes, one of your companions has already volunteered to be Queen's evidence."

"The sneaking hound! Who is it?"

"Knatchbull."

"The treacherous devil! Why was he who tried to make us all promise to hold our tongues?"

"Very probably."

"But he was the worst of us all, sir, the ringleader. I assure you, he planned the whole of it."

"So you say," said the governor, "who imagined this outbreak was merely a bit of spite on Crawford's part on finding himself forestalled in his revelation."

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Not only was Knatchbull rewarded for his share in the crime, but his original sentence of transportation to Norfolk Island was remitted.

He continued to live in Sydney, and had obtained the command of a small coasting craft, with a crew of five or six men.
Kelly put my belt into his pocket, made me lolo, sure enough. *get eyes on.*

*It's devilish little use being polite with chaps like this. Why didn't you try a bolt if it was impossible to show fight?*

"I thought I knew your face, and now I have heard your voice, I am sure of it. "dates, this fellow is one of Kelly's gang. I will swear to him anywhere," he shouted.

I felt this was a bit too much, and thought to chance it. I had a good look at him, and could swear to him in Black, with a white star on his forehead."

"Ay," said a man named Hill, "that's Kelly's Marco Pelo, sure enough."

"I felt it was a very narrow squeak though," said Sam. "It was odd he didn't send you under when you obliged him to show you his face."

"Hill, I don't know him," said Salmon Roe, who saw that his remark might lead to awkward consequences: "I'm sure more than one will bear me out that it is a common known thing that Ned Kelly only robs the rich and gives to the poor."

"I have a nobbier with him and the landlord, and the other fellow there was a strapping chap with black whiskers. I had pulled up for a spell at a little out-of-the-way shanty, and while I was watching Salmon Roe narrowly since he had spoken, he pulled out a long bag I had in the brush. He pulled it open all the way, and what should I see but a hat full in ounces of gold about me. It afterwards struck me that just let it drop that I was from the mines, which was, perhaps, an inferior foothold thing to do, for I had been dealing there, and had about sixty ounces of gold about me. If afterwards struck me that both he and the landlord had a hard look at my belt, but I never thought any more of it, especially as he got on one of the finest bits of horseflesh I ever saw, and rode off southward, while I jogged along to the north where there was a station I counted on passing the night at."}

"Well, was it Kelly?" asked Smith.

"Just wait a bit. I jogged on quietly till I got in a place about four miles from the inn, where the track narrowed, and was quite walled in by scrub. There was no sign of the bandits being about, but I kept my eyes open all the way, and what should I see but a hat full in the middle of the road?"

"A hat?"

"Yes, a felt hat. I was not going to offer to pick it up, but I slackened speed, and a voice says, a little way ahead of me, to the right—"

"Hello, mate! don't you hear what the hat's a-saying to you?"

There was a laugh at this.

"Of course I guessed what was meant, and I felt pretty certain the other was covered. So I pulled out a long bag I had with about ten ounces of gold, and, undoing it, poured the lot into the hat. I thought that would satisfy whoever it was, for the devil he could not see, for I had a wasps' nest about his ears, and, not being able to see His face round. As I stood with my back to him, I felt it was a station I counted on passing the night at."

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NED KELLY.

Zeph had armed himself with a bunch, and a couple of town from this stretched Sam Smith and Hill sense-

Salmon Roe, close at his elbow, laid Owen's head open with a bottle and flocked another antagonist.

so sudden had been their charge that for a moment it seemed as if they would succeed in getting away.

But fresh foes interposed, and the next moment they were forced to retreat to the wall.

Salmon Roe, caught up a stool, and so fiercely did the two fight that their antagonists drew back a little.

As yet no one had ventured to make use of firearms.

Suddenly the sound of hoofs was heard on the road without, over which darkness had stolen.

There was a pause, of which the two rascals profited to place a heavy table in front of them.

"You had better surrender," said Mr. Leath. "Here are the police."

As he spoke a horse's head was thrust through the open doorway, and next moment its rider had crossed the threshold.

He was a strapping fellow in the uniform of the police.

"There are just in time," said Leath, "to help us to secure those two rascals," and he pointed to Zeph and Salmon Roe.

The stranger seemed to comprehend the whole business at a glance.

"All right, sir," was his answer, given in a hoarse voice, and he advanced into the room.

The eyes of Zeph and Salmon Roe had been fixed on the horse, and now they turned on the man.

They exchanged a glance of intelligence.

"Knife and pistol, mate," whispered Zeph to his com­

"Bravo!" said Salmon Roe.

Wait a bit," said Ned, "and listen to me. I think I agreeable Zeph and Roe had ever experienced.

They felt their spirits rise, and their confidence in speedy delivery brightened their hitherto tear-drawn features.

"I'll take these scoundrels in charge myself, sir," said Kelly. "Just make out your warrant for their commit­

"What, hopping Charley," he said, "is it you? I'm sorry I squeeze your gullet so tightly. Here, take a sip of this to put it right again."

As he spoke, he held out his flask.

Hopping Charley was an ex-convict who, on more than one occasion, had been his partner in deeds of mischief.

An understanding was quickly come to with him, and, as he bore no malice for Ned's squeezing, he readily agreed to do all he could to further their escape, and even to accompany them.

"I am sick of this place, and had made up my mind to go off in a day or two," the truth being that he had been stealing and selling fodder, and was bound to bolt or to be found cut.

Ned quickly reconnoitred the place in which he found himself.

The stable was a long, narrow building, with a high-pitched roof, the gable end being toward the road.

But just as they left the house a man in the guise of a digger was observed to be eagerly conversing with the landlord to do all he can to secure them.

The four men listened for a moment in silence as Ned quickly reconnoitred the place in which he found himself.

"I thought so," he remarked, as he returned to his companions. "They have surrounded the place."

"The devils!" said Zeph. "I was thinking we might have slipped out by that back window."

"We couldn't have got the horses through it," said Ned."

"We couldn't have got the horses through it," said Charley.

"Well, I'm blessed if ever I thought it would ever be

To the right of the Canary Bird rose its stables, a large and strongly-built edifice formed of split logs.

It had only recently been put up, and replaced a number of ricksheds and out-buildings that had formerly served to shelter the horses of travellers.

It was solidly constructed, because horses are amongst the most valuable and the most frequently stolen property that travellers are provided with, and hence it behoves a landlord to do all he can to secure them.

Into the stables the three dived.

An ostler, who was seated on a bucket repairing a mending the light of a horn lantern, sprung up at their cutter.

Ned—who knew the place well, having several times visited it in disguise—caught him by the throat before he could utter a word.

"Pick out a couple of the best prads," and mount for your lives," he said to his companions.

But, before this direction could be carried out, the main body of their pursuers, who had followed as swiftly as the darkness allowed, were at hand.

Ned could have sprung on Marco Polo and galloped off easily, but he resolved to stand by Salmon Roe and Zeph.

Casting the half-strangled ostler to the ground, he pulled Marco Polo into the stable, and slammed the door.

It was a strong one, and was secured by a heavy bar.

Ned's next care was to tie the ostler hand and foot.

As he bent over him for this purpose, he burst into a laugh.

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Ned quickly reconnoitred the place in which he found himself.

The stable was a long, narrow building, with a high-pitched roof, the gable end being toward the road.

In the centre of this end wall was the door by which they had entered, and which formed the only means of ingress or egress.

Along each of the side-walls was a row of stalls.

Ventilation and light were given by a range of holes high up in the walls—and too small to allow the passage of a man—and by a window secured by a strong shutter at the further end.

In the stalls were sixteen or eighteen horses.

The four men listened for a moment in silence as Ned held up his hand and stopped softly to the further end of the stable.

"I thought so," he remarked, as he returned to his companions. "They have surrounded the place."

"The devils!" said Zeph. "I was thinking we might have slipped out by that back window."

"We couldn't have got the horses through it," said Charley.

"Well, I'm blessed if ever I thought it would ever be
any good to me, but I think I can get a wrinkle that's going to fetch us out of this fix, tight as it seems!"

"Don't get down, but let's have it!"

"All right. Do you remember anything about a cow named Samson?"

"Samson!—Samson! Wasn't that the chap as pulled down a house with the jaw-bone of an ass?"

Zeph laughed at this.

"No, that's not it. Samson had a spite against a lot of fellows, and he just set fire to the tail of a lot of foxes and sent them scuttling into the beggars' cornfields, and just played blue blazes with 'em. Now, that's my game!"

"I think I see it," said Zeph, "but where's your foxes?"

"Here!" said Ned, pointing to the horses. He then advanced to the end wall at the side by which they had entered.

"We're in luck," he muttered. "Have you got any tools here, Charley?"

"There are some picks and shovels."

"That'll do, first-rate."

Ned then proceeded to give his orders. The end wall was constructed of longitudinally-arranged logs, and was secured to the side walls by iron clamps. Armed with a pickaxe and lever, Zeph and Salmon Roe proceeded to loosen these clamps in such a way that a very slight effort would be needed to remove them altogether.

Ned meanwhile, with Charley's help, had picked out and saddled the three best horses in the stable, and had led them to the upper end.

Then he returned to assist the other two in their work of demolition, while Charley proceeded to arrange and tie up a number of small bundles of the dried fodder on which he could lay hands.

Meanwhile, the assailants, on finding the door closed in their faces, had retreated, and held a short council of war.

A detachment was posted in observation on each side of the building.

"By Jove!" roared Tom Smith, "I only wish I could see a face smash at that devil of a trooper who made such a dash at us!"

"Did any of you notice the trooper's horse?" asked Barrett.

"Yes," answered one or two.

"Well, wasn't it a black with a white star on its forehead?"

"Yes."

"Black with a white star on the forehead?" said Owen, who had been insensible when the false trooper had made his appearance. "Why, then! it's no mistake. It is Ned Kelly!"

"Of course," exclaimed Hill. "By Jove, boys! the trooper is Kelly himself!"

This announcement had a different effect upon his hearers according to their temperament.

Some were fired with the prospect of capturing and getting hold of one of the three best horses in the stable, as all the others were being sold to the nearest butcher. Others could not help thinking that discretion was the better part of valour.

Those, however, who had been hurt in the scuffle with the two ruffians were eager to revenge their injuries, and their outcries prevailed.

"Or rig up a beam and batter her in," said Owen.

This plan was at once adopted. A stout log was selected and a party advanced with it in their arms.

"By all that's lucky," said Ned, who discovered the manoeuvre, "these fellows are going to do our work for us after all!"

A couple of thundering blows shook the door, which, however, stood firm.

Encouraged, however, by the fact that no shots were fired from the stable, the assailants were renewed.

"This won't quite do, after all," muttered Ned. "Look how they lark, shore up the door as strongly as you can."

This direction was obeyed. For a while the repeated strokes of the assailants were of no avail.

"I wonder they don't fire at us," said Mr. Leah.

"Perhaps they've no more powder."

"What a lark if they haven't."

"Stop a bit," said Leah, "the door stands firm, but it seems to me as if the whole of the wall is loosening bodily."

"That is so," said Owen, "it is getting loose all down the side!"

"Well, then, let's rig up a couple more rams and drive it in altogether."

"This advice was quickly taken, and soon, under the repeated blows, the whole of the wall began to sway and shake.

"What a lot of trouble they are saving us," chuckled Ned. "I meant to push it outwards, but they are going to drive it flat in. Look here, though, we must clear away the posts of the first three stalls so that it may fall flat."

This order was obeyed.

Next, by order of Ned, the horses were led from their stalls, and each had one of the bundles of dry fodder fastened to the crupper.

They then had their heads turned in the direction of the door.

Zeph and Salmon Roe, active as all sailors, each took his position on one of the cross beams running across the stable close to the end, and from this position proceeded to loosen the last of the clamps.

Ned mounted Marco Polo at the further end of the stable and took the bridles of the three other horses that had been chosen in hand.

Charley took his position in rear of the loosened horses, with a torch in either hand, and the lantern open before him.

"Are you quite ready?" said Ned, in a whisper.

"Half a minute," said Zeph. "This cursed clamp still holds. There it goes."

As he spoke the whole of the wall forming the further end of the stable began to oscillate violently. The blows of the battering rams were doubled.

Suddenly it swayed inward, and fell with a tremendous crash.

A dense cloud of dust rose. Suddenly from behind this there flashed a bright light.

Charley, at the signal, had lit both torches, and now appealed them in swift succession to the bundles of fodder fastened to the horses.

Frightened by the light and maddened by the pain, these sprang forward in the only direction that lay open, casting the bridle of one of the three other horses that had been chosen in hand.

Kelly and his party took good care to be in the rush after all.

On they bounded like a living avalanche.

Before the assailants had time to realise their position, the maddened animals, urged on by shots and shouts from Ned and Charley, were upon them.

Some few managed to dart aside, but the majority were knocked down and trampled upon.

Kelly and his party took good care to be in the rush with the frightened and tortured animals, who came tearing on and through Kelly's enemies, scattering them like chaff before the wind.

In the midst of the scared animals were to be seen the bashers with heads bent almost to the withers of their horses, urging with voices and hands the frightened brutes to racing pace, and quickly disappearing from the view of their would-be captors.

"Head westward," said Ned. "I am bound for Sydney, for it is just the last place they will think of looking for us after this little caper."

"Head westward," said Ned. "I am bound for Sydney, for it is just the last place they will think of looking for us after this little caper."
THREE weeks afterwards Ned was sitting in the parlour of a public-house at Sydney.

He had discarded his trooper's uniform, and was got up in tomeably decent style as a settler from up the country.

He had made up his mind to keep quiet for a day or two, and to see how the land lay, and not to venture into any haunt where he was known; still, as a measure of precaution, he had put on a wig and whiskers.

He felt a trifle lonesome, and was not sorry to see a door open and a man enter the room.

The new-comer was a short, thick-set man, with a broad intellectual-looking forehead, deep-set black eyes, a short open lip, good teeth, a mouth expressive of ferocity and daring, and a very prominent jaw and short neck.

He was dressed in a semi-nautical style, and, despite his somewhat unprepossessing appearance, was not without a certain fascination of manner.

He entered into conversation with Ned, and, after a few words, introduced himself as Captain Fitch, commanding a coasting schooner.

"There was a certain fascination of manner," the author writes."

"After their glasses had been replenished several times, their talk grew more confidential.

The stranger let out that he had been sent across the herring-pond at the expense of Government, and Ned, without revealing his real name, admitted having been guilty of several crimes that ought to have been rewarded with the Order of the Henpen Cravat.

"Captain Fitch—Fitch!" said Kelly at last: "why, ain't you the fellow that helped to physe the lubbers on board the Wellington?"

"Yes," said the other, with a grin.

"By Jove, old pal I tip us your hand. Why, you must be one of the right kidney."

"I think so."

"But, stop a bit; if I remember right, Fitch ain't your right name."

"Perhaps it is not; but, as I don't know yous, we'll let it serve for the present."

"Mine!" said Ned, with his usual recklessness—"oh, you can read it on the wall of every police station in Sydney."

"Why, who are you?"

The bushranger caught him by the wrist with a grip of iron, and looked him full in the eyes.

"You'd like to know my name? Well, I'll tell it you. I'm Ned Kelly."

"Oh! that's it, is it?" said the other.

"Yes. Now, who are you?"

"I am the brother of an English baronet," was the answer, given with a certain pride; "and I once held a commission in the service. My real name is Knatchbull." (Knatchbull)

"Of course!" cried Ned; "I have heard all about you. You have got a ship?"

"A little coaster.

"What do you do with it?"

"Well, I've helped more than one fine fellow on the way to freedom, and I do a lot of smuggling."

"Do you want a couple of good hands?"

"I should not grumble at them."

"Good! I can put you up to a fine thing, I suppose."

"What's the lay?"

"Burglary, I fancy."

"Good! I can put you up to a fine thing, I suppose you know we have got a new chief of police?"

"Yes; and the darned fool—he's a greenhorn from the old country—has gone up country after me. He'll find some few things wanting to be put straight."

"The last statement of Ned's was a fact."

When Kenneth and Murdie had recovered from the effects of their struggle with the water, they had started for the interior.

Fortunately they came across a party who had noticed the wreck, and were hastening down to the seashore.

The shipwrecked pair were at once taken to the nearest station, and received every attention.

Horses were provided to take them on to Sydney.

Arriving there a twofold surprise awaited them.

Murdie learnt that his uncle, instead of being a poor, struggling farmer, was in reality one of the richest of squatters on the Murray, and had come in person to Sydney to receive his niece and destined heiress, and escort her to her future home.

Kenneth's surprise was not so pleasant.

He had no sooner assumed his new position than he was overwhelmed with accounts of Kelly's atrocities and outrages.

"He was, contrary to many of his class, a thoroughly honest man; and this fact had brought down on his head the enmity of several members of the criminal classes to whom, in their great amazement, he had dared to lead over to the police when they had brought him stolen property to dispose of."

"Several attempts had been made to rob him, in revenge; and, in consequence, he had not only fortified his house till it was as strong as a jail, but had a hired watchman to keep guard outside."

"On the premises he allowed no one after nightfall, save himself and an old housekeeper.

Mr Knatchbull had taken a fancy but very dilapidated tenement, three doors higher up the street, in the name of a man called Hopkins, with a view of using it as a depot for smuggled goods, and to this he suggested Ned should accompany him, in order to unfold his plans.

Ned agreed; and the pair proceeded to the house, which, was, apparently, that of a dealer in ship stores in a small way.

The door was opened by Hopkins, a man of about fifty, with a grizzly beard fringing a forbidding countenance.

Ned and Knatchbull were soon seated at a table in the room behind the shop, with a bottle of whisky between them.

"I think you agree with me," said Knatchbull, "that old Goodered's crib is about as good a one to crack as any Sydney?"

"That's so. Why, a sack wouldn't hold the haul in watches and jewellery alone."

"Well, do you see a way to do it?" and Knatchbull looked into the other's face with a grin.

"It'll be difficult," said Ned. "The crib is as strong as a jail, and there's no getting over the watchman; he's an old soldier, and true as steel. Besides, the police keep a special eye on it."

"Well, you can read it on the wall of every police station in Sydney."

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"Good! I can put you up to a fine thing, I suppose you know we have got a new chief of police?"
slide of a bull's-eye lantern, and by its aid the pair sur­

from that of the adjoining house.

the soundest, two figures crawled like huge vipers out of a

nis premises, to see that everything was securely fastened.

shutters some three hours before, 'made a final round of

and the relation of their former exploits and escapes from

conversation, was caded in, and Kelly presented to him.

despite the price set upon him, no thought of betraying

plenty of room. Then to-morrow, after breakfast, we'll

ever visit your cellar ?”

"No; forth it is where I stow away the little odds and

"Shall we have to tunnel the whole distance?” en­

quired Kelly.

"No, we have only to make a passagc large enough to

crawl through under the three foundation walls; it

looks pretty good. Do you mean to let anyone else into the secret?”

"Only Hopkins”

"When shall we begin?“

"What do you say to to-morrow?“

"I don't care."

"Well, then, you had better stop here to-night. There's

plenty of room. Then to-morrow, after breakfast, he'll

set to work, whilst Hopkins minds the shop. At night,

when we knock off, he can take a band."

"All right."

Hopkins, who had been in the outer room during this

conversation, was called in, and Kelly presented to him.

Such was the awe and reverence which the latter in­

spired amongst the class to which the man belonged that,
despite the prices set upon him, no thought of betraying

him crossed the teller's mind.

The three wound up the evening with a hand at cards

and make things safe at once?“ said Knatchbull, in a low

pitch, and mean it,” cried Kelly, whose temper was getting roused.

"Jast stow all that rot, and come to business if you

say to starting a tunnel under my cellar wall, and ending

it under old Goodered’s?"

"But there are two houses between."

"Yes, but they are untenanted and untenantable. The

owner wants to sell them because he is too poor, he says,
to pull them down and rebuild them, and can't get any­
one to take them as they are."

"That alters the case,” said Ned. "But does anyone

ever visit your cellar?"

"No; forth it is where I stow away the little odds and

ends I don't care for the police to find lying about in case

they put their prying noses into the shop. The only

entrance is by a nicely-fitted trap, on which the four legs

of my chair are resting at the present moment."

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"I don't care."

"Well, then, you had better stop here to-night. There's

plenty of room. Then to-morrow, after breakfast, he'll

set to work, whilst Hopkins minds the shop. At night,

when we knock off, he can take a band."

"All right."

Hopkins, who had been in the outer room during this

conversation, was called in, and Kelly presented to him.

Such was the awe and reverence which the latter in­

spired amongst the class to which the man belonged that,
despite the prices set upon him, no thought of betraying

him crossed the teller's mind.

The three wound up the evening with a hand at cards

and the relation of their former exploits and escapes from

the sounds of the law, and then turned in.

CHAPTER CXXXV.

HOW THEY DID IT.

Two nights afterwards the weather was wet and drizzling.

At eleven o'clock, old Goodered, who had put up his

shutters some three hours before, made a final round of

his premises, to see that everything was securely fastened.

He and his housekeeper then ascended to their respective

rooms.

After putting out his light, the old man looked out of

the window to ascertain the state of the weather, and then

retired to rest with a pistol beside him.

Three hours later—towards two o'clock—when all slept

on the soundest, two figures crawled like huge vipers out of a

hole tunnelled under the wall dividing Goodered's cellar

from that of the adjoining house.

They rose to their feet, and one carefully removed the

shutters of a small window, and, by its aid, the pair sur­

veyed the place in which they found themselves.

Both were masked, but anyone acquainted with their

voices would have had no difficulty in identifying them as

Kelly and Knatchbull.

Knatchbull had remained in the farther cellar.

When we came,” said Knatchbull, "safe and sound, and

the watchman outside knows no more of what is going on

in here than you ever will of what is going on inside

heaven."

"Hullo! someone has been at work here lately,” said

Kelly, pointing to a heap of shavings and the ends of

several newly-placed planks in one corner. "It was we

he didn't hear us."

"Oh, that was four or five days back. The old boy had

a carpenter in to fix up some shelves and partitions.

But now the first thing is to get upstairs and find the

keys of the safe. They'll be in the old man's room, I reckon."

"Do you know where he sleeps?"

"Yes; I know which is his room by watching the

lights from the outside. I'll tackle him if you'll attend to

the housekeeper."

"That's a bargain. Come on."

They stole up the cellar-stairs like cats.

The door at the head of the stairs was locked and the

key was on the other side.

This, however, was no check to their progress.

With the help of a convenient implement with which he

was provided, Knatchbull turned the key almost as easily

in the lock as if he had held the handle in his hand.

They were now on the ground floor, and after softly

closing the door behind them stood without moving for

a few minutes and listened.

"Shall we go through the lower premises now, or go up

and make things safe at once?" said Knatchbull, in a low

whisper which lent a horrible significance to the word

"safe."

"Go up," whispered Ned. "No; stop a bit. Let's cast

an eye over the premises to see the best way out in case we have to make a bolt of it."

A quick inspection showed the position of the back

and front doors, and having ascertained this they with the

same catlike stealthy tread slowly ascended the stairs and

on the landing again halted to listen and reconnoitre.

"What is that?" whispered Kelly, as his ear caught a

faint voice.

There was a pause for a moment and then Knatchbull

replied—

"It's the old man snoring, I do believe."

It was so.

The heavy breathing of the old man would have indi­
cated to the prowling wretches the room he occupied had

Knatchbull been unacquainted with it.

They listened again, and could in addition now detect

the regular sound of the respiration of the housekeeper in

the adjoining apartment.

"There lies your way, this is mine," said Knatchbull, to

his companion.

The two separated, Knatchbull approaching the bedroom

of the pawnbroker, and Kelly that of the housekeeper.

The doors were both ajar, and before either entered

they allowed a pencil of light from their almost closed

bull's-eyes to play over the floor, in order to show them

where to step without falling over anything.

They were careful to only let this flash of light play

over the ground, and to keep it thus low in order that it

might not strike the eyes of the slumberers, and so arouse

them."

It served, however, to point out the position of the

hears.

Knatchbull stole quietly across the room, and drew near

the bed, where the unconscious pawnbroker, who was

sleeping even more quietly than when the burglar had first

cast the sound of his breathing."

His mind was made up for every evil.

Had he so willed it, he might have merely sought to

secure his victim and not to slay him.

But no; death, he argued, was the only sure way.
But death with no outcry, no shrieks, no groans, no dying gasps.

He held the dark lantern in his left hand, and raised one of those tomahawks so common in colonial settlements in his right.

Then, allowing one flash of light to fall on the old man's silver hair and guide his aim, he struck home.

His aim was sure.

There was no struggling, no writhing, after that one dull, heavy thud with which his axe-blade had sunk into the old man's brain like a thunderbolt from a storm-cloud.

Satisfied that his victim was dead, the robber gathered up the plunder through the tunnel instead of through the front door. The answer is—fear of the police, who, knowing Knatchbull well by sight, would have overhauled him at once.

They had several times "had" Sir Edward, as they called him (after his brother the baronet), and looked upon him as one of the most dangerous ticket-of-leave holders out, game for anything—from robbing a church to murdering the incumbent—if anything was to be gained by it.

The job was not yet over, however.

The three men returned to the cellar adjoining the pawnbroker's premises and proceeded to push the earth back into the cavity leading into Goodered's cellar, striving to throw it as far forward as possible so as to fill up the hole on the other side.

Kelly and Knatchbull then returned to the cellar under the empty house adjoining the one in which the plunder was now stored.

Then they, working on their side, and Hopkins, who had remained in the cellar next to Goodered's, on the other, removed all traces of the connection between the two by filling up the hole and leveling and beating down the earth.

Hopkins's retreat was apparently cut off; but this was pre-arranged.

Knatchbull then proceeded to pass into the cellar of the house rented by him; and, with Kelly working on the other side, this hole was filled up in a similar way.

Knatchbull then unfastened the shop-door, without opening it.

Kelly, left in the empty house, undid the dilapidated shop-door, after first cautiously peering into the street to make sure no one was about, slipped out, pulled it to after him, and darted into Hopkins's dwelling.

Hopkins, observing similar precautions, followed him.

The next morning the watchman, who had been at the back of the premises during the half-minute required to accomplish this last feat, knocked at Goodered's door to rouse him, and help to take down the shutters before going off duty.

There was no answer.

He knocked, and knocked again, without result, and, getting anxious, started for the police-station.

He soon returned with a couple of policemen, and found several early customers wondering at the shutters not being taken down with the usual punctuality.

The police, after examining the outside of the building, rudely pounded at the shop-door for some time, but without result.

The back door was assailed in the same way, but no signs of life appeared.

"There is something wrong here," said one of them, and, whilst he kept guard with the watchman, the other returned to the station, and came back accompanied by the inspector and a couple more constables.

A fresh pounding at the door followed, and then the inspector gave orders to one of his men to fetch a locksmith.

In a few minutes a locksmith, furnished with keys and picklocks, made his appearance, and was ordered by the inspector to open the door of the shop.

The lock soon yielded to his skill, but not the door, which was barred on the other side.

The other door was then assailed, but with the same result—that, too, having fastenings on the inside which the locksmith could not reach.

The shutters were then tried, but it was found that they were so well secured that they could not be opened.

The inspector saw that the only means of effecting an entrance was to break down the doors.

An axe was procured, and, the back door having been broken in, an entrance was effected.

By the same means the stolen property was conveyed into the cellar of the second empty house, and from there again into the one below the premises tenanted by Hopkins.

It may be asked why this trouble to take the plunder through the tunnel instead of through the front door. The answer is—fear of the police, who, knowing Knatchbull well by sight, would have overhauled him at once. They had several times "had" Sir Edward, as they called him (after his brother the baronet), and looked upon him as one of the most dangerous ticket-of-leave holders out, game for anything—from robbing a church to murdering the incumbent—if anything was to be gained by it.

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An axe was procured, and, the back door having been broken in, an entrance was effected.
At a glance round the shop, the inspector saw that a robbery had been committed, and, from the state of the doors and shutters, he felt satisfied that the robbers could not have entered the house from the street.

Without permitting anything to be disturbed, he ascended with two of his men and the watchman to the sleeping-room above.

The stillness of death prevailed, and, not one of those present did not instinctively divine that the shadow of a greater crime than that of robbery brooded over that silent dwelling.

On entering the housekeeper's room the sight of her corpse confirmed their worst suspicions. Her head was almost split open by the blow from Knatchbull's tomahawk.

The room of the old pawnbroker revealed a similar sight of horror.

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed the inspector, "a more atrocious murder I never was called to look upon. How on earth did the murderers effect an entrance?" he continued, addressing the watchman.

"Certainly not from the outside," replied the man. "The only thing I can think of is that they hid themselves on the premises somewhere before they were closed."

"But how could they have escaped without my seeing them, and leaving all the doors and windows locked and bolted behind them?"

"Perhaps they are still hidden here," suggested one of the police.

"That's an idea," said the inspector, and, after stationing a couple of men so that no one could leave the house unseen, he proceeded to the attics and commenced a thorough search.

The fact of the attic windows being fastened like those in all the other rooms on the inside, proved that the thieves had neither entered nor left the house by means of the adjoining roofs.

Every nook that might have afforded a hiding-place, cupboards, lofts, chimneys, were all peered into, without result.

A similar search on the first floor proved equally futile.

"It's evident that they have not only got off, but taken a tremendous amount of property with them," said the inspector, "but how they have managed it completely baffles me."

"The door of the cellar now caught his eye."

"Where does that lead to?" he asked.

"To the cellar," answered the watchman.

The inspector darted forward but found the door locked and the key on his side.

"If they came in this way I don't see how they got out," he muttered.

On descending the steps, however, he began a careful examination of the wall and the heavy trap-door of the side walls, which he found securely fastened on the inside.

At length the loose and broken appearance of the surface of the ground close to one of the walls caught his atten-

On examining it he found that it was soft, uneven, and had evidently been recently disturbed.

"Hullo! this looks like a clue," he said, and at once sent for spades and commenced to clear out the loose soil from the tunnel leading into the adjoining cellar.

In a short space of time the loose soil was cleared from the hastily-filled-up tunnel, and, passing through this, they found themselves, as they had anticipated, in the cellar of the empty house.

"This is how the entrance was made, and this is how the murderers got off," said the inspector.

A thorough search of the premises followed, but here again they were baffled.

The earth filling up the second tunnel had been levelled and beaten on the surface, in a way that defied detection without the closest investigation.

Some loose soil from the first excavation, too, had been scattered all over the surface of the cellar to add to the deceit.

Search, however, revealed the absence of any fastening to several of the windows and doors, and the conclusion came to was that the murderers had escaped by means of them into the street.

The only man not concerned was the watchman.

"I don't see how several men—for there must have been several to carry off all that swag—could have got into the street without my noticing them, especially if carrying bundles," he said to himself, and resolved to do a little search on his own account.

CHAPTER CXXXVI

THE FENCE.

MEANWHILE the murderers had, after a few hours' sleep, been engaged in sorting out their plunder.

There was comparatively little ready-money, the bulk of the articles secured being watches, plate, and jewellery.

It was necessary to find some method of disposing of these.

Of course it would have been madness to have tried to have pledged them or to have offered them for sale at any respectable trademark.

(To be continued.)

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NED KELLY
THE IRON CLAD
AUSTRALIAN BUSHRANGER


**NED KELLY: IRONCLAD BUSHRANGER.**

It is well known that for many years Ned Kelly had made himself notorious by a series of crimes wholly incomparable with the civilization of the nineteenth century. Ned Kelly's celebrated steed, Marco Polo, is as well known as the Antipodes as Dick Turpin's Black Bess in these islands.—Telegraph, 7th July, 1881.

"It is notorious that the robbery of Mr. Steward's corpse was merely performed by the assistance of Ned Kelly's Bushranger, the Captain of what was neither more nor less than a pirate ship."—Times, July.

"The history of Ned Kelly and his celebrated black horse Marco Polo, will ever live in the recollection of the Australian public. The deeds of Dick Turpin, and the performance of Black Bess, are mere shadows of 'Ned and his Mayo,' in addition to which Ned's history is true, and Turpin's is pure fiction."—Perth, July.

CHAPTER CXXXVI.—Continued.

The only plan was to get rid of them to a dealer in stolen goods or "fence." At this period a traffic in stolen goods, on the largest possible scale, was carried on between England and Australia, and firms of the highest repute were engaged in it. Their dealings amounted to thousands and thousands of pounds per annum.

There is a perfectly authenticated story of an English officer quartered at Sydney recognising in the window of a leading jeweller of the town a magnificent jewelled comb, which had been stolen from his wife two years before in London. He at once entered the shop, and gave the jeweller the name of the parties by whom it had been consigned to him from England.

The jeweller unhesitatingly accepted the former alter­

No one could exactly tell who or what he was, or where he lived. But any one of his numerous customers having need of him, who knew how to acquaint him, had no difficulty in finding him out. Accompanied by Ned, Knatchbull walked forth, and the cry of "cuckoo" sounded twice.

The watchmaker stepped into a little glass den at one end of the shop, and began to look for the article required.

"Silver-gilt," continued Knatchbull, his eyes all the while being fixed on the row of clocks on the wall. From the front of one of these another bird popped forth, and the cry of "cuckoo" sounded twice. The hands of the clock began to revolve suddenly over the dial, and it struck ten.

The watchmaker came forward with a tray of keys, and Knatchbull, after selecting and paying for one, left the shop with Kelly, who was in a state of bewilderment.

"What did you want to go in there for?" asked the bushranger.

"To settle about getting rid of the swag," was the reply.

"Then why didn't you do it?"

"I have done it."

"What do you mean?"

"I asked him if he had any watch-keys in stock."

"Yes."

"Well, that might mean I wanted a key; but it also meant that I had some stolen goods to dispose of."

"I see."

"I told him a large silver-gilt key, which meant a lot of gold and silver."

"That's all blessed fine, but how and when and where are the things to be got rid of?"

"At a crib in Pitt-street, at ten o'clock the night after to-morrow."

"But he never said that."

"No, but the clock did."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, directly we went in I spotted there was a customer. If it had been safe to speak before him the cuckoo on the first clock you heard would have popped out and sung. But it didn't, so I held my tongue till he was gone, and it gave the signal all was clear."

"But why didn't you speak out then?"

"Because you were with me, and, not knowing you, he might have refused to answer; so I spoke about the watch­key."

"Well, but how do you know when and where he will buy the swag?"

"The second clock is a house in Pitt-street, two cries of 'cuckoo' mean the night after to-morrow; and ten o'clock, striking the time."

"But, if it had not suited us, what then?"

"Why, I should have said 'this key won't fit; can you get me one by say eight o'clock to-morrow' or whatever hour I wanted, and so on."

"That's all right; but it's a bit infernally awkward. Of course the beggar never says a word to compromise himself, and you can't swear to what the swag is going to consist of, even if you can guess it fairly well."

"Oh, there's a system of wires and springs, and electricity, I believe, but, of course, he keeps all that dark as possible."
Pitt-street was a thoroughfare running parallel to the one in which Durlacher's shop was situated. The tenement inhabited by the old Jew Mendez was a tumble-down sort of a dwelling of one storey high, standing back some distance from the road, and having a tolerably spacious garden in front of it. It was a relic of the early days, when many houses in the city were surrounded by a large patch of garden-ground, which has since, in most cases, been re-sold, at an enormous profit, for building upon.

But Mendez had firmly refused to part with his garden, or to rebuild his house on a larger scale, or let it. Ostensibly he was a kind of pedlar, and was frequently accustomed to be absent for weeks together.

On such occasions his house would be closely shut up and left uninhabited. Indeed he was not nominally at home more than a few weeks in the year, and very few of his neighbours had ever done more than catch a glimpse of him.

These described him as a tall old fellow, with a grey beard, usually wearing a long gabardine-like garment. But it was a strange thing that, even when Mendez was supposed to be up country peddling, a man who knew the right way to work could always manage to see him by giving due notice to Durlacher.

At half-past nine on the night set apart for the interview between the receiver and the thieves, darkness and solitude reigned in the Jew's dwelling. It was a strongly-built house, the windows being all secured by iron bars.

The back premises extended to the boundary-wall dividing it from the yard attached to the house occupied in the parallel streets by Durlacher. At the end of this yard was a deserted shed filled with lumber.

As the clock tolled the half-hour, a figure glided along the yard and entered this shed, the door of which it carefully closed after it.

Five minutes later a creaking sound was heard in the cellar running under the Jew's house. A portion of the wall swung aside, revealing a dark opening, through which stepped a figure, bearing a lantern in its hand with the bulk's-eye almost closed.

Traversing the cellar, it approached a flight of steps, at the summit of which was a heavy trap-door secured both on the inside and outside.

Removing the bolts and lifting the trap, the stranger stepped into a large room on the ground-floor, which was the only one, as already noted.

The aspect of this room was peculiar—not to say strange. It was divided into two by a massive counter running right across it. From this counter several stout wooden uprights ran up to the ceiling; and the spaces between them were filled with a strong network of brass wire.

In two places, however, the wire was arranged so as to leave a pigeon-hole-shaped opening like that in a railway booking-office, about eighteen inches by fifteen.

On the other side of the counter there was a black space, the only furniture of which consisted of a bench fastened against the wall.

The window, which was on this side, was not only defended by iron bars and thick and strongly-secured shutters, but by a species of padded mattress fixed over the whole surface, and the object of which was evidently to deaden sound.

On the other side of the counter was an iron safe, a tall desk, a large wardrobe with two upright wings, and an armchair.

The figure that had entered the room proceeded to light a couple of lamps fitted with semi-circular reflectors.

It paced these on the counter so that the light illuminated the inner half of the room.

By this light the stranger stood revealed as the stout, sleepy-looking German watchmaker.

The next act performed by this individual was to remove his huge goggles and reveal a pair of jet-black, piercing eyes strangely at variance with his lymphatic aspect and fair hair and beard.

A single twist of the hand, however, removed them, and displayed a closely-cropped head of jet black hair.

He then removed his coat and waistcoat, which were thickly and heavily wadded and swung open one of the wings of the wardrobe, disclosing a recess filled up with a washing apparatus.

After shaving his face with water, he turned round, and, instead of a beard, clung a dark, fair-haired, party-faced German, stood revealed as a square-shouldered, upright fellow of about forty, with sparkling black eyes, a dark complexion, and keen features of a Jewish type.

His next step was to open the other wing, the inside of the door of which was lined with looking-glass, and which contained a number of shelves fitted up with all the requisites for what is known in theatrical parlance as "making up."

He took a wig representing a bald forehead, fringed with scanty whiskers of grey hair, and a long grey beard, and fitted these on. A pair of bushy grey eyebrows were next attached. Then, by the liberal application of paint, his complexion was converted to a sallow parchment-tint, and his eyebrows and hair were powdered with unguent innumerable lines and wrinkles.

"Making up."

They found themselves in utter darkness, and the next moment the door closed behind them.

"Well, I'm blowed!" grumbled one of them, who was neither the men were very tired, or the bags were more than usually heavy, for the three lurched and stumbled along with apparent difficulty.

"It's all right," answered Knatchbull. The three were in a narrow passage, as Kelly could tell by the feel of the walls.

"You shos dere?" suddenly demanded a snuffling voice at some little distance.

"It's me; Fitch and two pals," answered Knatchbull.

"Very well. You know de rules. "Vum at a time, if you pleass." A door on their right opened a few inches. Taking his bag in his hand, and dropping it after him, Knatchbull disappeared through the opening, which was immediately closed behind him.

Ned could hear the murmur of voices inside.
At last, after he had been for some time growing impatient, the door again opened, and Knatchbull slipped out.

"Who is it now?" enquired the voice.

"Here, come in, it'll be better, Ned," said Knatchbull, "and try if you can make any better terms for your bed, you've been out of the old bank than I have."

Kelly slipped through the door, which was opened as before, and found himself in the outer half of the room already described.

The door which he found was worked by a system of rods and levers from within the grating.

He advanced towards the counter, and found himself confronted by Mendez, whose face, however, remained in the shade whilst the full glare of the light was turned towards the visitor.

"You will excuse all dis trouble," said the Jew, with an apologetic air. "I am a poor, weak old man, very ill and feeble, and I am very frightened of rough people."

The voice in which he spoke was an admirable imitation of the quavering tones of extreme old age.

"All right, mate," growled Ned. "Vell, vot have you to sell?" enquired the Jew.

Ned hoisted his sack on to the counter, and displayed the contents to the visitor.

"Poshdn in van by van," said Mendez, taking his first at one of the articles already mentioned.

One by one he took the articles of plate and jewellery handed in by Ned, and scrutinised each in rapid succession.

When he appeared in doubt as to the genuineness of any one of them, he tested it with a file and acid, and in the same way removed several of the stones from their settings and examined and weighed them apart.

Though this work was quickly done, it was done most conscientiously, yet all the while his eye never left Ned, whom he watched like a cat.

After weighing a few of the things, he took a certain sum in notes and gold from the till, and pushed it towards Kelly.

"What's this?" growled the latter.

"Vun hundred and dirty pounds," was the reply.

"Here, but dang it all, the swag's worth a blessed sight more than that. There's a good twelve hundred pounds' worth of stuff, if there's a penny, or I'm a Dutchman."

"But dere's no risk.""Risk be blowed!"

"Oh, very well. If you want to blow de risk, you are quite welcome. I am going down to Sydney, and sell de goots aerch an counter, and den perhaps you would get de twelve hundred pounds: and perhaps not. Only it striketh me you would not only blow de risk, but blow de gaff ash well."

And he chuckled grimly.

"Come now, spring something more." "Your friend will have told you dat I have only one prishe. Take it or leave it."

Knatchbull had, indeed, assured Ned of this beforehand, and the bushranger retired, growling like a bear with a core head.

Hopkins was admitted in turn, and after an interval rejoined the others in the passage.

Then the outer door was opened by the same invisible agent who had previously admitted the three robbers to the room where the bargain had been concluded.

After the departure of the three robbers he had reassumed his habitual pace, and was walking the yard at an end, and a few minutes later had noiselessly arrived at the room where the bargain had been concluded.

A fresh noise of a grinding character followed.

"The feilo w must haze had a wonderfully sharp eye to have spotted the deduces so well," thought the Jew; but instead of going where they thought, Ned was hurrying back to the house of Hopkins, muttering as he went—

"I've a good four hours before me, and I'll not sleep to-night till I've put matters straight with that Jewish ape, who thinks he has got the better of Ned Kelly!"

CHAPTER CXXXVII.
DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

It was shortly after midnight and Mendez or Durlacher was peacefully sleeping the sleep of the just in a room over the watchmaker's shop.

After the departure of the three robbers he had resumed the garb of the watchmaker, cleared away the scales and other paraphernalia, and stowed the articles purchased from his late visitors in a spot prepared for their reception.

Then he had returned to his dwelling, eaten a hearty supper of fried fish and salted cucumbers, sopped up by just a thimbleful of rum and shrub, and had turned in.

As he slumbered a little alarm suddenly rang out above his head.

He started up at once.

"Ah! someone trying the house. I had my idea it would be no," he muttered.

Hastily striking a light he glanced at the particular alarm which had sounded.

"So, so," he muttered, softly, "one of these fellows comes back. I'll wager. I'll read him a lesson he won't forget in a hurry."

Hastily dressing himself he passed out of the back door, traversed the yard, entered the street at the end, and a few minutes later had noiselessly arrived at the room where the bargain had been concluded.

Noiselessly cocking a brace of pistols, with which he had not been provided, he stood still and listened in the darkness, for he kept his lantern darkened.

Straining his ears he could catch a low grating sound.

"They are cutting through the window bars," he thought.

"The idiot, they do not know that even a hand cannot be laid on shutter or door without warning me."

The faint grating sound ceased.

Then came a faint click and then another.

"Two bars avenhalf through, and then snapped," thought Mendez.

A fresh noise of a grinding character followed. It was that of a centre-bit at work on the shutter.

"He must be rich at that game," said Kelly.

"Not a doubt of it. I expect he has no end of coin invested."

"Do you think he keeps it stowed away?"

"No, no; he's too sharp for that."

"But he must always have a tidy stock of things on hand, not to mention the coin to do a deal with."

Knatchbull laughed.

"I believe you are hankering to have a go in him?

"Do you feel that way inclined?" asked the bushranger.

"No, no; he's a bit too useful—and knows too much," he added to himself, and then said aloud. "But you?"

"Oh, I," said Kelly. "I'm blowed if I'll meddle with going after watches and spoons again. Give me a digger full of dust, or a squatter with a pocket-book full of notes. That's my style, and I ain't going to depart from it."

Nevertheless, Kelly ascended from his commodities in an hour's time, under pretext of an appointment with a friend.

CHAPTER CI.
SAND DIRT DIRT.

Ir was shortly after midnight and Mendez or Durlacher was peacefully sleeping the sleep of the just in a room over the watchmaker's shop.

After the departure of the three robbers he had reassumed the garb of the watchmaker, cleared away the scales and other paraphernalia, and stowed the articles purchased from his late visitors in a spot prepared for their reception.

Then he had returned to his dwelling, eaten a hearty supper of fried fish and salted cucumbers, sopped up by just a thimbleful of rum and shrub, and had turned in.

As he slumbered a little alarm suddenly rang out above his head.

He started up at once.

"Ah! someone trying the house. I had my idea it would be no," he muttered.

Hastily striking a light he glanced at the particular alarm which had sounded.

"So, so," he muttered, softly, "one of these fellows comes back. I'll wager. I'll read him a lesson he won't forget in a hurry."

Hastily dressing himself he passed out of the back door, traversed the yard, entered the street at the end, and a few minutes later had noiselessly arrived at the room where the bargain had been concluded.

Noiselessly cocking a brace of pistols, with which he had not been provided, he stood still and listened in the darkness, for he kept his lantern darkened.

Straining his ears he could catch a low grating sound.

"They are cutting through the window bars," he thought.

"The idiot, they do not know that even a hand cannot be laid on shutter or door without warning me."

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Then came a faint click and then another.

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"But he must always have a tidy stock of things on hand, not to mention the coin to do a deal with."

Knatchbull laughed.

"I believe you are hankering to have a go in him?"
Another hole was cut in the same way, so as to enable
the unseen burglar to reach the second bolt.
When this was drawn the shutter was swung gently in-
wards, for there were no casements to the window of the
room.
A huge figure slipped across the window-sill, pushed the
shutter carefully to behind it, and then, facing round,
began to withdraw the slide of a bull's-eye lantern.
"Very neatly done," said Mendez, in clear, ringing
tones, very different from those in which he had hitherto
spoken.
As he spoke he, in turn, drew the slide of his lantern
aside and flashed the light full on the burglar, covering
him with his pistol at the same time.
It was Ned Kelly.
Quick as thought Ned drew a pistol and fired in the
direction of the voice and light.
But another report rang out simultaneously with his
own and Kelly, after turning half-round, dropped heavily
to the ground.
There was a pause.
Mendez kept the light of his lantern turned on the
prostrate form of the burglar, but the latter never once
stirred after his fall.
Then the receiver of stolen goods, advancing to one end
of the counter, drew a bolt and pressed a spring.
A section of the counter swung inward on hinges, and
Mendez diving beneath the grating, passed through the
opening in one hand and his second pistol in the other.
Arriving close to the prostrate figure, he listened again,
with a view of detecting if anyone without had been
startled by the pistol-shot.
There were, however, no signs of this.
Then, stooping down, he turned Kelly over.
The bushranger presented a most ghastly spectacle.
One of his legs was muffled up, and his face
was smothered in the blood that had flowed from his
wound.
"I did not want to fire," muttered Mendez, "but there
was no choice. The question now is, what the deuce I am
to do with this carrion. That is just the awkward part of
the question."
He felt about his head, with a view of stopping the flow
of blood on to the floor as far as possible.
As he spoke he, in turn, drew the slide of his lantern
around his wounded head.
Then the receiver of stolen goods, advancing to one end
of the counter, drew a bolt and pressed a spring.
A section of the counter swung inward on hinges, and
Mendez diving beneath the grating, passed through the
opening in one hand and his second pistol in the other.
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"I did not want to fire," muttered Mendez, "but there
was no choice. The question now is, what the deuce I am
to do with this carrion. That is just the awkward part of
the question."
After thinking a few minutes, he took a large bag, with
which he noticed Ned had come provided, and tied it
tight round the leggery, with a view of stopping the flow
of blood on to the floor as far as possible.
Then, taking Kelly by the legs, he dragged him through
the opening in the counter, closed this, and, after some
difficulty, succeeded in transporting the dead body, as he
deemed it, to the cellar.
"I haven't time to settle what to do with it just now," he
thought, and, passing through the aperture in the wall,
he ascended a flight of steps leading to the trap down which he had been
brought by Mendez.
On descending these steps, he examined the trap-door, and
found that it was secured by some catch that he was
unable to fathom the secret of.
He resolved, therefore, to bore a hole with the centre-
bit, and then cut away the wood with the saw.
The steps were awkward to work on, and he got to work
to form a more commodious platform.
In order to do this he shifted several of the boxes and
barrels.
On moving one of the latter his eye noticed a glaze of
metal, and the next minute his too had caught in a ring
partly buried in the sand.
Stooping down he found that it was the ring of another
trap.
In the hope that this might reveal some other mode of
escape, he lifted it.
A square hole was revealed, and on holding the taper
over it, the light was reflected back by a host of sparkling
objects, amongst which Ned recognised the apolo they had
disposed of that night.
"It was one of Mendez's temporary hiding-places for
valuables awaiting shipment.
It was a fearful job for Ned to stoop his wounded head
over the hole, for the pain caused by the rush of blood
upwards every time he leant forward was terrible.
But forgetting everything, even the fear of the peril in
which he found himself, in his greed for gold, ignoring
by the circumstances that Mendez might return at any
moment, and that every second's delay might lessen his
prospect of escape, he did not rest till he had completely
emptied the cavity.
This done, he paused a little to recover himself.
The sight of all this wealth became, however, simply
maddening, when he reflected suddenly that it would be
impossible to carry it all away.
He began rapidly to sort it over, selecting from the
shimmering mass only the smaller and more valuable articles
such as watches and articles of jewellery.
He even thought of searching Kelly before he retired.
Had he done so, the history of Ned might have been prematurely ended.

His mind was so agitated that he forgot, when closing the door to the cellar, to shoot the bolt; and it was not until Kelly had bored a hole in its vicinity to enable him to draw back the bolt, that he discovered the omission, and that the door was simply on the latch, and that a good push from the shoulder would have opened the path to his release.

Overjoyed at the discovery, he quickly made his way out of the house, vowing to be the death of Mendez.

It was broad daylight, however, by the time he emerged from the window by which he had entered, and went staggering down the garden.

Fortunately for him, Mendez had neglected to re-fix the alarm communicating with the window in question.

The sight of an apparently drunken figure staggering along, with a broken head and a decided air of having been up all night, was too common a one in Sydney to excite attention, and Kelly reached Hopkins's house unmolested.

Neither of the other two had returned.

Ned set about patching up his broken skull, and then, crowning himself on to a bed, fell into a sleep that was only broken on the arrival of his companions.

When asked how he came in that plight, he contented himself by spinning a yarn concerning a row he had got into the night before, resolving to keep his expedition a secret, even from Kate.

As for Mendez, he postponed his visit to the cellar till the following night, when great was his horror to find the supposed dead man had not only come to life, but had carried off an amount of plunder the loss of which made the Jew almost frantic.

CHAPTER CXXXVIII.

FRIENDS IN THE ENEMY'S CAMP.

DURBLACHER, alias Mendez, gave a howl like that of a trapped wild beast when he realised the loss that had befallen him.

His rage and anguish were unbounded.

Shylock suffered a great deal at the loss of his ducats alone, but it is to be questioned whether Mendez did not suffer more at the loss of the money alone.

Moreover, he felt a twofold grievance against the receiver

In the first place, it was abominable, unnatural, detestable that he should have been robbed by one of a set of men whom he was continually in the habit of obliging, by buying stolen goods of them at only seventy-five per cent, below their value.

In the second, it was the unkindest cut of all to find he had been bested by a man whom he flattered himself he had so thoroughly got the better of as Ned.

Under ordinary circumstances, he would not have dreamed of betraying a customer, no matter what reward might have been offered by the police authorities.

But in this case he felt justified in using every effort to bring a villain who had pilaged him benefactor, as he considered himself, to justice.

He was, however, ignorant of one very important fact, and that was Ned's name, for he had never seen him before.

Accordingly he hired a boat in the course of the afternoon, and managed to hide the treasure without exciting the suspicion of his companions, both of whom were bent on continuing the spree they had commenced overnight.

With his wounded head, Kelly was wise enough to see that a quiet life would be the best he could lead for a week or so.

Accordingly he took up his quarters with a widow who lived at a short distance out of the town, and confided his excursions to an occasional visit to the tavern with his sister Kate acting as barmaid.

Through her he was able to learn all the latest gossip, most of which turned on the terrible tragedy in which he had been engaged.

He was careful to keep the part he had taken in it a secret, even from Kate.

Knatchbull had started on a cruise, and, although Mendez was on the watch, he had failed as yet to run against the man who had despoiled him.

"I've a bit of news for you, Ned," said Kate to him one evening when he called in.

"What is it?"

"The new head of the police is back."

"I could have told you that. He turned up in Sydney yesterday."

"Ah! but he's been here this morning."

"What's he like?"

"Oh, very tall and trim, and no end of a swell. Almost as tall as you, straight as a ramrod, with a splendid mous	ate, and the whitest hand you ever saw in your life."

"Um! I reckon he'd better not try to clap those whitt hands on me, or he'll run a precious good chance of having them snapped off by the wrists," said Ned, with a toss of his head and a look out of his eyes that meant that he was not over pleased at hearing his secret unknown.

"Perhaps not, but by the look of his eye, he's the boy to try it, or anything besides."

"What? I suppose he's been telling you some foolishness or other, eh?"

"Oh, you need not get in a flutter. He's the sort of man that has a pleasant word for any girl he comes across, but don't you suppose I'm going to listen to any foolery."

"I should hope not."

"Only, Ned, you might just remember one thing, that the more he says to me, the more I may have to tell you."

"That's true enough. It's a capital idea. Play up at him all you can, Kate, get all the information you can out to the bar over which she presided.

"Well, I can't quite promise as much as that, but you may be sure I will try."

It was quite true that Kate Kelly had found Kenneth Rothsay a remarkably agreeable fellow, not so fascinating, individual, during the short visit he had paid that morning to the bar over which she presided.
But she was not the only one who entertained similar opinions by a long way.

During his expedition after Ned on the Upper Murray, Kenneth had halted at the abandoned station where the bushranger had so successfully defied the police, and had seen the girl who had aided him in this scheme. To her, also, the dashingly ex-light-cavalryman had done his best to render himself agreeable, though it is sad to relate that the innate perverseness of the convict's daughter led her to consider him more favorably with the bushranger, over whose shoulders she had so tenderly watched.

Kenneth, returning from his fruitless chase, had been startled first with the news of Ned's exploit at the Canary Bird, and, secondly, with the horrible intelligence of the murder of Goodall. A crime like the latter occurring in a city under his charge was, he felt, a serious blow to him, and he felt bound to spare no possible exertion to bring its perpetrators to justice.

He had ridden a few miles out of the city one evening and was, indeed, in somewhat pensive mood, at a footpace, with his reins held loosely in his hand. It was getting almost dusk, when he caught sight of a female figure some distance ahead.

There are some men who cannot see a woman walking along in front of them without being seized with an excess of that quality, resolved—in his own words—to do with the likes of you.

The result is very disappointing, but they persevere none the less. Kenneth could not help scanning the fair unknown, and quickening his pace to overtake her.

He could make out a tall elastic figure splendid shoulders, even ankles, and a swinging, apple-gold, dashing ex-light-cavalryman was almost sure to see her face.

It was a failing of his that he always did gaza on pretty faces about.

Kenneth glanced at her with admiration. It was a falling of his that he always did gaze on pretty girls with admiration.

"You want a place?" he said.

"Yes!"

"Probably if any disinterested person had asked Kenneth Rothsay when he started for his ride that afternoon if he knew of any vacant situation for a young woman, he would probably have answered "No," and with truth.

But, looking at Jess, it suddenly occurred to him that he had heard of a vacant situation.

He was living with a Mr. and Mrs. Fielding, since he had not yet had the leisure to start an establishment for himself, and he felt certain he had heard Mrs. Fielding express a desire for a nurse, or a governess, or a cook, or a housemaid—he was not quite sure which—a day or two before.

Here was a chance for Jess.

If Jess had been a dowdy looking wenche it is probable that the remembrance of this chance would not have occurred to him, but he liked to see pretty faces about him; and, accordingly, he told the girl of the vacancy.

It was, he now recollected, a nursemaid.

He also mentioned that he was living in the same house as the lady who wanted the domestic in question.

And, after some further conversation as they strolled along, he at last felt bound to quicken his pace and leave her. For they were entering the outskirts of the city, and Sydney has its scandalmongers like every other spot where men do congregate.

As for Mr. Joe Hubbard, both had forgotten him, and he lay insensible till a passing teamster, finding he was in the way of the traffic, considerably drew him to the side of the road, and, after emptying his pockets, left him there to come to or not as it pleased him.

This estimable old lay furnished her, after due consideration, not only with a suitable outfit but with three written testimonials of the highest character.
Neither of the two paid much attention to the somewhat plausibly-dressed Jewish gentleman who had found it necessary to sit down on a pile of lumber at a short distance and remove his shoe in order to shake out a pebble that had got into it, and who continued to sit there till Ned moved off.

Mendez did not pay much attention to the loafers coming along in the opposite direction, who paused to look at Jess as she moved up towards the house with her charges, and growled out something that was certainly not a blessing.

The Jew heard him, however, and said—

"What's that girl, and what makes you swear at her?"

The fellow paused, and the answer which rose to the top of his tongue was—

"What the devil's that to you, you blooming Shemmy?"

"But he thought better of it, and said—

"A blessed bit of stuck-up insolence which got me broken head the other night."

"Ah! how was that?"

"Oh, no matter. I'll be even with her."

"But who is she?"

"She's the daughter of a wretched old swindler who keeps a grog-shop somewhere up country, and since she made Sydney too hot to hold her she's been stopping with me."

"But what's she doing here?"

"Blast it! playing the correct and proper thing, I've known the time when—"

Here Mr. Joseph Hubbard—for it was he—gave some details respecting Jess's early career which were not of a particularly edifying character.

Perhaps, if it had not been for his indignation, he would not have been so communicative to a perfect stranger.

Mendez's shrewd mind guessed there was something to be made out of the connection with the man he was following, and the girl."

He glanced after Ned, who was almost out of sight.

"No, Ned Kelly," he said; "I'll just call at that address this afternoon, and ask for Mr. Simeon."

Having spoken, he handed Hubbard a paper, on which was the address in question, and walked on after Kelly.

He saw the latter enter a respectable-looking cottage-dwelling, and then, dropping into the nearest public-house, and quaffed down a glass of stout, declared that it was the residence of a widow named B. w. s. who let lodgings.

Also, that the tall man living there was named Dawes.

Mendez then returned to the city to perfect his scheme. His object was rather to frighten Ned into yielding up, the time and place of the theft, than to betray him to the authorities; or, if the truth must be told, he thought he might manage to terrify him into giving it up first, and could then, if he judged fit, hand him over at leisure afterwards.

If he had known that Dawes was Ned Kelly, with a big reward on his head, he would have denounced him.

Ned went into the city the next morning as usual, and was leaving Kate's bar, when a little red-headed Jew-boy stepped up to him.

"Mister Dawes?" he said.

"Yes," answered Ned.

A young lady living at Mrs. Fielding's wants to see you—"

"The lad, bloody."

Ned started.

"Where is she?" he asked.

"At Hill-street."

Ned fell blindly into the trap in which chance served Mendez better than ever he had bargained for.

Jess had said she would let him know where he could meet her, and this was evidently her messenger.

CHAPTER CXXXIX.

A TRAP.

MENDEZ found his task a more difficult one than he had anticipated.

Knocktail being away, he had no chance of questioning him, and when he got bold of Hopkins and sounded him he found to his disgust that the latter either would not or could not give him any information as to the man who had been their companion on the night of the burglary.

Chance, however, at last did more for him than all his scheming had been able to bring about.

In the rather flashy get-up of the well-to-do middle class, he had been of late a constant visitor to hotel bars, gaming rooms, sporting publics, and the like, where he thought there might be a chance of running across the man who had robbed him.

Walking down one of the main thoroughfares during a breezy afternoon he saw the hat of a tall, broad-shouldered individual, striding along a few paces in front of him, carried off and whirled away.

The stranger turned with an oath to catch it.

Mendez noticed that one side of his head was done up with strips of sticking-plaster.

This, with the face of the man's height and bulk, served to identify him, despite his change of dress and sundry other attempts at disguise.

Mendez was almost certain that he had the man whom he had seen but twice, and then in the dress of a sailor, and began to walk away, which said plainly enough as he halted, leant his elbows on the fence and began to pass words that she was not going to have anything to do with his object.

For the moment she did not recognise him, and, when he had seen but twice, and then in the dress of a sailor, and began to walk away, which said plainly enough as he halted, leant his elbows on the fence and began to pass words that she was not going to have anything to do with him, and when he got hold of Hopkins and sounded him he found to his disgust that the latter either would not or could not give him any information as to the man who had been their companion on the night of the burglary.

"I cannot stay any longer," she said, at last, "or these kids will get talking to their mother about it. But I will meet you later on."

She did, and a wave of colour swept over her face as she moved up towards the house with her charges, and growled out something that was certainly not a blessing.

The Jew heard him, however, and said—

"What's that girl, and what makes you swear at her?"

The fellow paused, and the answer which rose to the top of his tongue was—

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last I got there, for I could not get away as early as I
myself, and I may run across him, but if he comes back
into Sydney. ' Well,' I said, ' I've got to go into Sydney
wanted, I found you were out. I had seen you two or
three times before, and Mrs. Bowles said you were gone
that I shall be in Htfl-sfcrect this afternoon.' When at

direction indicated.

ushered him along a narrow passage.

fell on his ears, Ned jumped to his feet.

and a howl of suppressed rage escaped him as he realised
surrender, and I'll gammoa them that I'm going to, and then

to flight.

a very fair-sized window, but his brows knit as he noted
almost full.

he entrenched himself behind a barricade hastily con­
structed of chairs and tables, and awaited the result with
perfect calmness.

to do all he knew to keep up.

this new assailant, but without effect.

kick in the stomach that doubled him up in agony, and

clapped their hands to their faces.

flict. 

one being Mendez.

As

as it only alighted on his shoulder, though with

side.

effectual use of it, indeed it hung almost useless by his

head.

in the receiver, and the sharp sound of the bolt

at that window seriously I can get those bars
down in an hour with the knife. I wish they'd come, I
feel equal to a brush with half-a-dozen,' he muttered,
still glancing round with quick, keen eye and pricked
ears, and gathering his mighty limbs under him like a cat
out to spring.

The sound of approaching voices and footsteps in the
passage was now audible.

Suddenly he recognised the tones he had heard on the
night Mendez had fired at him.

Yes, he could not be mistaken.

Instinctively he divined the whole affair.

He had been assured by the Jew in order that the latter
might recover his property.

But he asked himself, was Jess an accomplice?

He was a large and tolerably well-furnished kitchen, with
a window.

It was a large and tolerably well-furnished kitchen, with

As the door clanged, and the sharp sound of the bolt
fell on his ears, Ned jumped to his foot.

What was the meaning of this?

He glanced round the room in search of a way out.

The outer door was closed, and the passage in darkness.

Raising his left foot, however, he gave his assailant a
kick in the stomach that doubled him up in agony, and
sprang through the doorway.

Escape being impossible, resistance was his next idea,

Almost simultaneously, the man to his left had also
aimed a downward blow at him.

He could not quite avoid it, but managed to jerk his head
aside, so that it only alighted on his shoulder, though with
such stunning force that his left arm was for the time dis­
able, and the knife fell from his unclenching fingers.

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sprang through the doorway.

The outer door was closed, and the passage in darkness.

He slunk to the door behind him and, stooping down,
sought for and shot the bolt.

As he did so he heard footsteps, and, before he could
rise, had received a violent though ill-directed blow from
a fifth man, who had been stationed as sentry just under
the outer-door.

Hung to his feet, he struck in turn with the poker at
this new assailant, but without effect.

Pursing forward he found himself grappled with at a
disadvantage.

His left arm was still too numb for him to make
efficient use of it, indeed it hung almost useless by his
side.

His adversary had caught him round the waist, and was
striving to lift him and throw him on to his back.

At any other time Ned would have languished at his effort,
but with one arm the case was a little altered, and he had
to do all he knew to keep up.

At length the bushranger brought his right arm across
to the left side of his chest, and dashed the elbow smack
against the right side of the other's head just by the ear.

The follow's grip slackened, and Ned expelling the blow
with his fists caused him to lose his hold, and to stagger
back half stunned.

It was rather habit taw an sense of instinct that led
him to ask—

"What young lady is this?"

"Miss Jessie—a tall young lady, with red hair."

"And how did you know me?"

"Miss Jessie said to me this morning, 'Go down to
Mrs. Winkle and tell the gentleman there, Mr. Dawes,
that I shall be in Hill-street this afternoon.' When at
last I got there, for I could not get away as early as I
wanted, I found you were out. I had seen you two or
three times before, and Mrs. Bowles said you were gone
that I shall be in Htfl-sfcrect this afternoon.' When at

direction indicated.

ushered him along a narrow passage.

fell on his ears, Ned jumped to his feet.

and a howl of suppressed rage escaped him as he realised
surrender, and I'll gammoa them that I'm going to, and then

to flight.

a very fair-sized window, but his brows knit as he noted
almost full.

he entrenched himself behind a barricade hastily con­
structed of chairs and tables, and awaited the result with
perfect calmness.

to do all he knew to keep up.

this new assailant, but without effect.

kick in the stomach that doubled him up in agony, and

clapped their hands to their faces.

flict. 

one being Mendez.

As the door clanged, and the sharp sound of the bolt
fell on his ears, Ned jumped to his foot.

What was the meaning of this?

He glanced round the room in search of a way out.

The outer door was closed, and the passage in darkness.

Raising his left foot, however, he gave his assailant a
kick in the stomach that doubled him up in agony, and
sprang through the doorway.

The outer door was closed, and the passage in darkness.

He slunk to the door behind him and, stooping down,
sought for and shot the bolt.

As he did so he heard footsteps, and, before he could
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against the right side of the other's head just by the ear.

The follow's grip slackened, and Ned expelling the blow
with his fists caused him to lose his hold, and to stagger
back half stunned.
Then beating him down, he kicked him into insensibility, and stepping over his prostrate form gained the front door.

After some little groping he succeeded in opening it, and arranging his clothes as straight as possible, and pecking up a hat lying in the passage, to replace his own, which had been set up in the first scuffle, he passed out into the street and made his way quickly but speedily in the direction of his old haunts.

By the time Mendez and his friends were released from the kitchen by the old woman, who had kept upstairs during the shindy, he had a good start.

CHAPTER CXL.
A CLOSE SHAVE.

Ned was resolved on having an explanation with Jess and on his way home halted opposite Mrs. Fielding's.

The girl caught sight of him and managed to run out, told him to come to the boundary at nightfall, and appointed the trysting-place to be at the foot of a large tree, well known to both of them.

Accordingly, after going home and eating a hearty meal, Ned, armed himself, lit a cigar, and strolled out to the appointed scene.

He had not been there long before Jess joined him.

He told her of the peril he had just escaped, and how her name had been used to lure him.

Jess indignantly denied all knowledge of the plot or the plunder, seemed greatly agitated at the news of Ned's danger, and did not take long to make her confess that she had been to Sydney on purpose to renew her acquaintance with Ned.

"There's one thing that's rather comical," she said.

"What's that?" asked Ned.

"I suppose you know that the new chief of the police is living here?"

"No; it is so?"

"Yes. And do you know? he's a very nice young fellow indeed," she said, stirrily.

"I've heard that," growled Ned.

"And I really think he admires a pretty girl whenever he comes across her."

"What do you mean?" said the bushranger fiercely.

"Oh! I don't get in a way. He's got some ridiculous, old-fashioned idea that he ought not so much as to pay me a compliment because he happens to be under the same roof as myself, but there's a look in his eye which just says what he'd say if it wasn't for that stupid notion."

"Stop a bit, Jess," said Ned. "Do you think you ought to get him to be regular spoony on you?"

"Well, I don't say I couldn't."

"Then try it on, my gal, try it on."

"I don't quite see what you're driving at," said the girl, evidently hurt at the seeming want of all due and proper jealousy implied in Ned's remark.

"He's chief of police, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, with you to wheedle all his little plans out of him, and me to thwart them, I will be able to carry on with Ned."

The girl laughed.

"Suppose," continued Ned, "we were to try something of the sort at once?"

"What?"

"Why, you see, I have robbed a good many people, but not a chief of police yet. It would be a fine feather in my cap to do it."

"Ah! Well, what is it you want me to do, for I suppose you are driving at something?"

"Right again. I want you to leave a window unfastened to tempt your right."

"Yes, I can manage that. The second from the left And on the ground floor."

"Good."

He added some further conversation that need not be repeated, Ned took his leave.

His last attempt at burglary single-handed had, though in the end successful, been attended with some peril, and he thought that on this occasion the services of a friend would be useful.

Accordingly he looked up Hopkins.

Hopkins did not seem overmuch pleased at the proposal, which offered a great deal of risk and not much prospective profit, as far as he could see.

But Kelly persuaded him, and he agreed to meet Ned the following night.

The following night Ned retired to rest at his usual hour.

His landlady, who was a quiet old soul and rather deaf, had already caught her pillow.

But, after remaining in his room about half-an-hour, Ned, who had not undressed, removed his shoes, and stole quietly downstairs with them in his hand, putting them on when he reached the door.

He opened the door and crept quietly out.

Having gained the gate and stepped into the road, he advanced a few steps to the left.

He halted, and, picking up a couple of stones, began to tap them smartly once or twice together.

This hooliganish trick was done in the direction of his old haunts, and a figure emerged from it.

"Is it very late, mate?" said a voice recognised as Hopkins's.

"All right," was his reply to this innocent sentence, which had been fixed on by them as a password.

The two quietly passed up the road.

Arrived opposite Mrs. Fielding's house, they halted for a moment to see whether the coast was clear.

Satisfied on this point, they got over the fence, and stole like two phantoms towards the house.

Here all was readiness.

Mrs. Fielding was a woman who every night used to go round her premises in person, and satisfy herself, with her own eyes, that every bolt and bar was shot.

But Miss Jess was a very soft-footed young person, and after Mrs. Fielding had retired for the night, this young damsle stole out of her room, crept downstairs like a cat, and undid the window, as promised by her to Ned.

Consequently the two burglars had not any difficulty in effecting an entrance.

Once inside all was plain sailing, thanks to Jess's information, and they set to work at once.

The lower rooms were quickly ransacked, but they did not yield very much, for Ned's chief object was rather the plunder than the robbery, so he tore up his old clothes and undid the window, as promised by her to Ned.

Consequently the two burglars had not any difficulty in effecting an entrance.

Once inside all was plain sailing, thanks to Jess's information, and they set to work at once.

The lower rooms were quickly ransacked, but they did not yield very much, for Ned's chief object was rather the plunder than the robbery, which was Mrs. Fielding's habit to carry up to bed with her every night.

Ned meanwhile stood at the door, pistol in hand, prepared for any emergency.

The things secured, Hopkins rejoined his companion.

Ned was divided in opinion as to whether he should enter the room in which Kenneth was sleeping.

He weighed it as whether it would be best, as he put it, a very good move to go at once and cut the throat of a man who was no doubt destined to give him a great deal of future trouble.

A reflection came in time to stay his hand.

The new chief of police, he argued, was young, was green, and was liable to be impressed by women.
Guided by the pistol shot, Kenneth and Mr. Fielding were soon on the scene of this tragedy.

"It must be the fellow I fired at," explained the former.

But what could that shot have meant?

Meanwhile Ned, stealing every muscle, had darted down the road, and then quitting it had made his way by a somewhat circuitous route to Mrs. Bowles's.

Here was quite, and opening the front door, he stole noiselessly up the stairs and gained his room.

Dying in, he was soon sound asleep. He had no conscience to trouble him.

CHAPTER CXLI.

A PRACnICAL JUDAS.

The sensation which followed the attempted burglary at Mrs. Fielding's was tremendous.

Coming as it did after the similar crime which had ended in the murder of the old pawnbroker, people naturally maintained that there was a connection between the two offences, and that they must be the work of the same gang.

And they began to ask themselves, with an uneasy feeling, who was likely to be the next victim.

The death of Hopkins, too, was not without an element of mystery.

Kenneth, at the inquest, swore that he had fired at the burglars from the window of his room as they retreated from the house.

But the wound that had put an end to Hopkins was of such a nature that death must have instantaneously followed its infliction, and hence it was certain that he could not have proceeded to the spot where he was found, had he received it at the time Kenneth fired.

Further investigation, too, showed that the bullet that had put an end to his existence did not fit the bore of Kenneth's pistol, whilst both the latter and Mr. Fielding could swear that a shot was fired which helped to guide them to a spot where the body was found.

Both were certain of this.

The only conclusion, therefore, was that Hopkins had been accidentally shot, either by his own hand or by that of an accomplice, in endeavouring to seal the fence, for no one went so far as to imagine that his life had been purposely sacrificed to secure his comrade's safety.

His death led, however, to a somewhat important discovery.

He had been identified by several people as a man residing a few doors from the murdered pawnbroker, and, on his home being searched, a number of articles, the products of the former burglary, which it had not been thought worth while disposing of to Monda, were found.

Some of these articles were identified, and led to a strict examination of his premises.

In clearing away the rubbish which filled the cellar, it was noticed that the earth along the wall separating his house from the abandoned tenement next door did not seem so solid as elsewhere.

On examination, it was found that it could be easily removed by a spade, and that the deeper they went the less compact it became.

The police proceeded to work as in and soon traced the tunnel that had been opened into the adjoining house.

With this clue, the rest was easy, and it was soon perceived how the plunder had been removed and the cellar in which the men had lived for several weeks was traced.

It was resolved to keep a sharp look-out on all who had visited Hopkins, but, as it turned out, no one had noticed Ned during his few visits, and he remained quite unsuspected.

A couple of days after the burglary Kenneth was at breakfast, when a card was brought in with the request that its owner, a Mr. Simeon, wanted to see him at once.

The young chief of the police had been pestering with visitors ever since the perpetration of the double murder, and had got disgusted with the countless numbers who had...
only come to bother his life out with suggestions of impossible plans for securing the offenders and bringing them to justice.

"Please ask him to send in word what he wants with me. I am to see a friend who had brought the card, and added to Mr. Fielding, "If it’s another of those fellows with a cock-and-bull scheme, I shall step quietly out of the house and down to the office. If he’s got anything to say, he must say it there."

"Please, sir, he says he must see you in private on an important matter of business," said the servant, returning.

"Tell him that if it’s business, and he will name a time, I will see him at the police office. I’m bugged if I’ll be hurried out of my Ilf’s like this. To be told before one has time to swallow one’s breakfast, is too bad. Well, what is it now?" he continued to the servant, who had again re-entered the room.

"If you, sir, must and will see you on a matter of the highest importance, and that if you refuse to receive him at once, the matter will not rest here."

"Confound his impudence! Tell him I’ll join him in half an minute. By Jove, if he’s come on any humbugging game, I’ll give him a lesson he won’t forget in a hurry."

This conversation had been carried on in such a manner as to reach the ears of Jess, who happened to be passing the open breakfast-room door.

"What’s the matter?" asked Kenneth, as he came into the room.

"Mr. Simeon had been ushered to wait in a room with a window opening on to the verandah. The window was open. Jess slipped out, and stealing round, placed herself conveniently outside it."

When Kenneth entered the room, Mr. Simeon rose to receive him.

He was a well-dressed, middle-aged Israelite, wearing one of the largest green shades that can be imagined over his eyes.

"Aha! a disguise," thought Kenneth; "wait a little bit, my fine fellow."

"Mr. Simeon?" he began interrogatively.

"That is my name," said the stranger.

"You wish to see me on business?"

"Yes; if it is an important communication to make to you."

"In connection with my official duties?"

"Yes, sir.

"Ah! now I have you, my friend," thought Kenneth.

"I presume, sir, you are aware," said he, putting on the red-tape air of a Foreign Office clerk, "that such communications are usually received by myself or by one of my representatives at the police office, where every attention is always paid there."

"But he was not.

"Sir," he replied, very politely, but very firmly, "you have, you will pardon me for reminding you of it, not held your present position very long, and are not perhaps thoroughly up in some of the peculiarities connected with it. This is not England, Captain Rothsay, and I may take it on myself to tell you that there is a very peculiar impediment which will at all times hinder men from crossing the threshold of the police-office in order to give you information. May I have the honour of mentioning it?"

"Certainly," said Kenneth, with a vague idea that his visitor was either a most covertly insolent scoundrel or a madman.

"It is that they run the risk of having their throats cut if they are seen coming out of it."

This answer rather confirmed Kenneth in his previous idea.

"You seem well acquainted with the little ways of the dangerous classes over here," he said.

"I am—so well that I am, with your permission, going to put one of the worst of them in your hands." Kenneth started.

"Ah! an informer," he said, contemptuously.

"If it were not for informers, I don’t think the police would run such a risk," was the answer.

Rothsay began to see that he was not likely to get the best of it at this game.

"(To be continued.)"

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CHAPTER CXLII.—Continued.

"Well, sir," he said, "pray proceed."

"I am prepared to put one of the men concerned in the Gooderell murder in your hands. There is a reward of five hundred pounds offered, I believe.

It would have been in better keeping for Mr. Simeon not to have made this remark, but he could not help it; he wanted to hear the fact officially stated.

"Yes," said Kenneth, "five hundred pounds."

"Well, I know I can trust to you, Captain Rothsay, and that you will forgive me if anything I have said has in any way annoyed you. I am willing, on your assurance that if my information results in his arrest I shall receive the reward, to put you in possession of his name and hiding-place."

"Indeed?"

"But, as I have said before, I cannot give you the information officially."

"Why not?"

"You are new to this country, and cannot understand all its ways. The honest man amongst us would hesitate before risking the enmity of such a powerful body as the criminal classes and their admirers are."

"Or the chance of losing their custom?"

This was a mere guess-shot of Kenneth's, but the other did not like it.

"You will perhaps more readily understand me: when I tell you that the murderer is a man for whom an immense reward has already been offered, but who has evaded capture on account of the aid and sympathy he has received from almost all classes."

"Who is he?"

Simeon rose and approached him.

"Ned Kelly," he said, in a low whisper.

"Ned Kelly?" repeated the other in amazement.

"Ha!" cried Simeon, looking round with an air of alarm.

"You say he did this murder?"

"Yes."

"And you know his hiding-place?"

"Yes."

"Then I shall upon you to reveal it, sir."

"Exactly, I am going to do so; only I will venture first to remind you of the reward that has been offered for his apprehension, and which I claim, in addition to the five hundred offered for the Gooderell murderer."

It was the fact of the large amount of this reward that had led Mendez to abandon the principle that had guided him throughout his career and give up a man to justice.

His first idea had been to secure the man who had robbed him and drive a bargain with him for his restoration to liberty.

This scheme had proved abortive. He had unsuccessfully hired Ned into the house in Hill-street, but the bushranger had escaped.

Up to that time he had been quite unaware who his plunderer really was, and the men who had helped him, and who were mere ruffians he had hired for a few pounds, had merely thought the affair was a bit of kidnapping for absolute vengeance.

But when one of those who were knocked down in the kitchen picked himself up, his first words were—

"Oh! thunder! that's a strong fellow; he's just the cut of Ned Kelly, too."

These words led Mendez to think. He mentally compared things together, and flashed across him that, when he had purely the bushranger in his mind, he had noticed a scar on the left hand of their vendor.

No doubt it was Kelly.

And, if it were, why the reward would more than cover the value of the thing Ned had carried off.

It was this argument that had brought him to Mrs. Fielding's, for he felt sure the man was well enough for him to hear the light out of doors.

"That is true," said Kenneth, in reply to his last remark.

"Well then, sir, to earn me that reward, and yourself the reputation of ridding the colony of a most dangerous villain, you have only to proceed to Mrs. Bowles, half-a-mile down this road, and you will find Ned Kelly, under the name of Mr. Dawes."

This statement startled Kenneth.

It startled another listener much more, however.

This listener was Jess, who had not lost a word of the conversation.

She was delighted she had made up her mind to listen to that interesting stranger, Mr. Simeon, and at once began to scheme how she should warn Ned.

Meanwhile Mendez and Kenneth had rapidly arranged the plan for Ned's capture.

The former was to letter about the road, and keep watch at a distance over the cottasge occupied by Mr. Dawes.

The latter was to ride at once into the town, and put himself at the head of a sufficient number of men to render all resistance on the part of the bushranger futile.

With this agreement they parted, and Jess was left racking her brain for a chance of slipping away and giving Ned warning of this impending peril.

CHAPTER CXLIII.

A SUDDEN ECLIPSE.

The best-laid plans of mice and men, as we are informed by the poet Burns, often fail.

And usually by some unforeseen trifler.

So it was in the present instance.

Mendez, sauntering out from Mrs. Fielding's residence, proceeded, with the air of a mere idler, towards the house occupied by Ned Kelly.

Despite the green shade he could see pretty well, and he kept a close lookout as be went along, and carefully scrutinised everyone that passed him.

He met no one, however, resembling Ned.

Arriving in sight of the dwelling tenanted by the latter, he rubbed his hands joyfully.

"Aha!" he thought, "my fine fellow, you shall see if I won't give you cayenne in return for pepper."

Meanwhile, the girl Jess was in a terrible state of anxiety.

In vain she sought for a chance of getting away from the house for half-an-hour.
She knew it would be useless to ask the permission of her mistress.

It happened, the housemaid had left in a great hurry the preceding evening, after what can only be styled a "row," and consequently Jesse had to do more than her usual share of work.

It was impossible to slip away on the quiet, for Mrs. Fielding's eye was constantly on her. For a moment she thought of breaking into open rebellion, and bolting; but a moment's reflection showed her that this would only arouse suspicion.

Almost at her wit's end, she scribbled a few words of warning to Ned on a piece of paper, and kept this in readiness to send by the first messenger who might present himself.

But time went on and no messenger presented himself at all.

As she looked from the front of the house towards the road, she saw Kenneth Rothsay pass by at a brisk trot, followed by four troopers.

She clenched her hands, and drove the nails into the palms with rage, as she watched them sweep on in the direction of Ned's abode.

"I must see him at once, on matters of the utmost importance," continued the chief of police, advancing over the threshold.

"The door in front?" asked Kenneth.

"Yes, sir," was the answer, given with military promptitude and consciousness.

"Very good; so we will give the devil his due for cunning. Gaskell, ride up to the back of the house, and see no one escapes that way. Bell, you push on to the further end. Now trot."

Kenneth, dismounting with one of his men, left their two horses in charge of the other, and rapped at the front door.

Perfectly speechless, she could only point to the stairs and the threshold.

"The meaning of it is that your lodger, Mr. Dawes, is neither more nor less than Ned Kelly the ironclad bush-ranger.

"Ned Kelly!" screamed the affrighted woman. "Why, we might all have been murdered in our beds!" and she fell into a chair in a half-fainting condition.

A brief council of war followed the futile search, and it was decided that two of the troopers should remain in ambush at the cottage.

Followed by the remainder, Kenneth galloped back to Sydney, and a thrill of satisfaction shot through Jess's breast as she noticed that he was unaccompanied by any prisoner as he passed, and that his face did not wear the triumphant expression that denotes the return of a leader from a successful expedition.

The real reason of this failure was a very simple one. Ned had taken it into his head to have a day's fishing in the harbour. He had started off earlier than usual, hired a boat at Sydney, and, whilst his pursuers were wondering what had become of him, was sailing towards the Heads.

Towards evening he returned, well pleased with his sport.

Amongst the first persons he ran against on landing was Knatchbull, whose schooner had come in the afternoon. They greeted each other cordially; and, of course, "Fielders" were proposed.

Ned suggested that they should adjourn for this purpose to the hotel at which his aunts were serving as barmaids, to which Knatchbull made no objection.

Accordingly they started in that direction.

Meanwhile the report that Ned Kelly was ailing in Sydney or its neighbourhood was rapidly spreading abroad.
Despite the almost piteous appeals of Mr. Mendez that he would keep the matter dark, Kenneth Rothsay had at once set all those acting under him at work to track the bushranger—a description of whose person had been forthwith circulated.

Mendez—who had gnashed his teeth with disappointment at the failure of the expedition of the morning—was still more enraged to find so many now engaged in a pursuit, the threads of which he wanted to keep in his own hands.

Kelly did not notice that, as he passed through the streets with Knatchbull, more than one passer stared a little hard at him, though such was the case, but, as it turned out, his disguise was so good that those whose attention had been caught by his height and figure came to the conclusion, on looking at his face, that they must have been mistaken in identifying this passing stranger with the notorious bushranger.

One man, however, seemed in doubt, and followed the pair at a distance, till he watched them enter the hotel bar.

He was a short, stout-built, red-bearded man, with a quick, keen eye.

After waiting for about a minute as if in doubt, he started off down the street at a brisk pace.

On entering the bar-room, Ned, somewhat to his surprise, saw that Kate was not at her place.

The second was an individual of Jewish appearance, who, as he entered the bar, said, "There was another girl there, and after being supplied with drinks, Kelly and Knatchbull stood conversing together.

They had been engaged in this manner for some minutes, Kelly being anxious to see Kate before leaving, when that young lady entered the bar.

At the sight of Ned she gave a start of surprise.

"Good heavens, Ned! You don't mean to say you are leaning about here?" she exclaimed.

"Why not?" was the answer.

"Don't you know the police are on your track, and that they are hunting for you high and low, all over Sydney?"

"No. How's that?"

"I don't know; but Captain Rothsay has been in here this morning, and several others, and it seems that the police have been warned to keep a lookout for you."

"Tante very awkward!"

"For goodness sake be off at once."

As the girl spoke the outer door opened and three men entered the room.

"By goles!" exclaimed Ned as he caught sight of them.

"What do you mean?" said the girl anxiously.

"I mean to say we are going to have trouble."

She turned with him and entered the bar-room.

He had not gone far up the street before he met Kate, who had given the first information about Ned, and also that Cann had on one occasion met the bushranger face to face.

He told them of his suspicions, and they at once returned with him and entered the bar-room.

They took up their places near the door so as to cut off all retreat, and began to run their eyes quietly over those present.

"That's the man I mean," said Smithson; "the big fellow with the grey coat."

Mendez and Cann both glanced in the direction indicated.

It had grown dark by this time, but the gas in the bar had been lit.

"Yes," said the former, "that's him."

Cann remained silent for a minute.

"I don't know, I'm not quite clear; if it is, he has altered a great deal," he said at length, with an air of doubt. "The light is not very good."

"There's a way of settling it," cried Smithson, struck with a sudden inspiration. "I'll go up in a minute and ask him to pass me a light for my needle, and I'll have a look at him in the gloom.

Having been hosting Ned had omitted to put on gloves.

On his part, directly he saw these three enter, Ned had set his wits to work to try and find a way of escape. At first he thought of making a dash for it, but there were three powerful men against him, and amongst the other people present a number of respectable people who, if called upon would probably help the officers.

The only way to get out would be by a trick.

"Look here Kate," he said, to the girl in an unconsidered tone as if giving her an order or paying one of those trivial and impertinent compliments your bar-lounger delights in, "this is a tight fix, and I am not certain how we shall get out of it. You must lend me a hand."

"Very good."

"They don't suspect you. Can you leave the bar for a minute and slip out by the side door of the hotel?"

"Yes."

"Sip out then, call a cab, and get the driver to draw up in the side street ready to bolt off at full gallop directly his fare comes. Tell him, by the way, his fare will be two gentlemen, one tall and the other short."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, for the present.""All right, I'll do it.

A few minutes later Kate left the bar.

Smithson, Cann, and the Jew seemed to be in some hesitation as to what course they should pursue.

"It strikes me," said Kelly to his companion, "that these fellows are not quite certain after all whether they have got the right pig by the ear. I suppose the paper I put in that chap's eyes has blinded him a bit and he can't see clear yet. That's it, and they do not care to kick up a shine by collaring the wrong man in a respectable place like this. Stand so as to keep between me and those other people present, and whilst I try to work out a plan to fix them. Do you see any way yourself?"

"No, confound it! However uncertain they may be they don't take their eyes off us, and I can't see how to go on of this business by breaking through."

"No good that," muttered Ned. "Look at the crowd."

The evening frequenters of the place were now dropping in, and it was getting pretty full.

"I have it," said Ned, suddenly looking round.

The bar-room was oblong in shape and the only door giving access to it was situated in the centre of one of the longer sides.

It was by this door the police had taken up their position.
CHAPTER CXLIII.

N E D K E L L Y .

Run to Earth.

Kelly's escape had been effected in the simplest manner possible. The gas had been turned off purposely by Kate, in accordance with his whispered order.

No sooner was the room plunged into darkness than he seized Knatchbull by the arm and led him in the direction of the window, which, in consequence of the prevailing heat, was nearly always left open.

Through this aperture the two felons made their escape.

Both were active men, and it was only the effort of a moment to jump through the open window, a mode of egress they had both measured for some minutes before they availed themselves of such a means of escape.

"I'm hanged if it isn't quite providential! such a chance!" grumbled Kelly.

"You're lost in such a limited sphere, Kelly; your resources are marvellous. You are the Napoleon of future, D—me, but I almost respect you, my boy," said Knatchbull.

Kelly knew nothing about the great emperor, but felt his friend was paying him some compliment or other.

A cab was waiting in the side-street in readiness. Ned and his companion jumped in, and, long before the face of their absence had been ascertained, were driven out of sight of the hotel.

Dismissing the cab when they had gone some distance, and watching until it had driven off, Kelly and his friend separated.

The former, ignorant of the visit that had been paid to his domicile in the morning, and looking on his recognition by the Jew as a mere accident, resolved to return to his lodgings.

Walking rapidly and quietly along the road, he approached the widow's house.

Unfastening the gate, he entered the garden.

Everything seemed quiet, and he judged that, as usual, his landlady had retired to bed at an early hour.

He took the key with which he was provided from his pocket, and prepared to open the door.

He little thought that every movement was watched.

The landlady had told them that when Ned went to Sydney and stayed beyond a certain time he very seldom returned till late.

Accordingly at dusk they installed themselves in a room on the ground-floor in the front of the house, with a window looking on to the garden.

They would thus be able to discern his approach, and to hold themselves in readiness to seize him the moment he entered the house.

It was a bright moonlight night, with only a few floating clouds; and, as Ned came up the garden, he was plainly visible to the two watchers.

They saw him pause before the door, and at once stole from the window and placed themselves at the door of the room which opened into the passage.

Their idea was to throw themselves on to him directly he had entered and closed the outer door behind him.

Just as Ned was about to put the key into the door a sound fell on his ear.

It was the neigh of a horse.

And coming from the rear of the house, too.

The events of the evening had roused his suspicions until he felt the most trivial event had a meaning.

He knew the widow had no horses.

What then, was the meaning of the neigh he had heard, and which in reality came from one of the troopers' horses temporarily stabled in the woodshed at the back of the premises?

Instead of putting the key in the lock he turned away, and moved off in the direction of the gate, intending to proceed to the rear of the house and investigate the source of the noise that had startled him.

Hearing his retreating footsteps, the troopers judged that he had in some way learned their presence.

Throwing open the door they darted out.

At the sound of the opening door Ned turned his head.

He recognised the uniforms at once.
Wrestling to the gate, he sprang out and darted down the road.

He turned to the left towards the town.

Without tumbling themselves about their horses, the troopers dashed after him on foot.

In the moonlight he was clearly visible. Ned was a splendid runner, and had no fear of being unable to distance his pursuers.

However, they proved better goers than he anticipated; and after a chase of about half a mile he found that, although he was gaining on them at every stride, they still kept up their pursuit.

He was preparing for a final spurt, prior to quitting the road and taking shelter to the right or left, when the noise of horses’ hoofs approaching from Sydney caught his ear and caused him to pause.

A party of horsemen were evidently coming forward in such a way as to cut off his advance.

He could plainly discern the peculiar clank and jingle produced by a trooper’s accoutrements.

The new-comers evidently belonged to the police as well.

Thus taken, as it were, between two fires, there was nothing to do but to quit the road and try and throw the pursuers off the scent.

A faint hail from behind showed that during the minute or two he had paused had enabled them to gain on him, and that they, too, heard the approaching horsemen, who were drawing nearer every moment.

Dashing at the fence to his right, he caught the bough of a large tree that projected over the road, and by its aid swung himself over.

In doing so, he was throwing himself into the very jaws of the lion.

Kenneth Rothsay was in the house, and there were several police about.

One of the two men left with the horses galloped along the road to the front of the house, and shouted to put them on the alert.

With Kenneth at their head, they turned out.

Ned, crashing through the belt of ornamental trees and shrubs that bordered Mr. Fielding’s garden, became aware of an unusual animation at the house.

Lights were flitting about from room to room, and soon Kenneth and his men began to search, spreading themselves out, so that it would be impossible for anyone to pass through their line.

Kelly found himself in a very ticklish position.

The party in his rear were getting nearer every minute, and to advance would be to fall into the hands of Kenneth and his men.

Flinging himself flat, he crawled over an open space, and gained a thick clump of trees and shrubs on the edge of the lawn and scaled a tree.

The two parties now united, and an active search began in all parts of the garden.

Glancing from his post of elevation across the lawn, towards the verandah, Ned noticed a female figure standing by an open window.

Towards the verandah. Ned noticed a female figure standing by an open window.

She heard it and looked up.

Ned pushed aside the branches.

She could not make him out, but she could discern a human figure in the tree, and, guessing whom it was, urged him to approach.

He was just about to comply, when suddenly a trooper, named Gaskell, appeared round the corner of the house.

For a few moments he stood as though uncertain which way to go.

Then, as though he had made up his mind to remain where he was, as a sentry, he took up his position on the lawn.

The girl drew back at once into the house without noticing her.

"Curse him," thought Ned, "is he going to stay there all night?"

The man kept pacing up and down, and casting keen glances around him, as though he thought it likely the fugitive would cross the open space.

He walked backwards and forwards, as on his beat, from the house to the edge of the lawn.

Every time he slightly lengthened his promenade and at last, it extended to the clump of trees amongst which the bushranger was concealed.

The length he passed on the end of one of these tramps, with his back to the trees.

At that moment a slight rustling sound in the tree behind him caught his ear.

He was on the point of turning round to discover its source, when all at once it seemed to him that a house had fallen on the top of him, and he dropped forward on his face perfectly senseless.

Ned had sprang from his perch, and alighted on the top of him, almost breaking his neck.

Satisfied of the trooper's insensibility, the bushranger darted across the lawn to the house.

Jesus met him at the window.

"I'm here," she whispered, "they are all at the back of the house, and no one will see you. Quick, take off your boots," she continued, as he entered the room.

Ned complied, and the girl led him cautiously upstairs to her bedroom.

"I am going to leave you here, and lock the door on the outside," she said, when about to quit him.

"What?" he cried, hoarsely, catching her by the arm.

"It is the best plan," she answered, "for then, if they search the house, they will never dream you are concealed here. Later on, I will join you, and arrange for your escape."

When the stunned trooper was discovered no further pursuit was needed that the fugitive was, or had been, close at hand.

But Gaskell could not tell in what direction Ned had gone, and the turf had not taken the imprint of his footsteps.

It was resolved to search the house, though Jess, like all the other inmates, vowed she had neither seen nor heard anyone.

As there was no reason to suspect her she was believed.

A search, however, took place, and in his place of concealment Ned heard the tramp of footsteps ascending the stairs.

He thrust his hand in his pocket to feel for the revolver that since his struggle with Mendez had never quitted him for a moment.

To his horror it was missing.

In his mad race through the timber he had lost it.

The footstaps paused outside the door, and the perspiration started from his forehead as he drew himself up prepared to dart out the moment the door opened.

"To his horror it was missing."
CHAPTER CXLIV.
THUNDER AND LIGHTNING.

NED, as the time went by, began to grow bitterly weary. He had every confidence in Jess's devotion, but spite of this doubts would steal across his mind.

He kept wondering what had become of her, and why she had not returned.

The minutes went by like hours as he was occupied with these reflections, and the suspense began to grow intolerable.

A clock in the basement of the house struck midnight, and each stroke seemed to reverberate dolorously in his breast.

Almost immediately after, and, as if responding to the signal, a low muttered grumbling sound was heard in the distance, and a flash of pale light lit up the darkness of the room for about a second.

Then all again was dark and silent.

The flash of lightning, and the distant murmuring were the forerunners of a storm on the point of bursting forth.

A sudden hope rose in Ned's breast, and he started to his feet.

"Thunder and lightning!" he muttered, "nothing could serve me better. The one will show me the way, and the other drown the noise I shall make in getting off."

If the girl is only square, all is as right as a trivet. I wish she'd come. I've a good mind if she's not here in another quarter of an hour to risk it alone."

About ten minutes elapsed.

At the end of this time, Ned, whose ears were on the alert, caught the noise of approaching footsteps on the landing outside the door.

"I tell you it's a thing to be thought of, but it's as well to be prepared," and grasping a chair he held it in readiness to hurl at the intruder.

He heard the door open almost noiselessly and the dazzling light of another flash showed him a female figure standing on the threshold.

It was Jess.

She carried no light, and next instant darkness resumed its sway.

Where are you, Ned?" she asked, in an almost inaudible whisper.

"Here," he growled.

Closing the door behind her, she advanced on tiptoe in the direction of his voice.

Another flash of lightning revealed that her hair was rather more disordered than it ought to have been, that her bosom was rather more disordered than it ought to have been, and that her breast.

The sentinels--"

"The devil you have? Come, tell me all that has happened.

"Yes, we have a whole lot of the police here."

"The sentinels?"

"Yes, we have a whole lot of the police here."

"The devil you have? Come, tell me all that has happened."

"Yes," he replied, as a flash of lightning showed him a female figure standing on the threshold.

She listened to their compliments, laughed at their jokes, and did not show too much anger when an arm was slid round her waist and a mustached lip pressed to her cheek.

"Look here, I can't do it before the cook, but as soon as she goes up to bed I'll bring you a bottle of whisky."

"This was carried out.

The cook went up first, Jess saying she would follow her in a minute, but, instead of doing so, she produced another bottle and sat down by Ned, and the bushranger, despite the thunder and lightning continued, and were coming nearer and nearer, though no man had fallen.

Ned opened the window with every possible precaution to prevent a sound being heard.

Putting his head carefully out, he could distinguish the top of the verandah that ran round the house.

"Look at the stable," he asked.

"That building to the left," was the answer.

"Let's go there."

Ned stooped down and took off his boots, and the pair crept quietly into the room she had spoken of.

The thunder and lightning continued, and were coming nearer and nearer, though no man had fallen.

Ned opened the window with every possible precaution to prevent a sound being heard.

Putting his head carefully out, he could distinguish the top of the verandah that ran round the house. "Are all the horses in it?" he asked, drawing in his head.

"Yes."

"Is there a fence all round the garden?"

"Yes."

"Any way out except through the gate going on to the road?"

"Yes."

"No. Stop a bit; there is a gap in the further corner, beyond the stable there, it is only stopped up by bushes."

"Can a horse clear them?"

"Marco Polo could," said the girl, with a remembrance of Ned's former escape freshly before her.

"Yes, but I haven't got Marco under my hand just now," remarked the bushranger, grimly.

He looked up at the sky as he spoke.

The night was a strange one.

One half the heavens displayed a dome of burnished silver, studded with innumerable stars.

But across the other an iekj veil, the edge of which was..."
CHAPTER CXLV.

PLAYING 'POSSUM.

NED KELLY.

As sharply defined as that of a knife, was being slowly drawn.

From time to time a flash of dazzling light leapt forth from its blackness.

"We shall have it in bucketsful in three minutes," said Ned, "and then I'll try for it.

At that moment they heard the sound of steps below.

The sergeant having visited his sentry in the front of the house, had come to look after the one entrusted with the guard of the rear.

They heard the man's challenge, and the officer's response, which was almost drowned by another clap of thunder.

"It's going to be a rough night," said the sentry, who happened to be Gaskell, the trooper, whose neck Ned had almost broken.

"Yes," was the answer, "no chance of your falling asleep with that row going on overhead.

"Going to sleep," growled the other; "every blessed bone in my carcass is aching too much for there to be any chance of that. If I could only lay on my hands on the velvet pelt, I'd give you something to remember your little game of leapfrog by.

"Well, keep a sharp lookout, for there may be something in the captain's idea that he is hiding hereabouts. Fire at once, without challenging, if you see anything suspicious. I have brought you out a nip of whisky in the bottom of this bottle; it'll serve to keep the damp out if the rain comes down." Another dazing flash of light and crash of thunder followed.

The next moment, as if this had been the signal, a blinding cataract of rain descended.

The sergeant darted into the house, and directly he had gone the soldier incontinent took shelter under the verandah, on the roof of which the rain was beating with a noise of cataract.

Ned put his arms round Jess, and, hugging her close, pressed a dozen kisses on her willing lips.

Then he swung himself out through the window.

His feet touched the roof of the verandah.

There was another crash of thunder, and profitably by this, he let go.

The tremendous noise of the storm drowned the noise he made.

For a moment he lay flat and motionless on the roof, which slipped slightly, but not enough to render his position a very difficult one.

Then slowly he began to edge himself inch by inch towards the corner of the house.

Crawling like some gigantic lizard, with the rain descending like a cataract from the eaves above him, on his back, he made his way along.

The rain, washing sound of his progress was drowned by the torrent of falling water beating on the roof of the verandah like a succession of rapid blows from a gigantic drumstick.

Even to the sentry beneath its shelter, the sounds were indistinguishable.

At length Ned reached the corner.

The verandah continued along the side of the house, and he made his way till he had arrived at the corner of that portion of it running along the side.

He paused.

"It's pretty well certain," he reflected, "that the sentry in front here has followed the example of the sentry at the back, and has taken shelter under the verandah. Now if the one is at the front and two other at the back, neither can see me if I jump down from the centre of this part of the verandah. The only danger will be from the lightning, as I make my way to the stable."

He watched and waited.

Another flash of lightning lit up the scene.

Another clap of thunder followed.

Profiting by the noise of this, Ned slipped down one of the pillars of the verandah.

But instead of making his way at once to the stable, he flung himself flat on to the ground amongst the climbing plants at the base of the pillar, and rolled himself close up to the supports of the wooden flooring.

It was as well he did so.

The tramp of feet sounded on the floor, and the sentry in the front of the house hailed his comrade.

"Gaskell!"

"Yes," was the answer.

"Did you hear anything just then?"

"No, only the thunder.

"I don't know, but it seemed to me I heard something on this side of the house. Keep a sharp lookout for the next flash."

At the next flash the two men strained their eyes.

It revealed to them the garden with its drenched trees and roofable discernible through the falling sheets of rain.

"All right," said Gaskell, "I'll go round and have a look at the other side."

As soon as he heard them move off Ned darted noiselessly over the saturated earth in the direction of the stable.

The door was on the latch, and, unfastening it, he darted in and closed it behind him.

Upwards of half-a-dozen horses were in the stalls, and, to his great joy, the majority were saddled.

It was impossible in the darkness to make anything like a choice.

He unfasted the first that came under his hand from the manger, slipped the bit into its mouth, tightened the girths, and led it to the door.

Then waiting for the next flash, he threw open the door at the moment the interval of darkness commenced, led out the horse, jumped into the saddle, and darted off in the direction of the gap in the fence of which Jess had spoken.

The sound of the rain drowned the noise of the horse's hoofs.

The two sentries, after all, however, were not keeping a bad lookout.

Passing back and front along the verandah, they halted every time the lightning flashed, in order to glance around them.

Glancing in the direction of the stable, Gaskell fancied he could distinguish that the door was open.

Doubting for a moment the evidence of his senses, he resolved to make sure, and awaited with anxiety the next flash.

There could be no doubt of it.

The stable-door was open.

To jump from the balcony, and to tear across the garden to the stable was the work of a moment.

In less than that he verified the fact that one of the horses was missing.

Stepping to the stable-door, he fired his carbine into the air and shouted to his comrade, who at once began to thunder at the door of the house.

Before five minutes had elapsed the troopers had all turned out and had mounted in hot haste.

By the light of a stable-lantern Ned's tracks were plainly discernible, and remembering the opening in the fence, they headed in that direction, since it was impossible that he could have passed out of the front gate unobserved.

Jess, who had been observing the whole affair from the lumber-room window, darted back into her bedroom directly the alarm was given, and presently emerged, half-dressed, as though aroused from sleep.

"I don't think they'll catch him, considering he has a fair five minutes' start on a night like this," she murmured to herself.

CHAPTER CXLVI.

PLAYING 'POSSUM.

Ned's start was, however, in reality, less than either the girl or his pursuers imagined.
He was, even in a country of daring riders, acknowledged by one and all to be one of the finest horsemen that ever encroached a saddle.

Confident in his skill, he urged his horse straight at the gap in the fence, feeling certain that he could lift the beast over the barricade of thorns and brushwood with which it was blocked.

The horse, however, on which he had laid hands, though a powerful beast, was a heavily-built, lumbering kind of animal, and had not recovered from the fatigue of the three preceding days.

Twice he refused the jump, and when the third time Ned, gripping his ribs like a vice and taking well hold of his head, rammed him at the obstacle, he rose, it is true, but only to jump short and come floundering down amongst the brushwood just as Gaskell's carbine rang out.

There was nothing for the bushranger to do but to spring from the saddle and clear a passage for the struggling animal, which took some time.

As the breach was cleared, and Ned, to whom every sound from the house in his rear acted as a spur, sprang into the saddle again with the hope that he would be able to distance his pursuers.

The road from Sydney lay before him, and along this he galloped furiously, intending to strike off across country as soon as he got well into the open, with no chance of finding his career suddenly checked by a fence or other encumbrance.

But, to his horror, he found himself unable to get any speed like a decent rate of speed out of the exhausted and lumbering animal he had so fdred.

In vain, in the absence of spurs, he touched up the brute with his pocket-knife.

The poor beast did its best, but it was evident that it could not long continue even at the pace he was then giving it out of it.

"Oh for an hour of Mano's Polo!" thought Ned, "to ride clear away from those crawlers," as, on arriving at the summit of a somewhat steep ascent, he became aware that the troopers were following closely on his track.

The men had slackened speed, though the lightning still continued, and a gust of wind carried the sound of their approach to him almost at every stride.

They uttered a simultaneous cry of triumph, which gnawed at the heart of the trooper.

"Now I've got him!"

"I've got you at last, my lad!" he growled, unsheathing his sabre.

The bushranger glanced back.

The case seemed hopeless.

He began to wonder why Gaskell did not open fire on him at once.

"It looks like a case of all up," he thought; "but at any rate they shall only get my carcass.

And he resolved to fight too hot and wild like a wild beast until they killed him rather than surrender.

Suddenly his horse, winded and urged beyond its strength, fell under him so suddenly that it almost seemed as though one of the flashes of lightning that from time to time darted from the heavens had stricken it to the earth.

As it fell, Ned disengaged his feet from the stirrups, and, by a desperate effort, succeeded in preventing himself from being shot over the animal's head.

Nevertheless he was thrown forward in the saddle.

It happened that the horse on which the bushranger had laid his hands was no other than that of the trooper.

Ned was a man of quick resolutions and fertile in resource.

He at once hit on a plan which promised to ensure his escape.

He had left his pistols in the holster, and had not found time to reload the carbine with which he had given the alarm.

Ned was a man of quick resolutions and fertile in resource.

He was at once hit on a plan which promised to ensure his escape.

It was "playing possum.

Taking a pistol in each hand, he disengaged himself from the horse and threw himself flat on his back, beside the animal, which seemed unable or unwilling to rise.

Stretched thus upon the ground after a violent fall he appeared dead or stunned, and Gaskell, coming up at full gallop, did not doubt this for a moment, but exclaimed to himself with gloar—

"Now I've got him!"

The trooper reined in his horse.

Springing to the ground, he slipped his left arm through
NED KELLY.

loway's Pills and Ointment,' with which the whole Australian Continent has been so lavishly besprinkled, the same white police-bill, with its terribly signifiant lines, 'Murder! £10,000 Reward.'

And below a full description of himself.

"This is getting altogether too boiling," he muttered, and instinctively urged on his jaded horse.

Steering by the sun that had just risen, he continued to ride away from Sydney.

At length he caught sight of a column of smoke rising behind some trees, and pushed on cautiously in its direction.

He soon came in sight of a shepherd's hut.

Hailing for a moment, he proceeded to reflect whether it would be safe to advance, since, with the exception of the undischarged pistol, he was without means of defence.

He bid them therefore, to be cautious, lest he should fall into the company of foes.

Watching the hut, he noticed a man come to the door, shake a rug, and then retire.

He came to the conclusion that this was the hut-keeper, and that the shepherd had probably already started to the ranges with his sheep.

After waiting a little longer, he resolved at all hazards, to put this surmise to the test, and pursued his way to the little dwelling.

He drew near the same man that he had seen before, a sullen-looking, beastly-browed fellow of about thirty, with a face presenting a compound of immobility and cunning, again come to the door with a pale in his hand.

He stepped across the threshold and advanced some steps, and then, suddenly catching sight of Ned—who, upon approaching as a walking pace he had not heard, on account of the softness of the saturated turf—he started back, with a mingled look of surprise and terror.

"Hello! mate," he cried, "whose place is this?"

"Mr. Morley's," was the answer, in a sullen tone.

"How far am I from Sydney?"

"Close on thirty miles.

"Can you give me some grub, I suppose?" said Ned, dismounting, and feeling sure of that hospitality never refused to the wayfarer in the colonies.

The man continued to stare at him, and muttered some unintelligible answer.

"Jolly and hungry, mate!" cried Ned, his suspicions rapidly aroused by the man's manner, "what the devil makes you stare at me like that, man? Do you know me, oh?"

The fellow looked more confused than ever.

"That blood," he muttered.

"What blood?" thundered Ned, who had forgotten that, when he had shot Gaskell, the blood of his victim had spurted all over him.

"Yes. Just give me a swig of something to clear my throat—for I am as dry as a lime-kiln—and I'll tell you all about it."

The curiosity of the other was excited by this, and he stepped into the hut, followed by Ned, to whom he at once handed a pannikin of tea.

The bushranger would have preferred something
stronger, but he swallowed it gratefully, being parched
and exhausted.

"I suppose you wouldn't be sorry to get some of
the blood off your face? You don't seem to know it, but it
covers you like a mask," said the hut-keeper.

"All right. Get me a bucket of water, mate, and I'll
soon get rid of it. Only I'll put my beast to rights first,"
answered Ned.

He passed out of the hut, followed by the hut-keeper
—who continued to eye him with something like sus­
picion—and proceeded to rub down his horse, in which
occupation the other lent him a hand with seeming
wilfulness.

"It's a decent beast you've got there," said the hut-
keeper.

"Yes," replied Kelly.

"But you must have taken something out of him last
night to bring him into this state," continued the hut-
keeper, critically examining the animal, whose hair was
matted with sweat, and its legs and belly caked with hal-
dried mud.

"I just think I did," responded Kelly, "considering I
had to ride for my life."

"Ah! How was that?"

"I was bound for Sydney, and being in a bit of a hur-
y I pushed on through the night, thinking to reach a
station I know, where I could get a fresh horse. I never
thought of any dangers, when all at once in the darkness
two fellows popped out of the bush and snatched the
bridle. There was a bit of a scuffle, and one of them pulled
trigger at me, but, luckily, the cap had, I suppose,
fallen off, and his pistol did not go off. However, they
pulled me out of the saddle and got me down. One
had got his knot on me, and the other was trying to
check my horse from bolting when I draw a pistol and
shot the fellow holding me. He fell on me and deluged
his teeth and fairly bolted, and by the time I pulled him
there might be, I was off like a shot."

"And a blessed fine row I got into with my mates when
they found there was no damper, and with the boss, who
stuck out that I ought to have kept the things in my
foot. I'd have liked to have seen him risking his blessed
neck for the sake of a few pounds of mouldy old flour."

And the hut-keeper pulled savagely at his pipe.

"A tall, squint-eyed fellow, did you say he was?" en-
quired Ned.

"Yes."

"Sandy beard?"

"Yes. Do you know him?"

"No; but it seems to me, as well as I could make out
by the lightning, that the chap I sent to kingdom come
last night was just about such another."

"And a very good job if it was," crowed the hut-
keeper, who all through the meal had been eyeing Ned
with an attention that the latter could not help feeling
uneasy about.

"I suppose," he said, "that since it is known Kelly's
gang are about here, the police are on the alert after
them?"

"Oh, the police are a pack of asses. No one cares a
crap about them; they'll never do any good," said the hut-
keeper, who probably at some period of his career had
come into disgraceful connection with the authorities in
question.

"But a lot of the leading squatters have banded
together to hunt the fellows out of the district, and they'll
find it very difficult work trying to get away from
men who know every inch of the country."

"Just so," said Ned.

"I only wish I could catch sight of the chap who bona
fide my flour," continued the hut-keeper. "I'd bowl him
over pretty quick. And as he spoke he glanced at a gun
in one corner of the hut.

Then he turned his attention again on his guest, and
continued his examination of his features.

Ned, having finished his repast, rose.

"Look here, mate," he said; "my name is George
Dawes, and I've got a little station up the Macquarie. If
you ever are that way I won't forget the turn you've done
me; but in case you don't, here's something for your
trouble."

And he handed him a sovereign.

This very act of liberality served to confirm the other's
suspicion.

A man who paid so high a price for an act of hospitality
that would have been amply repaid by the gift of a fig of
tobacco must be a queer customer.

As Ned got into the saddle and was about to ride off,
the hut-keeper darted back into the hut, muttering—

"I can't tell him. I can't be mistaken. But if it is
he'll land him. The reward is too good to be lost. Ten
thousand pounds! Oh, 1'd be a swell for life; have my
own shay, and lush for a dozen."

When he stepped outside his door again, his gun was
in his hand.
He cursed the luck that deprived him of a horse at the moment when one was needed.

It was indeed necessary that he should pace as great a distance between himself and the district in which he now found himself as soon as possible.

The hut-keeper had told him that the depredations of men whom, he had no doubt, belonged to his band had caused the country-side against them, and that, probably, they would be tracked like wild beasts.

And now the slaughter of the hut-keeper would inevitably lead to this result.

It was necessary to get away at all cost, since, if the hut-keeper were only wounded he could put the shepherds on the scent when they returned to hut; and, even if he were dead, there would be efforts made to track his murderer as soon as the body was discovered.

Ned determined to try to steal a horse from the next station he came across.

He took from the holsters of the saddle the pistols, now useless, since he had no means of re-loading them, and thrust them into a belt which he fashioned from the stirrup-leathers.

He was in hopes of coming across someone who would supply him with ammunition.

After glancing round to make certain that there were as yet no signs of pursuit, he plunged into the bush.

For two hours he made his way onwards, working in the direction of a range of hills he could perceive in the distance.

At length he reached the foot of the first slope, which he began to ascend, after first bathing his face and hands in a little stream that trickled at its base.

His legs seemed at times ready to give way under him, and the inequalities of the ascent caused him fror, time to time to stop and stagger like a drunken man.

For two hours he had no signs of pursuit, he lay motionless, and the terrible danger that kept spurring him on every moment to fresh exertions, fatigue and want of sleep had begun to tell upon his iron frame.

His legs seemed at times ready to give way under him, and the inequalities of the ascent caused him fror, time to time to stop and stagger like a drunken man.

A dozen times he was on the point of throwing himself down and taking the rest of which he was in such sore need.

(To be continued.)

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**CHAPTER CXLVII. —Continued.**

"No," he would mutter, resolutely trying to shake off the overpowering effects of fatigue, "I'll go on. I'll go on. I'll find a safe landing-place to lie in till nightfall!"

He made his way up the slope, though each moment his progress seemed more difficult.

His head swam, there was a ringing in his ears, and from time to time a mist passed before his eyes, and veiled the rocks and crags that he kept scanning as he advanced in the hope of discovering some hiding-place.

"There must be some hole about here that I can creep into, and the stones luckily will show no trace of my passage," he thought.

Twice his legs failed him altogether, and he fell heavily, but, game to the end, he rose again and staggered onward.

At length his expectations were realised.

On the right, beneath a projecting spur of rock, he caught sight of what appeared to be the entrance of a cave, partly veiled by brushwood.

He made his way to it with some difficulty, across the broken ground.

The opening was low and narrow, but, after crawling through it, he found himself in a kind of cave, some ten or twelve feet deep, and almost high enough for him to stand upright.

It was perfectly dry, the floor being of gravel, on which evidently fallen at some remote period from the summit.

Ned dragged himself into the cave, and, moving some of the stones, constructed a rude barricade just within the entrance.

The precaution taken, he stretched himself at full length on the gravel, and, despite the hardness of his couch, was soon fast asleep.

He was the heavy slumber of exhaustion, which a cannon-shot will hardly break.

When he awoke he was in utter darkness.

He moved to the mouth of the cave, and, after cautiously demolishing his barricade, called forth.

"Who's there?" he asked.

He moved, to the mouth of the cave, and, after cautiously demolishing his barricade, called forth.

Night had come on, clear and starlit, and he at once turned to the entrance of the Southern cross, in order to steer his way by this Australian substitute for the Polar star.

Ned had recovered from his fatigue, but he felt fearfully hungry.

"Carve all," he wished he'd got a bit of 'bacca, even," he thought.

He continued to make his way up the slope, which was evidently one of the bottom spurs of the range of hills.

The ascent became every moment more difficult in the darkness as the hours went on.

Several times he nearly missed his footing, and more than once was really puzzled as to how he should advance.

At length, after missing his footing and rolling down a steep incline, he lay upon what, as far as he could make out in the darkness, had some resemblance to a beaten track.

Twice his legs failed him, but, game to the end, he rose again and staggered onward.

Suddenly a new incident caused Ned to forget at once the difficulties of the route and the hunger that had assailed him.

"Heard about ten paces off the sound which those accustomed to know me?"

It was the click of a gun-lock.

The next moment a tall figure stepped from behind a tree growing at the side of the path, and, levelling a gun, exclaimed in a hoarse voice—

"Half, or I fire!"

Ned's first thought was that he was in the presence of the men engaged in hunting out his followers.

"If there is a gang, luck's against me," he thought; "but if there's only one I'll try to funk the beggar."

And pulling one of his empty pistols from his belt, he cooled and levelled it with the speed of thought, shooting as he did so—

"Stow that, Drop your gun or you are a dead man, you blasted bushranger.""

"Hi! hillo! stop, don't fire!" yelled the stranger, as soon as Ned had spoken.

"Drop your gun before I count three, or I'll drop you," said Kelly, advancing in order, if possible, to grapple with his foe before the latter was aware of his intention.

"All right, Ned, don't be in such a blasted hurry," replied the other, complying with the order. "Don't you know me?"

"What! Zeph?" exclaimed Ned.

"Yes, Ned, I and Salmon Roe are here; and, what I suppose will gladden your heart to know, we've got Marco Polo all right at hand."

"Yes," replied Ned, "and a pretty couple of fools you and Salmon Roe have been making of yourselves."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm not always making of myself standing order only to take from those who could afford it, and never to meddle with a poor man, eh?"

"Yes."

"Isn't that the only way to have friends and spies amongst all the hut-keepers and the shepherds and the like, so that one may be sure of help and information as to what the police are up to?"

"Yes," replied the other with a downcast air, for he began to see what Ned was driving at.

"Well, then, what do you mean by plundering such a poor man? What the devil put you up to such a mean trick as to rob a poor, honest, hard-working hut-keeper of a few mouthfuls of victuals?"

Ned thundered out this moral lesson, as he considered it, in the most impressive fashion.

Zeph continued to look downcast, and really began to feel ashamed.

Besides, he was tremendously puzzled as to how Ned had become acquainted in such an accurate fashion with his malpractices.

If he had only known that Kelly had just put a bullet into the "poor, honest, hard-working hut-keeper"’s back, he might have been tempted to enquire whether robbing a man did him more harm than shooting him.

"Come," continued Ned, "I don't want to cut up rough
with such an old pot, but you must see that such a game can only end in rousing the whole country against us. What other devil's tricks have you been up to since we parted?"

"Why, the fact is that the country is pretty well roused against us as it is. Those cursed hills with the reward have set men's mouths watering, and neither Salmon Roe nor myself has dared to go into a hut or approach a station, lest we should be mistaken for you and shot down off-hand, or else collared as belonging to your gang."

"Yes," said Ned, meditatively, "you're right. Things are getting too hot in this quarter. I think we had better knock off work altogether for a spell and lie low, and close the harring-poud."

Whilst they had been speaking, Zeph had been piloting his captain across the tolerably smooth track leading almost parallel to that by which he had ascended the hill. It ended in a small natural basin almost entirely filled with trees.

Through their trunks the glow of a fire was discernible, but so steep were the sides of the hollow and so remote its situation, that the flames could only have been sighted by someone coming along the path they were traversing.

A figure hanging beside the fire started up at their approach and raised a gun.

"It was Salmon Roe."

A whistle from Zeph assured him that they were friends approaching, and a minute later he was welcoming Ned.

A huge frying-pan was soon brought into requisition, and chops, out from the carcase of a sheep hanging to the bough of a tree, were fried for supper.

"Yes, and bring the armour, and give me some powder and bullets. You've raised such a hornets' nest about us that we may have to bolt at any moment."

After examining his horse, Ned loaded the pistols of the departed.

"I feel a little more able to take my own part than I did half-an-hour ago," he remarked, "when I tried to bully you with an empty pistol."

"You'll never have such another chance of getting rid of me, as you had then," and he laughed grimly.

Though he said this as if in jest he was not exactly easy in his mind, remembering the treachery of former comrades.

"Look here, boys," he said, after a pause, "I've got a plan that I think we had better act on.

"Well," said Zeph, "if it's true, I say we'll do it."

"Yes, and bring the armour, and give me some powder and bullets. You've raised such a hornets' nest about us that we may have to bolt at any moment."

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Though he said this as if in jest he was not exactly easy in his mind, remembering the treachery of former comrades.
The dog was again brought into requisition, and after some trouble was put on Ned's track. Fortunately no one else had passed that way, and the animal's length made but what was required of him, went on steadily on the trail. Kenneth followed close at hand. At length the track led up into the hills, and the pursuers, reaching the foot of the slope, Ned had ascended, were obliged to abandon their horses. They scrambled after the dog on foot, and Kenneth, in his eagerness, far outstripped the remainder. Kenneth saw the dog dart with a growl into a hole beneath a projecting spur of rock. Before he could follow it across the broken ground, a figure darted from the mouth of the cave, and, catching sight of the young chief of the police, turned and fled upwards along a narrow and broken path. It was Ned, whose movements had been rude disturbed by the sudden arrest of the dog, which had rushed into the cave when following the track taken by the bushranger the day before. On seeing it, he guessed the purpose to which it had been put. As he knew how close the pursuers were at hand, he refrained from firing, lest he should guide them to the report, and, having a stone, dashed it down on to the head of the unfortunate animal. Then, selecting his gun, he rushed out as described. Kenneth started in hot pursuit, and the remainder of the party on reaching the spot found their leader had disappeared.

Their only guide as to the direction which he had taken was a distant shout, evidently given to guide them in the now thickening gloom. Following in the direction from which this proceeded, they advanced some way at a slow rate, when suddenly the report of a gun at a considerable distance ahead inspired them to fresh exertions.

Meanwhile Kenneth had kept on in hot pursuit of Ned. Young, active, agile, and accustomed in his youth to scramble over the hills and crags of Scotland, the chief of the police was perhaps a better mountaineer than the bushranger. As a result of training they were both in very fair condition for the sea voyage and the days since spent in the saddle by Kenneth had completely recovered him from the effects of his London life of frivolous dissipation.

But Ned knew he was running for life, and this made him put forth a pace that Kenneth had all his work cut out to equal. Gradually, however, the bulk of the bushranger began to tell, and he began to find his progress more difficult as the ascent grew steeper. The leap from rock to rock jarred his mighty frame. Bitterly he longed for Marco Polo, and cursed the luck that had led him to separate himself from his gallant steed. He saw, however, one chance.

It was a rapidly getting dusk, and if he could only prolong the chase a little longer, he would have a very fair prospect of getting off in the darkness, when pursuit amongst the hills would be quite out of the question. He would have had no hesitation in stopping and grappling his pursuer, who would have been almost a child in the encounter hands, but he judged the duration of a struggle would have afforded his pursuers time to arrive on the scene, and by numbers overpower him. From time to time he glanced back, and his hopes revolved at seeing only one pursuer. He wondered why Kenneth did not fire, but the latter had resolved not to do so if he could possibly avoid it, being desirous at all hazards to take Ned alive. The track the two were now pursuing led between two precipitous walls of limestone.

A short distance ahead it turned abruptly to the right.
adversary with one leg and make a step outwards with the other, so that the two foes came heavily to the ground, as he expected.

Before either could secure any further advantage there was a shout, and the remainder of the pursuers, rushing into the arena, threw themselves like a living avalanche upon the prostrate form of the bushranger. Ned fought desperately, writhing and plunging like a snared beast, and striking out with fists and feet indiscriminately at his foes.

Twice he almost gained his feet, but only to be borne down again by weight of numbers.

With one hand he managed to seize one of his assailants by the throat, and had almost choked him into insensibility before a violent blow on the head from the butt of a pistol forced him to relax his grip as he fell back half-stunned.

Before he could recover himself a pair of handcuffs were slipped on to his wrists and his elbows pinioned behind him with a carbine-sling.

A cord was then attached to his ankles, so that he could not step more than a certain distance at a time. "You had better put a bullet through me at once," he growled, when he had realized the impossibility of any further resistance.

"Not a bit of it," answered Kenneth, wiping his forehead, for he was almost as exhausted as his antagonist, "I prefer to take you alive to Sydney, and let the authorities settle your fate."

Ned relapsed into sullen silence, and, refusing to walk, was half-dragged, half-carried to the spot where the former lodge of the Bushrangers was half demolished by the police, and the troopers, with the exception of ten or a dozen mounted on horses, drew back with some feeling of disgust.

Mounted on one of these, with his legs fastened beneath his body, and escorted by Kenneth and the troopers, he was conveyed to Sydney, and, after a brief examination before a magistrate, committed to prison to await his trial.

CHAPTER CXLIX.

HOST WITH HIS OWN RETARD.

On the very day that Ned was committed for trial "Kit the Cruiser" put into Sydney.

On learning the position of his brother he resolved to leave no stone unturned to help him, and, being unknown, his efforts would not challenge attention.

The first thing he did was to hasten to the hotel where Kate was employed as barmaid.

From her he learned the full details of Ned's capture, and also that his condemnation to death would be the certain result of a trial.

"We must get him out of this fix somehow," ho said to Kate, "but I'm hanged if I can see the way to do it just yet. Are any of his pals handy? they might put one up to a wrinkle."

"I don't think so," answered Kate, "I fancy they are all up country."

"That may be awkward if one wants a hand lent at any time. It doesn't do to trust everyone when there're such a bunching reward offered."

"Well, all that a woman can do, I will," said the barmaid, "I managed to get him off pretty cleverly a few days back, and, to Kit's great amusement, she related how she had befriended the detectives by turning out the gas."

"That's the sort of thing we must trust to. Dodgery, I not violence," said Kit, "but the first thing is to get an interview with Ned and let them know we're going to work for him."

"I expect that will be rather a difficult matter; you will have to get a magistrate's order."

The application was correct.

On Kit presenting himself at the door of the jail he was informed that under no circumstances could he be allowed an interview with Ned, unless furnished with an order signed by a magistrate and countersigned by the chief of police.

After another interview with Kate, he learned the name of the softest-hearted and most muddle-headed magistrate in Sydney.

The next day he got up in the most correct rig-out of a skipper ashore, he presented himself at the private residence of the gentleman in question.

He played his part to perfection.

He looked and acted the honest, upright British citizen utterly befogged by all shore-going customs to the life.

He drew tears from the worthy magistrate's eyes by the little picture he sketched of his feelings on hearing that his brother, whom, despite his crimes, he had never ceased to cherish, was a prisoner awaiting trial on such terrible charges.

"Many a time, sir, when I've been pacing the deck at night with the old bumpy quietly slipping through the water, I've looked up at the stars above and thought of the time when we two were lads at our mother's knee, and I've said to myself that, after all, it was as well that the poor old soul had gone shift before one of her boys should turn out so badly as my unfortunate, misguided brother."

This was pitching it very strong, but, fortunately, the magistrate was unacquainted with the details of Ned's birth and parentage, and swallowed Kit's lies one after another like oysters.

But he would not at once give the order, whereupon Kit called upon the prison "parson," a young prig, who was as fit for the reclaiming of felons' souls as for reordering the Bag of Ahab.

All his efforts would be about as successful in the one case as the other.

When Kit called, the pious pastor was reading a fast French novel, which are generally only one remove from the work of that worthy poet, Balaugh and Mrs. Beatrix in their notorious "Balls of Philosophy."

"Kit," he said, "I don't feel so strong upon the young clerical, but the golden key apparently acts as powerfully upon these confidences of the portals of Heaven as upon the "Characters" of other establishments.

Offering to subscribe £10 in gold towards the charitable fund under the control of his youthful reverence, the application received his support, and the order was eventually obtained.

Furnished with this, he proceeded to the chief police office and obtained Kenneth Rothsay's signature to the document.

Then he started for the prison.

Before applying for admission he walked round it twice, and examined the outside in detail.

At certain points he shook his head dolefully, but when he found that one side looked into a narrow and comparatively deserted lane, a smile of satisfaction crossed his features.

His survey completed, he presented himself at the entrance.

The officials, having such a desperate character as Ned under their care, were on their mettle.

Kit's order was examined and scrutinised by half-a-dozen in turn, and at length being satisfied of its genuineness permission was given for him to be taken to Ned's cell, after he had first undergone a search, lest he should have come provided with any implement to aid the prisoner in effecting his escape.

"It's lucky I did not bring the stuff I thought of," he said to himself.

The regulations there were not so strict as at some places, and though, when Kit and Ned were placed face to face, there was an iron grating between them, so that it was impossible to pass anything to the prisoner, there were no warders to listen to their conversation.

After a brief greeting, Kit said—

"Look here, Ned—we mean to get you out of this. Are there any pals in the town who can lend a hand in the job?"

"I think not. Stop a bit. Do you think a girl would be any use?"
"I don't think so, besides, there's Kate."  
"Well, if you should want one, there's a girl called Jess, at a Mr. Fielding's, whom you'll find as sharp as a needle, and as true as steel. Don't forget the name, now!"  
"All right. And now, do you know anything about this place you're in?"  
"Anything about the place?"  
"Yes; about the shape of it, the build of it, and such-like?"

Ned laughed.  
"If I'd laid every blessed brick in the old cottage with my own hands I could hardly know it better. I've talked with old lags till I know the inside of every jail in the colony as well as you do the cabin of your ship."  
"Capital! Now, on which side is the exercising-yard, east or west?"  
"To the east."  
"Just inside the high wall fronting the street?"  
"Yes."  
"Well, what is the range of buildings on the other side— the west?"  
"The infirmary."  
"Better and better. We shall fix it all right."  
"How?"  
"Just have patience a minute. As you're only committed for trial, you're allowed to bring what you like to eat?"  
"Yes."  
"Where do you get your grub from?"  
"Oh, there's a kind of a cookshop outside that serves as a canteen. But it's no use trying to send in files in loaves or any of those kind of dodges—they're certain to be smoked."  
"No fear; they won't smoke my dodge."  
"But what is it?"  
"Well, I'll tell you part of it. Let's see, to-day's Wednesday. Well, next Monday you order a roast duck—a cold one—for dinner."  
"Well?"  
"Eat the legs and wings, but don't touch the carcase. Take out the stuffing, tie it round your knee like a poultice and keep it there all night, and next day you'll be in the infirmary."  
"I begin to see."  

On Wednesday or Thursday night you'll hear an organ playing 'Garryowen' outside the walls. Half-an-hour after it stops hold yourself in readiness to slip into the infirmary window, get into the left-hand corner of the courtyard, and when a stone comes over the flap of the neck and took out the stuffing, which he placed on a plate. Thus equipped and with Jess, disguised by means of dye applied to her face and hair and equipped with a tambourine, he began to play about the streets in the vicinity of the prison, so that people might get used to his presence.

On Saturday he sent Jess out to market to buy a duck. This was duly plucked, stuffed with the sage and onions, and roasted by the girl the following day. Then taking a brown powder from a small box, evidently of Oriental manufacture, he sprinkled it over the stuffing, mixed it up thoroughly, and returned the sage and onions, thus flavoured, to its original place, and re-fastened the flap. Jess looked on in wonderment; but a few words of explanation satisfied her.

Prisoners awaiting trial were allowed to purchase food at the canteen already spoken of, or to have it sent in from their homes. In every case, however, it was subjected to a most careful examination by the authorities, and in Ned's case precautions were redoubled.

In order to break ground for Kit's plan, Kate had sent in several little delicacies for her brother, which had all been examined and found all right, and on Monday morning the duck was presented as if from her.  
"Ah! it's well to be a fine-looking fellow, and have all the girls take an interest in you," said the warder, who, like his comrades, fancied that Kate must be Ned's sweetheart and not his sister.  
"What a beautiful bird!"  
"Well, I for one shouldn't care to change places with that fine-looking fellow. It's not many more ducks he'll have the eating of in this world," said his comrade.

"All the same, it's a beautiful bird," replied the other, eyeing it regretfully.  
"And to think that that chap inside has the eating of in this world," said his comrade.

"What a devil of a twist! But come, let's have a look at the duck."  

Taking it up, he pulled out all the skewers, examined the giblets, which were fixed beneath the wings, and then, taking up a knife, split the bird down the centre, and turned out the stuffing.

"Nothing there," he remarked.  
"Huh! I for one shouldn't take any chances," said the other.

A few minutes later the duck was placed before Ned. He carefully followed the directions given him.

Pulling the bird to pieces, for he was not allowed the use of a knife or fork, he picked the leg and wings with great relish.

Then, taking out his handkerchief, he placed it on the table and folded it in the form of a bandage.

In the centre of this he placed the stuffing, and, rolling up one leg of his trousers, tied this novel poultice about his knee.  

He had just pulled the trouser-leg down when the warder re-entered the cell to clear away.

"Hullo!" he said, noticing the carcass Ned had not touched, "off your feed to-day, eh?"

"Yes," answered Kelly, "I feel a bit seedy."
The man grumbled. "It is no use trying the malefacing game, my boy, if that's what your up to," he thought.

Strictly following Kit's instructions, Ned kept on the point of the injury, and then, returning to bed, he began to groan heavily.

Shortly afterwards the warder entered the cell.

"Pshaw! what a stink of sage and onions!" was his first remark. "Hullo, Kelly, ain't you up yet?"

Ned groaned in reply.

"What's up, man?"

"Oh, Lord, my knee!" groaned Ned. "My knee—oh, the awful pain!"

And Ned made a face that caused the man to start back in astonishment.

"Come, let's have a look at it," he said, half-incredulously.

"Gently, gently!" cried Ned, as the other laid his hand on the knee-cap.

"What's the matter?"

"My knee—oh, the awful pain!"

And Ned made a face that caused the man to start back in astonishment.

"This is awful. Here, I'll go for the surgeon at once."

And he darted out and locked the door.

Ned continued to groan; and about a quarter of an hour later, the warder made his reappearance, accompanied by the surgeon, a fussy, bustling little man, who, to tell the truth, did not appear particularly inclined to credit his subordinate's report.

"As big as a cannon ball, and as purple as a beetroot, you say?" were his words as he entered the cell. "Pooh! nonsense! Come, my man," he continued, addressing Kelly. "Let's see this knee of yours."

But no sooner had he caught sight of it than he seemed absolutely dumfounded.

"Why—why, what's this?" he gasped.

A hand on the bed-clothes to draw them aside and inspect the seat of pain.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the warder, as the knee appeared. "This is awful. Here, I'll go for the surgeon at once."
Mentally, and with touching impartiality, he cursed him and Kit, for he felt, had led him into this hole. He resolved to make an appeal.

"Do you think you need cut it off? It feels much easier this afternoon."

"Just so, my man. That's the worst possible sign; it means mortification."

Bitterly Ned regretted his lack of medical knowledge. If he had only known that much, he thought, how he would have howled.

At that moment there was a knock at the door of the infirmary. One of the attendants went to open it.

"A message from Government House for Dr. Philpott," he said, returning with a note.

"Give it me," said the prison-surgeon's colleague.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, on opening it. "Lady Belmont has been thrown from her carriage and is still insensible. I must be off at once."

"Certainly," said the other.

"It's a pity. This is such a curious case that I should certainly have liked to have performed the operation myself."

"Quite so. It is a curious case, and, to tell you the truth, I really don't like to undertake it single-handed. I do not think a few hours' delay will make any material difference. Suppose you come here the first thing tomorrow morning?"

"Well, after all, we may be mistaken about the mortification, for—to tell the truth—I never saw a limb present such an appearance before. Let it be as you say. I will call at morning tomorrow at seven."

Ned watched him hurry off, and saw the basins, etc., put away.

"Don't you mean to cut it off?" he enquired anxiously of the prison-surgeon.

"No; we are going to give you another chance. So good-night. Renew the dressings every other hour," he continued to the nurse, and then took his departure.

Kelly began to breathe more freely.

"That was a precious narrow squeak," he thought. "A very little more and I should have had to have blurted out the truth. I wonder what the devil kind of stuff Kit put in the stuffing that has bamboozled the doctors so."

Not even Kit could have answered that question.

The East has its medical secrets that have baffled the most skilful European enquirer, and he was ignorant of the very nature of the thing which had been given him—which together with instructions for its use—by an old Malay pirate whom he had once befriended.

As the afternoon approached, Ned began to grow anxious and to lift his head at the slightest sound. A dozen times he fancied he could hear the strains of "Garryowen" rising in the air, but, after straining his ears for a minute or two, found that he had been self-deceived.

The suspense began to grow intolerable.

At last, just about dark, he raised his head again.

Yes, it was the signal.

As the brisk and stirring notes of one of the liveliest fighting-tunes ever written rose in the air Ned's pulses quickened, and he felt tempted to fling himself on the bed. Recovering himself he began to think matters out.

He would have half-an-hour in which to act from the moment at which the music ceased.

True; but the question to him was whether he would have one or two nurses to deal with when the moment came for escaping.

It was not that two men could stop him, but it is difficult for one man, however powerful, to get the better of two without making a noise.

And a noise was above all things to be avoided.

Nursing again favoured him.

Two nurses relieved each other at intervals during the day attendants whom he relieved quitted the ward a few minutes later.

Ned fixed his eyes on the clock at the end of the ward. The hands seemed to him to creep with leaden slowness.

At length when they marked fifteen minutes after the music had stopped, he gave a low groan and called feebly to the attendant.

"What is it, mate?" enquired the latter.

"Just lift me up and give me something to drink," said Ned.

The attendant approached, and, passing his arm behind Ned's back, raised him up.

But no sooner was the bushranger in a sitting position than he suddenly threw both arms round the other with a jerk that almost drove the breath out of his body, hauled him on to the bed and threw himself on the top of him.

Suddenly the attack that the nurse had not even time to cry out before he was on his back.

Then he opened his mouth to do so, but before he could utter a sound Ned stuffed his cotton night-cap into it and stopped him.

He followed this up by squeezing the man's throat until he was almost strangled.

When he had choked the hapless wretch into insensibility, Ned tied a handkerchief over his mouth, which still contained the night-cap, and then bound him hand and foot with the bandages that had served for his own knee.

He then rose and was about to proceed towards the window.

Suddenly a very important want occurred to him, and one which unless it was supplied would render all further attempt at escape useless.

He had no clothes.

Patients were not allowed to have their garments in the ward, and though a flannel dressing-gown had been placed by his bedside, it was utterly impossible for him to make his appearance in public in such attire.

After a moment's reflection he returned to the attendant, and, temporarily shaking his bonds, peeled off his coat, waistcoat, and trousers.

Even with these he was not much better off.

The man he had despoiled was about five feet six, and though he was fortunately a very fat fellow, the coat would not button across Ned's chest, the waistcoat revealed six inches of shirt below it, and the trousers did not come much below his knees.

After tossing his feet in the shoes, he set about tearing the sheets into strips, which he fashioned into a rope.

With this in readiness, he approached the window.

The clock denoted the half-hour had elapsed.

Suddenly a bright flash illumined the sky, there was a roar like thunder, and a concussion that shook the prison to its foundation.

During the afternoons an old organist, who for several days had been favouring the neighbourhood with his music, had gone on his usual round.

He was—as well as could be judged from a stop acquired by carrying his instrument—a tall old fellow of about sixty, with a bronzed face almost hidden by a thick, grey, bushy beard, and long grey hair streaming from under his limp hat.

He seemed heavily and clumsily built, and moved stiffly and awkwardly under the weight of his organ, which was an uncommonly large one.

He had paused at the end of the lane running down the west side of the prison, and had played "Garryowen" for about ten minutes.

Then starting off again after two or three more haits, he
NED KELLY.

He at once guessed what he had to do, and hastened to the cord.
Soon the further end of it came to view, with a knotted rope attached to it.
Meanwhile, the organ-grinder had darted round to the side of the prison on which the infirmary courtyard lay.

This side was bounded by a narrow lane, flanked on either side by dead walls, and seldom troubled with passengers.
The only occupant was a girl, who was at that moment engaged in toasting herself from a very singular kind of crinoline—not more nor less than a collar of rope concealed beneath her petticoats.

After a glance at the newcomer, she continued her occupation.

Then, knotting one end of a cord she had in readiness to the coil, she threw the other, to which a stone was attached to the wall.

"Bravo!" said the organ-grinder. "I never saw a girl cast the lead so well before!"

Half-a-minute had hardly elapsed before the cord was pulled on the other side, and the two saw the end of the rope dragged after it over the wall.

"Now," said the organ-grinder, "catch hold of one end with both hands, and bear him all your weight."

As soon as Ned had the end of the knotted rope in his hand, and had satisfied himself by a steady pull that it was equal to his weight, he began to scale the wall by its aid.

This was not an easy task as might be imagined.
His weight caused the rope to hang close to the wall, and his hands, knees, and knuckles were scraped and bruised considerably as he worked his way up.

The nearer he got to the summit the greater became the difficulty, and when he got his hands up to the level of the top of the wall they were almost crushed by the rope against the brickwork.

However, after a desperate effort, he managed to hook one leg sidewise over the coping, and a few seconds later was safely astride it.
He looked down.

"Is that you, Kit?" he asked, on catching sight of the organ-grinder, whose disguise was perfect.

"Yes," was the whispered answer.

"Don't look here; how the devil am I to get down? It's too far to risk a jump, and there's nothing to fix the rope to."

"All right; haul up one end of it."
Ned complied, and found a large but light hook attached to the end of the rope.

Holding this over the top of the wall, he slid down, and was soon by the side of Kit and Jess.

Whilst he was descending the former had pulled off his coat and turned the sleeves inside out.

When he had worn it, it had appeared a dirty drab garment, but, turned inside out, it was transformed into a tolerably smart coat of blue pilot-cloth.

He then divested himself with the rapidity of a "transformation dancer" of waistcoat and trousers.

Into a tolerably smart coat of blue pilot-cloth.

He then divested himself of false whiskers, which, with a pail of water, and a pair of false whiskers, was produced from Kit's pockets, the transformation was complete.

Kit, discarding his grey wig and whiskers, assumed a smart blue-cloth cap.

The clothes of the nurse whom Ned had stripped, together with the knotted rope that a jerk served to se-
tack from the wall, were then made into a bundle of which Jess took charge.

The trio then separated, Jess proceeding in one direction and Ned and Kit in another.

The alarm in the prison gradually subsided, though for some time the officials were fully occupied in defending the breach in the wall from the prisoners attempting to break out, and the excited mob that had assembled without, and sought to surge through at intervals.

At length the police restored order. The roll was called, and it was found that three prisoners had escaped through the breach.

It was not till the excitement arising from this was allayed that any investigation was made in the inquiry. An attendant, at length, entering Ned's ward, found his colleague lashed to the bed, and almost in the last stage of suffocation.

On being released he could only point to the window. The rope formed of the bed-clothes, hanging from this, caught the eye of the attendant, and he at once raised the alarm.

The courtyard was reached, but without success. The lower rooms and ward of the prison were then in turn examined, but no trace of Ned could be discovered.

The warders, one and all, swore that they had not seen him on the eastern side during the confusion; but, nevertheless, the only conclusion arrived at was that he had slipped through the breach during the excitement created by the explosion.

But how a man whom the doctor was willing to stake his professional reputation was a helpless cripple had managed to accomplish such a feat was a mystery none could fathom.

As to the idea of his having scaled the courtyard wall in his crippled state, it was so preposterous that no one even thought of it.

CHAPTER CLI

OFF AND AWAY.

The sensation caused by Ned's escape was tremendous. How it had been accomplished was a mystery. A similar mystery enveloped the means by which the prison wall had been blown down.

At length one of the children who had been playing about when Kit had placed the organ against the wall, and who, like his companions, had been severely injured, re-collected what he had seen.

The authorities kept a sharp look-out for the organ-man, and for the girl who had accompanied him on his rounds, but it is hardly necessary to state that neither of them was of any service.

The way in which Kit had blown down the wall was simple enough. Prior to starting on his rounds that morning, he had removed part of the works of the organ, and had replaced them with a package of dynamite.

The enormous power possessed by this terrible agent of destruction is well known. A very small packet of it will wreak an amount of havoc appalling to contemplate, and Kit had not been sparing of it.

Ned had accompanied Kit to the latter's house, where Jess joined the pair later on.

The fugitive remained concealed in it all the next day. Ned had accompanied Kit to the latter's house, where Jess joined the pair later on.

The police were scouring all the roads out of Sydney.

"I think I've hit it," said Ned, suddenly.

"What's your idea?" asked Kit.

"Well, what do you think is the slowest fashion a man would choose to travel?" was the reply.

"On foot, I suppose."

"Just so. But wouldn't he go even slower if he was pushing a wheelbarrow in front of him?"

"Bravo!" cried Kit and Jess, simultaneously.

Accordingly, that very afternoon Ned saluted out into the streets, got up as a labourer, and pushing a wheelbarrow, with some tools in it, in front of him.

The trick was successful. No policeman dreamt of stopping a man who appeared to be on his way to some job a few hundred yards or so further on.

Ned got dear of Sydney, and took the road to the Hawkesbury, where the same impunity awaited him.

"That man has never crossed the minds of the numerous lookers-out for Ned Kelly that a hunted fugitive would encumber himself with such an impediment to quick travelling as a wheelbarrow.

To one or other who exchanged a few words with him he simply said that he was going to a job of work he had on hand a little further on.

Before starting, he had revealed to the marks and hearings of the spot where he had hidden the spoil he had taken from Mendes.

Accordingly, the skipper took a boat and made his way to the place indicated.

Having unearthed the swag, he returned with it to Sydney.

Ned, meanwhile, had not been idle. He had hired a trap to drive to Hawkesbury, and was waiting for him with this on the wharf.

The spoil was transferred to the trap, and the pair drove off.

The sight of a sailor with a pretty girl beside him rattling along the road was too common a one to excite much attention.

Nevertheless, such was the vigilance exercised, that one policeman insisted that Kit must be Ned; and it was only after a long palaver, and an adjournment to a public-house, that the man happened to resemble a scoundrel he's to be a rested," said the policeman; and this was true, for there was a decided resemblance between the two brothers as regarded their features.

"If that chap's Ned Kelly, he has shrunk pretty considerably since he has been in Sydney jail," said the land-lord. "Why, Ned is a head and shoulders taller, and far bigger altogether."

"He's devilish like the description though, anyway," said the policeman; and this was true, for there was a decided resemblance between the two brothers as regarded their features.

"Perhaps so; but it's very hard that because an honest man happens to resemble a scoundrel he's to be a rested," said Kit, in tones of great indignation.

"Just so," chimed in one of the bystanders. "Besides, the scar on the hand by which Ned Kelly has been recognized is a score of times wanting on this gentleman's fist."

The policeman was at length convinced by these arguments, and allowed Kit and Jess to resume their journey.

A considerable loss of time had, however, taken place from the delay, and it was almost nightfall when they overtook Ned, who was sturdily trudging along the road.

"They drew up beside him, and a brief consultation followed.

It was arranged that he should join them the next morning at a certain point near the mouth of the river known to both.
They then drove on, and Ned, when night set in, drove his barrow as far as a thick clump of scrub at some distance from the road, and, turning it upside down, lay down on the turf, with it serving as a pillow.

Abandoning the shelter early next morning, he started for the appointed spot.

It was where a little creek emptied itself into the Hawkesbury.

As he approached a low whistle fell on his ear from the surrounding bush.

He looked round.

The brushwood parted a few paces off, and the face of Kit the Cruiser was revealed.

"Hush!" he exclaimed, in tones raised but little above a whisper; "come here quietly."

"What is the matter?" he was asked.

"Somewhat very awkward," said Kit. "They evidently suspect the schooner, and she is being watched."

"Watched?"

"Yes; there are police lurking in the trees on both sides of the river, and, what is worse, there is a Government whale-boat with four men cruising about."

"That's nice."

"Yes; I have not dared to signal her to send a boat ashore, for fear of arousing their suspicions, though I am sure the mate will begin to wonder why I have not turned up as arranged."

"Is the boat always about?" asked Ned.

"Yes; and I am afraid they'll have a revenue cutter round if they get very suspicious."

"Quite. We could slip moorings in a moment if we were on board of her, but I'm hanged if I can see a way of getting there."

The three fugitives, concealed by the trees that bordered the stream, made their way to the water's edge, and peered cautiously forth.

The night that met their eyes was tantalising in the extreme.

There lay the broad expanse of water, where the river met the ocean, and there lay the schooner, evidently ready to slip her moorings and hoist sail at a moment's notice.

But there, too, was the whale-boat, manned by five men, cruising up and down in such a way as to cut off all communication with the vessel and the shore.

The three fugitives were quickly on board, and every preparation made for lighting a fire.

"That's true. The police are watching it, you say—are you sure?"

"Sure! Keep still; why, there's one on the further bank now."

Ned plainly saw the sentinel in question.

"There is, and one thing I can think," he said, after some time spent in reflection. "We must be as close as possible. It is not unlikely that the boat will put to shore some time or other. If the men land from her on this side of the river we must try to seize her and make for the schooner."

Kit agreed to this.

About an hour later the whole-boat pulled to shore, touching the bank about thirty yards from the spot where they were concealed.

Four of the crew landed, the fifth remaining as lookout in the Little craft, which was beached on a spot where the bank sloped.

The men who had landed proceeded to gather sticks and make preparations for lighting a fire.

Notwithstanding their efforts, the snow fell to the ground yards from the boat.

Beyond this point they could not expect to advance unseen.

Then, at a sign from Ned, both darted from their place of concealment, and raced towards the boat.

Before the sailor left in her had time to assume a defensive attitude they were upon him.

"Hurry up, Jess," roared Ned.

"The girl, who was encumbered with the bag containing the property plundered from Mendez, advanced out slowly."

"Hurry up," shouted the bushranger again, "or we shall have to leave you."

As he had been speaking, he and Kit—putting their shoulders to the boat—ran her off into deep water.

Kit, seeing how matters were with Jess, darted up to her and helped her onward.

As soon as she joined them, the three tumbled, with their plunder, into the boat and shoved off.

Ned and Kit seized a couple of oars, and began to pull like demons in the direction of the schooner.

Jess, who was at home on the water, acted as steersman.

Before the sailors, who had witnessed the capture of their craft, could gain the bank, the fugitives were several lengths ahead.

A new peril, however, awaited them.

A sentinel on the further bank a little lower down had his attention attracted by the shouting of the sailors.

Advancing to a point overlooking the water he awaited the passage of the boat.

As it came abreast of him he raised his gun and fired.

"A close shave!" said Kit.

"The danger was not yet over."

Roused by the shot the other watchers sprang to their arms, and those within range opened fire.

A bullet tore its way from above through the planking, near the stern, just at the water-mark.

The water began to bubble through the hole. Jess bent forward, and, while steering with one hand, thrust the fingers of the other into the aperture.

A few minutes later the little craft shot alongside the schooner.

The three fugitives were quickly on board, and everything being, as Kit had foretold, in readiness, the moorings were slipped and the sails set.

The breeze was fresh and favourable, and the tidy little craft was soon standing out to sea.

By the time the news reached Sydney and a Government vessel was got ready to pursue her, all prospect of such pursuit proving successful was quite hopeless.

By Ned's orders she was headed for Singapore, it being his intention to take the P. and O. steamer there for England.

After an exceedingly fair passage, the town in question was reached.

Ned went on shore and put up at one hotel, giving orders to Jess, who was to represent herself as a widow, to stay at another.

He had disguised himself, and was careful to behave with strict decorum.

A few days later the steamer he was expecting put in, and he and Jess went on board her, still pretending to be perfect strangers.

Several other passengers who embarked had landed at Singapore from a vessel which had arrived from Sydney.

Amongst them, to his amazement, Kelly recognised his old friend Count Anatole.
And yet it is as clear as day. He either takes no notice of your letter, or he requests an interview. In the first case, you write again, telling him you cannot think of keeping facts of such great importance from the public; in the second, you arrange an interview. And it ends by his making you a handsome present, as a return for your silence and discretion."

"Ah, I see."

"Not quite, I think. The sooner the better—when the present does not. So you call on him—politely, of course, four times in the year, like a landlord to the tenant. Do you see now?"

"Yes; but it's a pitiful business."

"Pitiful business!" cried the Frenchman, lifting up his hands in protestation. "Pitiful business! Why, there are hundreds of men in Paris, who move in good society, and draw handsome incomes from it. I did well myself, very well, till, hélas! I was forced to leave Paris by the police.

"Ah! Ha! ha! ha! But you, have you made your fortune in Sydney?"

"No, my friend, alas! no. Your colonies are too rude, barbarous, brutal, for a man of taste, of elegance, of fine feeling.

"We do not give the conversation in the halting English of the count."

"'You couldn't get on?'

"'Ah, not there was no scope for talent. Now, for instance, there is a very pretty little scheme of making a nice certain income that I have practised in Paris. It takes some time, some trouble, some thought, but, ah! it repays them all; it does truculent."

"And what's the name of this pretty little game?"

"It is called by the police and other objectionable persons who interfere with me exercise dexterity."

"And how do you carry it on?"

"Very simply though, as I said before, it requires time and trouble. You spot—a man who is rich, honourable, in a good position. You make it your business to find out all about him. Perhaps he gained his riches dishonestly. Good. Perhaps he was not always honourable. Good. Perhaps he has relations who have suffered for some crime or of whom he is ashamed, or secret vices which he dare only indulge in privacy."

"Well, what then?"

"What then? Why, the richer, the more outwardly honourable, the higher placed he is, the more anxious he is that such things should not be known. You find them out after a great deal of trouble. You write to him a very pretty little letter informing him how greatly and shocked you are to learn of such things, and you deliberately hint at the time and expense this trouble has cost you. Do you see now?"

"No, I'm blown if I do!"

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(To be continued.)
CHAPTER XII.—Continued.

"'Ah!" he says, 'you are afraid that it will reach his ears that my father was transported for forgery?'

"Yes, I say.

"'Oh, you need not worry yourself then, for he knows it just as well as I and everybody else in Sydney knows that his grandfather was hanged for horse-stealing. But we don't trouble our heads about such matters here.'"

"And what did you do after that?' said Ned, with a roar of laughter.

"'What did I do? Why, I went out like one very little dog with my tail between my legs. It was no use trying any appeal to the finer sentiments in such a barbarous country. No, my friend, for the man of genius there is only one place for the exercise of his talents, and that is Europe.

'Europe, eh? What do you mean to do when you get there?'"

The Frenchman looked into Kelly's face.

"'What have you call more than one string to my bow,' he said, with an air of mystery.

"'Well, take care you don't find one of them twisted round your neck,' growled Ned, who was offended at this seeming want of confidence.

"'Oh, there is no chance of that. But, though you will excuse me saying that they are not all of a kind to interest you, there is one in which I should feel honoure'd by your distinguished co-operation.'"

As he spoke he bowed slightly.

"'You grinning monkey' grumbled the bushranger, 'if you're chaffing me I'll smash your baboon face against the wall.'"

"'I say. Yes.'

Ned, in accordance with an agreement he had come to with Anatole, had resolved to take a quiet suburban lodging and live sedately for a week or two, until the time came for their great scheme.

He fixed upon the district of Peckham.

He got himself up as respectably as he could, and started in search of lodgings.

He was not long in finding a place that suited him, and having engaged rooms and paid a week's rent in advance, in order to avoid giving references, he returned to the railway station and took his place in a train bound for Ludgate-hill, in order to fetch his luggage from the hotel he had put up at.

He was alone in a first-class carriage.

At one of the intermediate stations his train stopped.

At the same time, a train coming in the opposite direction, drew up also.

Kelly glanced mechanically into the carriage compartment with his own.

It only had one occupant.

An enormously fat man, engaged like himself in smoking a cigar.

Kelly looked again.

Surely he had seen that face before.

And that figure! yes, there could be no mistake that enormous corpulence.

It was Castro, alias Orton, the Wagga-Wagga butcher, looking fatter than ever, but, to Kelly's surprise, got up in a suit of superfine broadcloth and a glossy hat, and wearing a huge gold chain strong enough, apparently, to have held an ox, coiled across his prominent paunch.

'Hi-lo-f!' thought Ned, 'what's the meaning of this? Castro in London? No end of a swell. I wonder if there was any truth in that yarn of his!'

He at once made up his mind to renew their acquaintance.

The only question was how to manage it.

Castro was in a train about to proceed he did not know where.

If Ned lost sight of him now it was perhaps a thousand to one against his ever catching sight of the ex-butcher again.

There would, he feared, be no time to leave his carriage, run round to the other platform, and enter the train conveying the man he wished to track.

Nevertheless he was about to attempt this, when suddenly another idea struck him.

A whistle and a shout announced that the train conveying Castro was about to start.

Before it could get under way, Ned sprang back from the door of his compartment opening on to the platform on to which he had just been about to step.

He jumped to the other door facing Orton's train, and threw it open.

Orton's train had just begun to move.

Like a cat Ned easily crossed the three feet or so of space intervening between the two trains, and alighted on the footboard of the carriage in which the hero of Wagga-Wagga was seated.

His hand caught the door-handle of the compartment.

So nearly and silently had this been done that no one noticed it.
Softly turning the handle, he stepped into the carriage and sat down in front of Castro.

The latter had been half dozing.

For a moment he took no notice of the entry of the new comer, whom he merely thought to be a passenger forty-five minutes behind time.

He did not even notice the peculiarity of Ned's mode of entry.

It was not until the train was well in motion that he looked up, but without recognising Kelly.

Ned, sitting opposite him, stared him full in the face, and then calmly scrutinised his get-up from head to foot.

Castro had already acquired a certain notoriety, and had got accustomed to be stared at.

But he did not like the way in which Ned was regarding him.

The idea of an attempt to rob him flashed across his mind, and he glanced round to see if there was any means at hand for alarming the guard.

Kelly guessed his thoughts, and grinned.

"I don't seem over-well pleased at meeting an old chum," he began.

"Old chum! what do you mean?" asked Castro with a very well put-on look of astonishment.

"Why, surely you're not going to say you don't know me?" said Ned.

"I shouldn't think you; ah! yes. Let me see, did you know you; ah! yes. Let me see, did you ever serve with me in the Caribbean, or was we at Stonyhurst together?"

"What?"

"Or was it in South America? Or, stop a bit; how can I be so stupid as not to recollect an old Hampshire friend?" and he held out his hand with a look of enquiry.

"I don't know what the devil you mean," was the answer.

"But I recollect very well the last time we two met in Australia."

"I am afraid there is some mistake," said Castro, with a wave of his fat hand, on which, Ned noticed, a fine diamond was sparkling. "You mistake me, I think, for someone else."

"Who are you, then?" asked Ned, ironically.

"I am Sir Roger Charles Doughty Tichborne, a barrow-knight of the United Kingdom."

"Alias Tom Castro, the butcher of Wagga-Wagga; alias Morgan of Gippsland; alias Arthur Orton, the horse-stealer, and pal of Ballarat Harry," said Kelly, with a laugh.

The other sat dumbfounded for a moment; but, recovering himself, scanned Ned Kelly.

"You make a mistake. I have passed under the name of Castro, it is true, but I am Sir Roger Tichborne."

"Oh! that be blown!" broke in Ned. "I heard all that yarn in Sydney; and how Boglo coached you there, and you were shipped off to England."

"Where have I been recognised by my mother, Lady Tichborne."

"An old idiot!

"And by many hundred."

"Foobs or rogues— which, eh? Come, it won't do. I have heard your version of affairs, but in the bush I came across an old pal or two who could tell me all about that little mess of Reedy Creek and the rest, and when you first came to the colony."

"Who are you, then?"

"You ought to recognise me with that wonderful memory of yours, that recollects all about death's-head pipes and stripes on shirts."

"And so I do," suddenly cried the other; "you're Ned Kelly, aren't you?" Just so. You see, I know you."

The fat man began to recover his coolness.

"Look here, Ned," he began, "we did not do much truck together, but it was all right, eh?"

"Quite so."

"And it's not like you to put a spoke in the wheel of a pal."

"Not if that pal behaves as such."

"Well, of course I ain't come into my property—it's fifteen thousand a-year; yet, but when I do, I'll come down something handsome."

"I'd like something on account. You're a long way further from that property than you think for."

"Well, then, see here," said Castro, taking a thick pocket-book from his breast. "I'll give you these."

"Why, what are these?" ejaculated Kelly, as he tried to peizzle out the spelling of the documents in question:

"They're not bank-notes."

"No," replied Castro, grandiloquently; "but they are worth as much. They are Tichborne bonds."

"Worth as much," roared Ned, in a rage; "why the informal things ain't no more account than curl-papers."

"Oh! ain't they, though! You only keep your eyes open, and you can plant them at a good price, even if you are such a fool as not to stick to them."

"There's something in that," assented Ned; "though I'd rather have something else, that sparker on your finger, for instance."

"Oh! come, you can't expect that. And now, if you won't mind a word of business, Ned, I may just hint that, with a reward of ten thousand pounds on your head, you are hardly likely to go into court to swear anything about my affair."

"Right you are."

"Well, I hope you don't think of driving a great bargain with the other side; in fact, I can't connect you of such a thing."

"Such a thing as what?"

"As sending all you know to them in writing."

"No fear of that," answered Ned, who could not quite see what the other was driving at.

"Very well, then. I shan't, on my part, think of sending word to Scotland-yard that Ned Kelly is in London in disguise."

"If I thought—" and as Ned spoke he rose from his seat, with a look that chilled the other villain, cool scoundrel though he was, to the marrow.

"But you don't. Here, Ned, here's the sparkler you fancied, as a token of friendship," and he pulled off the ring and handed it to him.

"Who are you, then?" asked Ned, with his finger, for instance.

"An old idiot! And by many hundred."

"That's a clever beggar," he muttered, "and a plucky one. It would have been a pity, after all, to have choked him; he'd cut a fine shine before his little game is ended, and give the lawyers—cure them!—some trouble."

CHAPTER CLIII.

ALL HIS WAYS WERE "PEACE."

Ned took up his quarters at his new lodgings.

They were situated in a quiet street at Peckham.

As he had nothing particular to do, and had promised Aristotle not to show himself abroad, time hung somewhat heavily on his hands.

He spent the greater part of the day indoors, and passed the evening either in taking a walk about the neighbourhood, or in the parlour of a quiet public.

"Pâute du nînez," he turned his attention to watching his neighbours.

He soon became, in spite of himself, interested in the occupant of the house on his right.

This was a very precieus-looking, elderly little man, of about sixty, with a clean-shaven face and long white hair.
He was usually dressed in a black frock-coat and very white shirt and collar, and presented the perfect type of the retired small tradesman, with a dash of the dissenting minister.

Ned was particularly amused by his quiet, precise ways and intense respectability.

He saw very few visitors, though occasionally a friend or two would drop in of an evening to practise music, or for which the old fellow was extremely fond.

A constant caller, however, was a friend with whom the stranger, who went by the name of Smith, was engaged in perfecting a scheme for the raising of sunken vessels.

The old fellow had a light trap and pony, which Ned's experienced eye set down at once as a capital bit of horseflesh.

Sometimes his neighbours would borrow the turnout for the day, and amongst those making use of it in this way was Ned's landlord.

This led to a certain intimacy, which was fostered by the exchange of certain neighbourly services on both sides, such as are common in the suburbs.

At last one evening Smith asked Ned's landlord into his house to supper.

Mr. Smith, a tall and not bad-looking, but nervous and courteous woman, and two other friends, were all who were present at the meal.

Smith delivered a very long and very formal grace before they began their repast.

Supper over, he and his friends betook themselves to music with great gusto.

Ned's landlord was amazed at the number of musical instruments lying about the room, and at the proficiency on many of them shown by his host.

Smith had half a dozen violins, and the same number of French horns and concertinas, not to mention trombones, oboes, flutes, ophicleides, and the like.

When Ned's landlord returned he told Kelly of the manner in which they had spent the evening, much to his lodger's amusement.

A few nights later, Kelly on going up to his room felt restless and unable to sleep.

After partially undressing, he put out the light and seated himself at his open window, pipe in mouth.

It was a bright moonlight night, and he could see everything almost as plainly as if it had been day.

The trap, however, was quite deserted, and not a light was seen in any of the houses.

Kelly sat and watched thus for some time.

Suddenly his attention was aroused by the sound of an opening door, rendered doubly audible by the prevailing silence of the night.

Putting down his pipe he looked cautiously forth.

It was Mr. Smith's door that had opened.

Presently Mr. Smith emerged from his house and closed the door behind him.

He was dressed in a rough tweed suit and soft felt hat, forming quite a contrast to his usual attire.

Then he went to his stable, which stood on the other side of the street, unscrewed the door, and a few minutes later led out his pony and trap.

He got into the trap, touched up the pony, and soon disappeared at the end of the street.

Ned could not help thinking it strange that so quiet and methodistical a man should care for his horse in such an unbusinesslike manner.

He thought, however, that he might have some business or other at a distance.

He turned in, and did not rise till ten o'clock.

Looking out at the back, however, he saw Mr. Smith, pottering about in the garden amongst his flowers, in his usual orthodoxy get-up.

Ned could not help feeling a bit puzzled as to when he had got back.

The next night he resumed his watch.

Sure enough Mr. Smith left his house a little after midnight in the same fashion.

Ned remained watching at the window this time.

Several hours passed without anything fresh occurring, and he was just thinking of turning in when the sound of approaching wheels caught his ear.

A few minutes later, Smith pulled up his pony before his door.

It was just getting light, and Ned could make out that the little animal was covered with sweat and foam.

It was evident that he had been driven far and furious, Smith left the pony and cars, and, approaching his door, tapped at it softly.

It was evidently a signal.

The door was noiselessly opened in reply.

Smith returned to the cart and took from it in succession a variety of parcels and other objects of various shapes and sizes, some apparently very heavy.

These he handed in at the door, where they were received by someone whom Kelly could not see, but whom he guessed to be Mrs. Smith.

When the trap was unloaded, Smith led the pony with it into the stable, and after a space of time, evidently spent in unharnessing and rubbing down the animal, came out again and entered the house.

Kelly was more and more puzzled.

For a man of such strict outward respectability to go in for these midnight journeys began to strike him as suspicious in the extreme.

He recollected that on more than one occasion he had caught the sound of returning wheels in the small hours, and that they were in all probability those of Smith's trap.

Ned resolved to quietly investigate the mystery.

In the course of the day, he took the opportunity of examining the look of Smith's stable on the quiet.

It was a perfectly ordinary one, and of a kind for which a key could be easily found.

His object in examining the stable was not quite clear to himself, but he had a kind of hazy idea that something might turn up.

He was not far wrong.

Lying on the ground near the trap was a scrap of printed paper. That paper had a heading, and under that heading was a bill for 3s. 6d., paid the evening before at the Falcon Inn, which was situated in the outskirts of Melbourne.

"What's he up to?" thought Ned. "I saw one of them bills before. I'll find out, old bloke, what's your little game. Can't be a woman surely. But them white—"

But them white—

Kelly thought that he had only been leading the pony for his reverence—it might be useful to have his prayers if I get into trouble. Ha! ha! ha!"

He consequently started at once, and took up his position about two hundred yards from the Falcon, on the road he knew Smith would follow.

He soon heard wheels slowly approaching and quickly recognised his smirky neighbour.

After a short pause he saw Smith alight.

Then the mysterious stranger took the pony's head and led it a short distance forward.

After proceeding for a few score yards Smith halted, after turning sharp round a corner.

As far as Kelly could judge, the last part of the journey had been performed over a very rutty road.

Smith drew the pony and trap close to a fence.

Kelly thought that he had only been leading the pony on account of the business of the road, and that he would not drive on.

But, instead of that, the bushranger heard a kind of scraping sound, and saw the trap away a bit to one side, and then grow lighter.

For a moment time puzzled him.

The next, he guessed at the solution.
Smith had evidently made use of the trap as a ladder to get over the fence by.

The bushranger could not help thinking that this was a very singular and fashion for such a very respectable person as Smith to pay visits.

After waiting a few minutes, he became certain that Smith had got over the fence.

As far as he could make out in the darkness, he was in a narrow lane shaded with trees, turning out of a broader kind of road, and was equally rural-looking.

The pony and trap were drawn close up to what seemed to be a high wooden paling.

Kelly was a tall fellow, and reaching his hands up, managed to place them on the top of the paling.

It was garnished with spikes, but there was room enough between these for his fingers.

He drew himself up by his arms and looked over.

He could just discern the outline of a large house, separated from him by a lawn studded with trees and shrubs.

It was evident that Smith was paying a visit to the house, and a great desire to follow him stole over Ned at the thought.

What puzzled him was how the little man had managed to scramble across the palings without some damage to his person, or at any rate, to his outer garments, from the spikes on the top.

By getting into the trap and examining the point where he had crossed, this was explained at a glance.

He had thrown the seat-cushion from the trap over the top of the fence, so that the spikes were neutralised.

Ned's ears were as keen as those of most men accustomed to hunting and being hunted in a wild country.

He stood there in the trap, he detected the faint sound of splintering glass from the house.

"Oh," he thought, "so my plain friend was not an expected guest there, after all."

Then came the faint click of a window-latch being pushed back from without by a knife-blade; then the noise of a sash being quietly and cautiously raised.

Ned still listened.

A faint whistling noise denoted that a centre-bit was being employed to drill a hole in the shutters.

Then he heard the sound enlarging it, and then the low creak, as a hand was passed through this hole and the shutters unfastened.

The fact that a burglary was being committed flashed upon his brain.

"It's in now," he thought. "I wonder how long he'll be?"

He began to debate mentally as to the best course to take on his own account.

The antifably-played game of Smith filled him with great admiration for its player.

Who on earth would suspect a burglar in this quiet, respectable, outwardly-religious man, living in a modest but comfortable way in a suburban street, and devoting all his spare time to his music and his flowers?

It was all the more admirable to Ned as he felt it was so utterly out of his own line.

Indeed, he looked upon it as the lowest branch in the profession.

But, then, what an invaluable ally such a man was likely to prove, if the could secure him as such.

He resolved to make his acquaintance.

The question was, when?

Should he quietly introduce himself to Smith when the latter returned from his excursion over the paling, or suffer him to depart, and interview him at home on the morrow?

Whilst he was debating, his ear caught a fresh sound.

It was not, however, from the house this time, but from the main-road they had left.

Kelly had not been long in England, but he had heard it before in the watches of the night, and recognised it at once.

It was the peculiar tramping step of a policeman on night duty.

Ned debated for a moment what to do.

He was caught by the policeman where he was, he would certainly be arrested at once as an accomplice, and this would not suit his look at all.

Suddenly he thought of the mode of escape he had practised at Sydney when chased.

Stepping on to the summit of the fence from the trap he bound himself for a moment and then caught hold of the bough of a tree.

With this he was about to swing into the garden, when on second thoughts, he changed his mind.

His hunter's experience had taught him that a man is always looked for below rather than above.

So, instead of swinging himself to the ground, he made his way upwards into the tree.

He had not been long concealed before a gleam of light caught his eye.

It proceeded from the bull's-eye of the policeman, who had arrived at the end of the lane.

He halted there for a short time.

He seemed to be hesitating whether to turn down the lane or to continue his way along the road.

At length he decided on the former.

He had advanced a few steps when he came to a sudden halt, in evident surprise.

He had caught sight of the pony and trap.

He at once took in the situation.

He again halted, after advancing a step or two.

Apparently he was unable to decide whether to advance to the house and give the alarm, or to try to capture the burglar, or burglars, on their retreat.

He was a plucky fellow, and decided on the latter course after but slight hesitation.

After glancing around for a place of concealment a thought seemed to strike him.

Bending down, he hid himself under the trap.

Several minutes elapsed.

At length Ned heard Smith approaching from the house across the lawn.

He was hourly awaited.

After depositing his plunder at the foot of the fence on the inside, he returned for another load.

This was placed with the former, and then he returned for a third.

Then, by means of a garden chair which he placed against the fence and stood on, he passed the objects one by one over the boundary and let them fall into the cart.

The pony was evidently accustomed to this kind of work, for he stood like a rock.

This task accomplished, Smith stepped over the fence in turn and, after carefully placing his spoil in the trap, got down to turn the pony's head and lead it back into the high road.

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This task accomplished, Smith stepped over the fence in turn and, after carefully placing his spoil in the trap, got down to turn the pony's head and lead it back into the high road.

The pony was evidently accustomed to this kind of work, for he stood like a rock.
Ned clenched his fist, and caught the unfortunate fellow by the hair with all his force just behind the ear.

He rolled over like a smitten ox.

Catching hold of Smith by the hand and pulling him to his feet, Ned tumbled him into the trap, pulled the pony's head round, and, jumping up, rattled away, heedless of ruts and jolts, towards the main road.

After driving a few score yards along this he slackened speed, and turned his attention to Smith, who was just recovering himself.

"Look here, old man," he began, "you'll understand I'm a pal by the way in which I have pulled you out of that little mess you were in with the bobby."

"Quite so," answered a voice which Ned would not have recognised as Smith's, and caused him to marvel at the fellow's resources of deception.

"I think you'll own up that, if it hadn't been for me, you'd have found yourself in a pretty tight fix."

"No, you don't," said Ned, catching him by the wrist, "someone else got you out of that.

"No," he said, somewhat curtly, "that's not the point. I don't want any price for catching a bobby a clip under the ear and getting one of the right sort away from him."

"Well, what is it you do want? Before you tell me, however, you had better give me the reasons. I know the road and the beast better than you do, and shall get more out of him."

"You're right there," said Ned, impressed by the other's business-like style. "But what struck me was that you seem a clever fellow and a plucky one. I have some little respect for the way we might get on together."

"No offence," was the reply, "but I prefer to work alone."

"You found it a bit awkward to-night, though," said Ned, with a grin that the night concealed from his companion.

"Yes; but I see how to avoid that in the future. I shall have a strap to fasten my barker to my wrist," he continued, half to himself, "then it will always be handy, and no one will be able to get away from me."

"You wouldn't mind holding a bobby for me," he said.

"Nor anyone else, was the calm reply, given in a firm but quiet tone.

Ned knew that he had before him a man even more dangerous to society than himself, even as the serpent's bite is more dangerous than the tiger's claw.

In this cold, crafty, calculating villain he recognised a fellow a blow with all his force just behind the ear. He knew enough of his companion to guess that he would not hesitate at anything to get rid of anyone obnoxious to him, and that he carried a revolver and the road was deserted.

He felt that a man he had saved from such peril in the colonies would hardly have assumed such a huxtering appearance, and Smith would hardly have allowed himself to be caught in the back gardens.

Before long he noticed Smith amongst his flowers.

Approaching the party wall dividing the gardens, he hailed the other.

"Smith!" said Ned, as politely as he could and in a soft tone.

"What's the matter?" asked Smith.

"Nothing, sir," was the reply, "but you were beforehand with me."

"Oh, you artful fox!" thought Ned.

"Well, to tell the truth, I was after the same game as yourself, but you were beforehand with me.

After proceeding a little further, Smith checked the pony, and said—

"I don't know where you are bound for, but I don't suppose our paths are quite the same. However, if it is anywhere near my way, I'll drop you, if you like."

"Oh, you artful fox!" thought Ned.

"And he added aloud—"

"Where are we going?"

"At Lee (a falsehood) on the main road to Loudon."

"Oh, well, if you'll put me down a little farther on, it will do for me."

This suited the other very well.

"Where shall we meet again?" asked he, "for I suppose I must pay you back the turn I owe you."

"Oh, where you like."

"Well, I'll be at the Elephant and Castle at nine to-morrow evening."

"All right, that'll suit."

At the top of the hill Ned got down.

"Remember, the Elephant and Castle at nine," called out Smith.

"Right, I'll be there," cried Ned. "Good-night."

"Good-night!"

And Smith drove off, looking round from time to time to see that he was not followed.

Neither had the slightest intention of keeping the appointment, and Smith drove on at full speed, chuckling at the thought of how he had pierced his companion's resources of deception.

As for Ned, he made his way quietly along the road, and, after several enquiries, made his way back to his dwelling.

All was well; he had ascertained that Smith had long since reached home.

Letting himself in, he stole upstairs, and, throwing himself on to his bed, was soon asleep.

CHAPTER CLIV.

THE HOLY ALLIANCE.

Ned possessed the power of waking up almost at will.

At eight o'clock his eyes were open, and shortly afterwards he was down to breakfast.

After breakfast he took up a position commanding a view of the back gardens.

Before long he noticed Smith amongst his flowers.

In turn, he sauntered out into the garden.

Approaching the party wall dividing the gardens, he hailed the other.

"You found it a bit awkward to-night, though," said Ned, with a grin that the night concealed from his companion.

"Yes; but I see how to avoid that in the future. I shall have a strap to fasten my barker to my wrist," he continued, half to himself, "then it will always be handy, and no one will be able to get away from me."

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Neither had the slightest intention of keeping the appointment, and Smith drove on at full speed, chuckling at the thought of how he had pierced his companion's resources of deception.

As for Ned, he made his way quietly along the road, and, after several enquiries, made his way back to that early hour, succeeded in finding the way back to his dwelling.

All was well; he had ascertained that Smith had long since reached home.

Letting himself in, he stole upstairs, and, throwing himself on to his bed, was soon asleep.
different identities, twenty separate existences."

"If you don't release me, sir," said Smith, with dignity
after one effort to jerk his arm from Ned's clutches, "I shall call for assistance."

"Shut up, or I'll call for the police and give you into custody for the burglary committed last night at
Lachlan and Castle for nothing, old feller."

"Smith glared at him like a trapped wolf.

"The man you flattened yourself you made such a fool of
last night, but who wouldn't incline to go-cooling his heels in the
Railway and Castle for nothing, old feller."

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last night, but who wouldn't incline to go-cooling his heels in the
Railway and Castle for nothing, old feller."

"Smith glared at him like a trapped wolf."

"Look here," said Ned, "you've no need to cut up so
shirty because other people are as smart as yourself. You are a very
shifty character, but I've had my peepers on you
for some days past. I saw you start last night, and what's
more, I saw you working!"

"Smith felt this was true. He saw that Ned was not only as brave, but as cunning
as himself. He resolved, therefore, to make a virtue of necessity.

"You are a smart fellow," he said, "what is it you
really want of me, now?"

"I want you as a pal," said Ned.

"For what?"

"For a job or two in your own line. Oh, I know what
you said about working alone, but there are jobs, and
those of the best and biggest, that cannot be worked
single-handed, be a man ever so much up to the
knocker."

"Right you are."

"Well, I don't care for puddling work, I can tell you. I'm on the lookout for a job that will bring me in a lumping
sum for my share, and the same for whoever works
with me."

"A lumping sum in hard cash?" repeated Smith.

"Yes. It's not all the first time I've landed a few
thousands," said Ned, with a dash of swagger.

"Why, who are you then?"

"Who am I? I guess you've never been in the colonies
or you would not need to put such a question. I'm Ned
Kelly."

"Ned Kelly?"

"The same."

"Oh, I've heard of you."

"Very likely."

"Let's see, aren't you the man who has a wonderful
horse, a sort of Black Dees? At least, so I read in those
cursed newspapers that pull everything into the light—
curse them!"

"Ay, Marco Polo, the finest bit of horseflesh that was
ever foaled under the Southern Cross. But who the devil
are you, and what's your real name, mate?"

"Let me explain. I have had twenty names and twenty
different identities, twenty separate existences."

"Hang it, man, they must recognize your face."

"Do you think so?" said the other.

He turned away for a moment and then faced Ned,
observing as he did so in an entirely different voice -
"Do you know me now?"

Ned started back in amazement.

By some marvellous power spread over the facial
muscles, Smith had transformed every feature.

If Kelly had not had him before his eyes the whole
time he would have sworn it was another man.

"But," continued Peace, for that was the real name of
the musical burglar, "you haven't seen my Sunday School
for I always perform my Sabbaths duties to the Sunday
School as regularly as either of our Lord Chancellors, or
that simple-minded old cove, Lord Stofflebury. I put
the young 'uns through their facings, I can tell you. I make 'em shout the Old Hundredth with fifty parson-
power, and I take good care the lips move along with the
voice chancing away like blue blestes. Oh! it's affecting;
very. I'm looked up to, I am, and blowed if I don't
serve it for I fulfil my Christian duties with regularity. I
rest on the Sabbath; I never 'work' on the seventh day.
I'm too conscientious, man. Now you see the advantage
of a good character and thorough respectability. It gives
one such a pull when a job's up."

Kelly looked on with universal surprise.

"By Jingo, you are a whole team and two bullocks
to spare, you are. You're the stuff I like to meet. Why
we should work together like a like as a pair."

"Smith, or Peace, evidently appreciated the compliment.

"You're not flattering," he said, "but I do my best in
that station of life to which God has called me, as the
prayerbook says, 'elevated Smith, with an affected exagger-
ation of the conventicle nasal twang, while his eyes
twinkled mischievously."

"It's mainly a natural gift, improved by years of prac-
tice. There are several men who give public entertain-
ments, similarly gifted. I can mould my nose into any
shape, like a piece of putty, screw up my eyes, bring
wrinkles on any part of my face at will or smooth them
away, alter the shape of my mouth and the slant of my
eyes; in short, I can almost assume a new face at pleasure.
He then dropped the clerical mask and turned his head
aside once more, facing Kelly again with the appearance
to which the latter was accustomed.

"But how the devil do you do it?" inspired Ned

"Ned Kelly."

"Ned Kelly?"

"The same."

"Oh, I've heard of you."

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are you, and what's your real name, mate?"

"Let me explain. I have had twenty names and twenty
different identities, twenty separate existences."

"Hang it, man, they must recognize your face."

"Do you think so?" said the other.
will, I can't see my way to bring it off single-handed. With
you it might be pulled off, though, all right."

"Well, it's a crib to be snared in town. I usually prefer
working in the suburbs, but in this case the svg
is too tempting to be neglected if there's ever such a
little chance of getting hold of it."

"What's it then?"

"Why, the old fellow is a diamond merchant."

"A diamond merchant?"

"Yes, one of the old style. He was a lapidary before
becoming a diamond dealer; lives down Hatton-garden
way, and sleeps on the premises. I knows he keeps a
large stock of stones in the house, and, once inside, it
would be easy enough to lay one's hands on if one
to only knew where they were."

"That's the rub, I suppose?"

"Yes. There's no getting a chance of a squire round
the premises. If I could only get inside!"

"Well, you might tell me where it is, and I'll go and
have a look at the outside, at any rate."

"It is Mr. Mallan, No. 21, — Street, Hatton-garden.
He's an old fellow, with a wife and one servant."

"I'se a chance of getting over her face."

"I'm afraid not. She's devotedly attached to her miss­
tress: that much I do know."

"But a handsome young fellow might have a chance of
talking her over?"

"Perhaps."

"At all events that game can be tried."

"I think, said Peace, "you and I have been talking
together quite long enough for the present. People will
begin to wonder what you have to say to me."

"Oh, blow 'em!" said Ned.

"Not at all, my dear friend. Come, get back over the
wall at once."

"Well, when shall I meet you to go on talking over
this job? None of your Elephant and Castle dodges
this time."

"Do you know the Crown in — Street? It's an
old-fashioned sort of a place, and there's hardly any one
there in the coffee-room of an evening. I'll meet you
there to-night at nine."

And as Ned scrambled over the wall, and his landlord,
who had stepped into the garden, stood in amazement at
his return, Peace continued, raising his voice—

"I am truly thankful, sir, to have made your acquaintance,
since it has enabled me to add my mite to this good
work. Truly, it rejoices the heart to help the afflicted.
It would have been difficult to have found two more
through-paced villians."

The contrast between the two was all the more striking
by this proximity.

It would have been difficult to have found two more
opposite types of humanity than the reckless, broad-
shouldercd Burglar, bearing his bag-looking bur­
glar, something like a parson run to seed, in his black
coat, and hat encried with a mourning-band.

At the same time it would have been difficult to have
found two more thorough-paced villains.

The subject of conversation between them was the best
method of effecting an entrance into the diamond mer-
chant's, and it was not until this had been thoroughly
discussed that the two separated, though without settling
anything definite.

A few days later Ned started off to survey the house
inhabited by Mr. Mallan.

Jess, who had joined him in London, accompanied him,
though without being aware of what was passing in his
mind, or the object of his stroll.

He paced slowly down the street with the girl on his
arm, looking at the house on the opposite side of the way.
No. 21 was one of the old-fashioned, strongly-built
houses to be found in the locality.

The lower floor evidently served as work-rooms and
office, and the upper part as a dwelling-house.

As he looked, a butcher, with his tray on his shoulder,
came up and rang the bell.

A middle-aged, decent-looking woman, dressed as a
servant, opened the door in reply.

"Well, this is funny," said Jess.

"What?" asked Ned.

"You saw that girl who opened the door there?"

"Yes: what of her?"

"Why, would you believe it? she's a returned convict!
She was in quod with me in Sydney: I knew her face at
once."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Ned. "I've got it then. What's
her name, Jess?"

"Paramatta Sal."

"Hurrah!" cried Ned. "I see the way to do the trick."

CHAPTER CLV.

PARAMATTA SAL'S history up to a certain point was not at
all an uncommon one.

The offspring of criminals, she had been brought up
without ever having the difference between right and
wrong pointed out to her.

She was of a dull, yet affectionate disposition, and looked
up to and loved her wretched parents after a fashion.

They taught her to steal, and she stole without having
the slightest idea she was doing evil.

Her intelligence was indeed remarkably limited, and the
frequent ill-treatment she received did not do much to
foster its development.

As she grew up she began to steal on her own account,
and a little later became the slave of a man who used to
thrust her and squander the product of her thefts, but to
whom she displayed the dog-like affection that was part of
her nature.

At last her lover, who was named Tom Hill, was shot in
an attempted burglary, and she, being implicated in re-
ceiving stolen property, was sentenced to a rather long
sentence for the same.

She had already undergone several short sentences, but
these had made no impression on her.

On this occasion, however, the death of her lover, and
the admonition of the chaplain, who divined the poor woman's
real nature, had a great effect on her.

It was a very difficult task for the chaplain to arouse in
her stolid mind a sense of the difference between right
and wrong, but, when he at length succeeded in doing so,
his repentance was genuine and profound.

He saw, however, that on her release there was great
danger of her returning to her old associates, and
that the best thing to do would be to get her out of the
 colony.

Accordingly he found means to have her shipped to
India, and received there in a house for training serv­
ants.

From this she had passed into the service of Mr. and
Mrs. Mallan, to whom she had transferred all the devotion
she was capable of.

She had gone so far as to tell them her story, and they
fully appreciated her evident wish to do right in all things.

Mr. Makins was a man of about sixty, with a frank, open face, and a look of good nature which did not, however, detract from the sternness that had been acquired during some forty years devotion to business.

His bright eye and clear complexion denoted a sound constitution, and, despite his age, a life of sobriety and activity that had rendered him, even at sixty, one of those men whom it is pleasant to drink with than to fight with.

His wife, who was somewhat younger, was a homely, kindly sort of body, stout and bustling, and occasionally given to scolding-fits, but at the bottom thoroughly good-natured.

Of this she had often given proofs, and one quite recently, in her treatment of poor Sal, whose true character she had guessed at and appreciated.

Sal one Saturday, a day or two after she had been recognised by Jess, was struggling away at her pots and pans till her face was as red as a peony.

She was hard at it when the kitchen door opened and her mistress came in.

"Ah, you are at it again," said the new-comer.

She lifted up her head and looked confused.

"But, ma'am," she said, twirling her apron with her hand, "there never was an easier task for me than the one I am engaged in, and I am willing to do it, and I am sure I can do it.

"Nonsense, girl; I told you before to have a man in for this rough work. I don't want you to knock yourself up like this."

A tear of that, ma'am; I'm too tough, and you can't think how pleased I am to be able to show how thankful I feel for your kindness by working with all my might and main."

"Pooh-poh! my girl, there's no need of that; and besides, it would be a poor way of proving your gratitude to knock yourself up and give me the trouble of nursing you, eh?"

And the good woman laughed at her own remark.

"Oh, ma'am!" said the poor creature, "I feel I never can repay all I owe to you. How few people would have taken in a poor girl like me, and treated me as you have done."

"Nonsense! Don't talk like that. I've just run down to tell you that I am going out for a couple of hours at least, in case anyone calls. I shall be in about teatime, and then wait for you."

A few minutes later Sal heard the front door slam after her mistress.

"Ah," she reflected, "the more I think of it the surer I am that no one else in the world would have treated me like they have. They know what I have been, and might always be thinking that I should let in some of my old friends, especially with all those diamonds in the place."

Alook from Sal checked her.

"I feel a bit faint. I have not been living too well since I have been over here," was the answer, in a low voice.

"I have been going straight, Jess," she said, "and am glad you think of going straight, Jess," she said. "It is for that I have come to England. I saved enough for my passage, thinking to get rid of all my old wicked associates, but here in London there seems to be more wickedness than even in Sydney. If you only knew what I have had to fight against. Aha! how fortunate you have been to find honest people to look after you. I only wish I could get such a chance," and she almost sobbed.

"Have you been trying, Jess?" asked Sal.

"Yes, indeed I have, Sal, and I hope to get a place of some kind. I don't care how hard I work, as long as I can make a fresh start, and earn an honest crust."

Poor Sal was deeply touched by this experience, so like her own.

"I am glad you think of going straight, Jess," she said. "I feel I never can repay all I owe to you. How few people would have taken in a poor girl like me, and treated me as you have done."

"I feel the same thing," said Jess, "and I am glad you think of going straight, Jess."

Although spoken in a sympathising tone, these words, instead of moving Sal as formerly they would have done, seemed rather to be repugnant to her.

"Yes," resumed Sal; "now I have straggled out of the mud into which I had fallen, and live among honest folk, I see clearly and know what sort of companions I used to have."

"Do you mean that for me, Sal?" said Jess, a tone of bitterness. "I suppose now you can afford to despise a poor motherless girl, who went to the bad when a mere child, not knowing right from wrong?"

Jess was closely watching Sal, and saw that this last remark had not been thrown away.

"It's true you were quite a kid, and did not know what you were up to," said Sal, meditatively.

"Yes; if you only knew how I have repented of the past, and tried to break off with it," said Jess. "I feel I am that no one else in the world would have treated, me. They know what I have been, and might always be thinking that I should let in some of my old friends, especially with all those diamonds in the place."

"But, ma'am," she said, twisting her apron with her hand, "there never was an easier task for me than the one I am engaged in, and I am willing to do it, and I am sure I can do it."

She had worn during her interview with Sal.
In a minute the latter had returned.

"Come along," she said to Jess, whose physiognomy and general appearance suggested a sudden return of her depression, and I will show you round the place.

She quitted the kitchen, followed by Jess, who smiled behind her back in a singular fashion.

The house occupied by Mr. Mallan was a tall, narrow building, of three storeys in height. The kitchen was underground.

On the ground floor, the front room served as a kind of workshop, and the back room as Mr. Mallan's office.

The dining and drawing rooms were on the first floor. Mr. Mallan's bedroom and a spare bedroom occupied the second floor.

The servants' room was on the third.

Jess and Sal first visited the upper part of the house.

They entered the office, Jess holding in her hand the pocket on the table before them.

"And what is there on the ground floor?" enquired Jess.

"The office and the workshop. Do you want to see Mr. Mallan's bedroom and a spare bedroom occupied the second floor."

"Ah! of course. I had forgotten your master was a diamond merchant. There must be something worth having inside there. Four or five thousand pounds, perhaps," said Sal laughingly. "Twenty or thirty thousand would be nearer the mark sometimes," she said.

"Really? What a lot! I'd like to see twenty thousand pounds' worth of diamonds," said Jess, reflectively.

"It's not much of a sight after all," said Sal, innocently, in a tone of consolation. "Master has shown me a lot sometimes."

After a few words more Jess took her leave, and hurried off to a quiet public where Ned, Peace, and Kit were waiting for her.

"Well?" said Ned.

"It's quite true, the man is a diamond merchant," said Jess.

"Good."

"And there are sometimes thirty thousand pounds' worth of sparcKers on the premises at once."  "Thirty thousand pounds' worth!" echoed Peace.  "And a friend in the camp, eh, Jess?" said Ned.

"As to that, no. We can't count on Sal!"

"What!"

"That's where the mischief is."

"You did sound her?"

"Very carefully; and I was lucky I was cautious. She told me her story. She has gone in for virtue, fidelity, and most devoted attachment to her master and mistress."

"Booh!"

"Not a bit of it. All genuine."

"Well but, Jess," put in Kit, "you're a clever girl, couldn't you talk her over? Tell her we'll go snacks."

"If you might the devil try to persuade a Newfoundland dog to drown his master."

"Curse it!" said Ned.

"No swearing, my friends," exclaimed Peace, in his most sanctimonious tones, throwing up his eyes with an expression of holy horror.

"Perhaps this may be of some use to you," said Jess, with a smile, placing an object she had taken from her pocket on the table before them.

All bent forward to examine it.

"Yes," said Jess, "the locks of the workshop and of the office in which is a safe holding the diamonds."

"By all that's glorious, Jess, but you are a brick," cried Ned, enthusiastically.

"Besides, I know all the ins and outs of the place and shall call on Sal once or twice till I find out a good day to work on."

"Capital."

"Well, it is to be share and share alike between us, as arranged, I suppose?" said Peace.

"Stop a bit," remarked Ned. I'm expecting a friend who may have a word to say about that matter.

"Hello!" said Peace, "what's the meaning of this?"

"Oh? said Ned, and, going out, he returned with our old friend, the Count.

"This is the pal who has the big job of which I spoke to you on hand," said Ned to Peace.

"I remember," replied the latter, gruffly, for he strongly objected to a number of people being mixed up in any affair in which he was concerned. "But can one patter about it before him?"

"Yes, freely."

"No swearing, my friends," exclaimed Peace, in his most sanctimonious tones, throwing up his eyes with an expression of holy horror.

"I remember," replied the latter, gruffly, for he strongly objected to a number of people being mixed up in any affair in which he was concerned. "But can one patter about it before him?"

"Yes, freely."

"Oh, I will set you the example," said Anatole with a smile. "I know what you are up to now."

"Oh? said Peace."

"Yes, the little matter of the diamond merchant, in which I wish to figure as your partner."

"Hum! said Peace. "I think there are enough of us in it, as it is, to pull it off all right, and to share the glory."

"The diab? the diab?" said Anatole in a perplexed tone of voice. "What are the diab?"

"The plunder," said Ned, laughing.

"Well, suppose I show you how, in taking me as your partner, you can double, treble your share of the—how do you call it?—the diab?"

"Oh, bosh!" said Peace.

"Stop one little moment," said Anatole. "Suppose the little affair, the job, over, and the diamonds—the beautiful little diamonds—in your hands."

"Well?"

"Well, the diamonds are there—sparkling so prettily
pounds.

"Certainly," said the three men simultaneously.

"Just so—and then?"

"And then?" repeated Peace.

"Yes, what do you do? You can't live on diamonds."

"No, but we can sell them."

"Exactly that is what I wanted to come to."

"It's simple enough," said the old burglar.

"Perhaps. You have the diamonds in your pocket?"

"And we sell them."

"To whom?"

There was a silence of a few moments.

Anatole went on—

"Could either of you three go to a Bond-street jeweller the day after a big robbery, and offer him six thousand pounds worth of diamonds?"

The three looked at one another.

"It's true," said Kit. "We might arouse his suspicions."

"And cause him to send for the police—eh?"

"That's so."

"Then it's no use thinking of Bond-street jewellers."

"I'm afraid 'tis not an easy job to open the workshops and office doors, though the lock of the safe would probably present more difficulty."

"At length, on the appointed evening, the three met at Kit's lodgings, which were situated near Holborn."

"Before we start," said Peace, "I should like to put in a word or two."

"Go it," said Neil.

"Why the first is this. It sometimes happens that at the last moment something unexpected crops up and spoils the best-laid plan."

"That's true, but I think we have foreseen everything."

"Quite so. But at the last moment we may be surprised by someone, and I know your temper and ways," and as he spoke he addressed himself to Ned.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you are just the man to pull out your revolver, and blaze away, so as to raise not only the house but the whole neighbourhood, in such a way as to make it all well in the beat, but it won't do in London."

"You carry a revolver yourself."

"Yes, for country and suburban work, but not for this sort of job. If killing a man will get you one clear out of a bush, but it would be madness to use the arms in a case like the present."

"But I'm not going to use them. What more do you want?"

"Well, one thing," said Neil, sagely.

"I'll tell you what I want," replied Peace, looking him straight in the face. "I want you to take your revolver out of your pocket and place it on the table here."

"And if I won't?"

"Then I'll not stir another step in the matter."

"That is to say, you want me to be cock of the walk in this affair," said Ned, slyly supping a mouthful of grog.

"I don't want to be cock of the walk, but I want you to agree to those conditions, return the other, and the affair."

"You're a perky little upstart to talk about conditions," said Neil, pulling out his revolver and balancing it threateningly.

"We shall see about that," replied Peace, calmly producing a similar weapon and imitating him.

"And if I won't?"

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"We shall see about that," replied Peace, calmly producing a similar weapon and imitating him.

The two stood face to face for a moment.

There was a striking contrast between the comely, handsome and dashing, muscular ruffian and the precise-looking little old fellow in front of him.

At first sight it looked as if Neil could have eaten his adversary at a mouthful.

But the pale grey eye of the old little burglar was full of that cold resolution that ought to quell.
"Here, hang it all, don't be a couple of fools," cried Kit, throwing himself between them. "This is not the way to do business. Peace is right after all, and for my part there is my revolver."

As he spoke he placed it on the table.

Groveling like a bear with a sore head, and eying Peace in a manner that might have terrified a weaker minded man, Ned followed his example.

"Very well," he muttered as he did so, "but all the same, I think we are acting like a blasted pack of fools!"

"You know your own tastes best, Ned," said Kit; "but for my part I don't care about making the acquaintance of the Newgate drop if it can help it."

"And suppose three or four of the people in the house catch us at the job, what are we to do then, eh?" asked Ned of Peace.

"Try and break through them and get clear," was the answer.

"All very fine," said Ned to himself, "but although I have given up my revolver, I'll stick to my knife, and I should not be surprised if it did not come in handy before the night was over."

"Come," said Peace, "it's about time to start. The supper was fixed for ten, and by eleven everything will be in full swing. They will be laughing and drinking and making noise enough to wake the dead, and we shall not be heard."

"It's a capital day to choose," even if they do hear a noise, a robbery with all the guests in the house will be the last thing they will dream of."

"Hey, are we to get in?" asked Peace.

"Oh, I've arranged a signal with Jess," answered Ned. Some twenty minutes later the three were standing outside the house of the diamond merchant.

It was close on eleven o'clock, and the street, the houses in which were mostly let out in offices, was completely deserted.

Very few of the houses had any lights in their windows. The night was a chilly one, and there was a slight drizzling rain.

The three waited for a few moments making their final arrangements.

It had been agreed that only Peace and Ned should enter the house, Kit remaining outside on the watch.

The last named retreated, therefore, to the opposite side of the street, while Ned gave a low but distinct coo-ee—the Australian cry—which was the signal to Jess.

The girl, who was in the kitchen, heard it, and held her breath for a few moments, listening for the slightest sound from without.

"Pretty neat, eh?" answered Peace, with a chuckle.

"Yes," answered Ned, "but don't let us lose time."

The workshop was in total darkness, the shutter being closed, so Peace struck a match and lit a lantern.

By its light they approached the office door.

"There's one advantage in the closed shutter," said Peace, "and that is that no one outside can see the light."

He began to try the lock of the office.

"Confound it!" he said, after trying several keys one after another, "this is a more difficult job than I thought for. Hold the light closer."

Ned obeyed, and, after a careful examination, Peace selected another key.

"I think this one will settle it," he remarked.

His prophecy was correct, and next moment the office door was open.

The two stepped cautiously into the room.

The safe at once caught their eye. It was a heavy but old-fashioned affair.

"This will be the hardest nut of all to crack," said Peace, as he surveyed it.

"If I think this one will settle it," he remarked.

His prophecy was correct, and next moment the office door was open.

"All right, Sal, I'll answer it," and started out of the kitchen before the other girl had thought of stirring.

Running upstairs she opened the door and admitted Ned and Peace into the passage.

"Who is it?" suddenly called out Mrs. Mallan's voice from the landing above.

"A man wants to know if Mr. Thompson lives here, ma'am," was the ready answer.

At that moment the fur on the first floor had reached its height.

Supper was drawing to a close, and everyone's tongue hanging been set. Joking, joking, jokes were being bandied about on all sides, and all were trying to talk at once.

Corks popped, plates rattled, glasses jingled, and the combined din was almost deafening.

Jess pointed to the workshop door and darted down into the kitchen, where, as if inspired by the gaiety above, she began to sing in a loud voice, and to wash up plates and dishes with an accompanying amount of chattering that threatened every minute to demolish them.

Meanwhile Peace had drawn a set of skeleton keys from his pockets and applied one to the workshop door.

It opened easily, and the two men, slipping into the room, closed it quietly after them.

"Pretty neatly done, eh?" said Peace, with a chuckle.

"Yes," answered Ned, "but don't let us lose time."

"The workshop was in total darkness, the shutter being closed, so Peace struck a match and lit a lantern."

By its light they approached the office door.

"There's one advantage in the closed shutter," said Peace, "and that is that no one outside can see the light."

He began to try the lock of the office.

"Confound it!" he said, after trying several keys one after another, "this is a more difficult job than I thought for. Hold the light closer."

Ned obeyed, and, after a careful examination, Peace selected another key.

"I think this one will settle it," he remarked.

His prophecy was correct, and next moment the office door was open.

The two stepped cautiously into the room.

The safe at once caught their eye. It was a heavy but old-fashioned affair.

"This will be the hardest nut of all to crack," said Peace, as he surveyed it.

Selecting a fresh set of keys he began an attack on the lock, Ned eagerly watching him, and at the same time listening for the slightest sound from without.

(To be continued.)
NED KELLY
THE IRONCLAD
AUSTRALIAN BUSHRANGER
CHAPTER CLVI—Continued.

A muttered oath from Peace caught his attention.

"What is it?" he asked.

"The keys are no good here," was the answer.

"Hang it all!" said Ned. "What’s to be done?"

"Oh, there are more ways of killing a dog than hanging him," replied Peace, "and I have not come out without all my tools."

From his pockets he produced several crowbars of different lengths, a number of wedges, and a hammer. The tools were all made of the very finest steel, and the tops of the wedges and the head of the hammer were covered with leather.

"Shan’t you make an infernal row with these?" asked Ned in a somewhat uneasy tone.

"No," answered the other. "Just wait till you see me at work. I learnt this lesson from Casey, who so astonished all the big-wigs at his trial when he showed them that the strongest safe they could put together could be forced with a ‘common councilman’ (a wedge), ‘an alderman’ (a bigger wedge), and ‘the chancellor’ (the crowbar)."

Selecting an almost imperceptible crevice Peace succeeded in driving one end of a fine steel wedge into it.

Again the two paused for a while to see if the noise had been heard.

No; all was right, and the din above continued.

With a marvellous knowledge of the power and principle of the lever, Peace began to bring the crowbars into play, and, aided by Ned’s immense strength, succeeded in wrenching open the door of the safe, with, however, a crash that it was impossible to avoid.

"That’s awkward," said Peace.

"Sharply let’s clear it out," was the answer.

The diamonds were nowhere visible, till Peace hit upon the idea of burglars selecting such a moment for their attack seemed to him, however, so preposterous, that he had set the sounds down to mere fancy.

"Have mercy upon us! but he’s bleeding to death!" was the first words he ejaculated.

"Help! robbery! thieves! help!" were the first words he ejaculated.

Mr. Mallan, though a powerful man for his age, was no match for Kelly.

It is true that, by the suddenness of his attack, he had succeeded in throwing Ned to the ground, and in planting his knee on his chest. But Ned, hearing the noise of footsteps descending the stairs, understood that he was in fearful peril, and did not hesitate in having recourse to extreme measures.

Drawing his knife, he plunged it into his adversary’s stomach, before the latter suspected his danger.

The unfortunate diamond-merchant fell back with a low groan, and Ned, springing to his feet, dashed out of the office, along the passage, and through the outer door, just as the first of the guests, whom the shouts of Mallan had aroused, reached the bottom of the staircase.

CHAPTER CLVII.

THE ACCUSATION.

Suddenly aroused from the festivities by the shouts of Mr. Mallan, the guests hurriedly quit the supper-table in a body, and descended the stairs in time to see Ned just disappearing through the open doorway.

Whilst a portion of them rushed out into the street in pursuit, the rest flocked into the office, on the floor of which Mr. Mallan lay pale and bleeding.

"Help! robbery!" were the first words he ejaculated.

"Have mercy upon me, but he’s bleeding to death!" suddenly exclaimed a voice.

And poor Sal threw herself on her knees by her master’s side.

"Run for a doctor," cried someone.

"All right, I’ll go," said another.
"My poor wife!" murmured Mallan, "where is she? And for it to happen to-day, too—you're wedding-day!"

Mrs. Mallan at that moment made her way into the room, despite the efforts made to check her, and, at the same time, to make good her statement as if she were thunderstruck.

Then, kneeling down beside her husband, she raised his head and covered his face with tears and kisses.

"My poor old girl, it's nothing," he gasped, the sight of her grief making him forget even his own agony.

Sal, manfully, had recovered her sense sufficiently to descend to the kitchen, from which she returned with water and linen for bandages.

With a resolution and nerve none of the others seemed to possess, she opened Mr. Mallan's garments, and, having discovered the wound, set to work to staunch the flow of blood as best she could.

Whilst she was thus engaged the doctor entered.

He at once proceeded to complete the task begun by Sal, to whose prompt action he stated the patient probably owed his life, and then ordered that he should have a bed improvised at once in the office, as he was afraid to have him removed.

Hardly had this been done, before a sergeant of police arrived, accompanied by a detective in plain clothes.

The latter soon made her appearance.

"Good evening, ma'am," said the sergeant, drily. "As far as I can learn, this little job seems to have been a 'put-up' affair.

"What do you mean?" she replied.

"Impossible!"

"That's what people always say, ma'am," said the sergeant sternly, whilst the sergeant continued, "impossible!"

"I don't think there is much need of that," said the detective, "only one, the most faithful creature that ever breathed.

"Yes, ma'am, that's what they always are till they are found out."

"Oh, I can answer for mine."

"Well, I'd like to see her, if you've no objection."

"Certainly not."

And, going to the door, she called Sal.

"A young woman who came in to help me."

The latter soon made her appearance.

"Who is Jess?"

"A young woman who came in to help me."

"With your mistress's leave?"

"Oh yes—that is, only Jess."

"Who is Jess?"

"Jess Appleby. I think—I think she lives at Peckharn," said Sal.

"Then the police."

"But you don't know?"

"I don't believe it now, good gentleman—it's the women's group."

"Who is she?"

"Jess Appleby. I think—I think she lives at Peckharn," said Sal.

"Ah, I thought you would tell what kind of a girl she was at a glance," observed Mrs. Mallan.

"Oh! yes, I know what sort of a girl she is," said the detective. "I never forgot a face. She's a colonial convict named Sarah Benson, alias Paramatta Sal. Come, young woman, the best thing you can do is to make a clean breast of it, or I shall take you into custody as an accomplice."

"No, no, my poor girl," said Sal; "I don't suspect you."

"As she spoke she raised Sal to her feet.

The detective, shaken for a moment, had already recovered himself, and, accustomed to such scenes being acted before him, was again becoming sceptical.

Besides, he knew Sal's antecedents and how seldom a convict's repentance is genuine.

"You won't let them take me, missus?" cried Sal, wildly clinging to Mrs. Mallan as if she had the power to protect her against the law.

"No, no, my poor girl."

"You're very kind, ma'am, I'm sure," remarked the detective, ironically, "but I suppose as you won't mind us putting a few questions to this young woman that will help to put us on the track of the thirty thousand pounds' worth of property that has just been stolen, I'm told, from this place?"

These words acted on Mrs. Mallan as though a bucket of cold water had been thrown over her.

They restored her to a sense of her actual position, and of the ruin that threatened her and her husband.

"Certainly," she said; "ask what you like."

"You say then," he said, turning abruptly to her, "that you have no communication with the people who have carried out this robbery, and self-titled your master?"

"No—no, sir."

"Has there been anyone else in the house tonight besides the guests invited?"

"No—yes—that is, only Jess."

"Who is Jess?"

"A young woman who came in to help me."

"With your mistress's leave?"

"Oh yes, sir."

And Mrs. Mallan nodded in confirmation of this.

"Well, who is she?"

"A young woman, sir, I know."

"What's her other name, and where does she live?"

"I don't know."

"Continued the detective sternly; whilst the sergeant glanced at Mrs. Mallan in a way that plainly said—"You see, ma'am, we're on the track."

"I think—I think she lives at Peckharn," said Sal.

"No, you don't know?"

"No," answered the girl, in evident trouble.

"When did you first know her?"

"In Australia. She was a poor lost girl like me, and now she has reformed, and come over here to try and..."
earn an honest living; and I spoke to my mamma about her, and as she was doing very badly misused the milk of her she might give me the job of helping me to-night."

"A very pretty story. Where is she now?"

"I don't know."

"Isn't she in the house?"

"I haven't seen her since—let me see," said the girl, making a desperate effort to collect her thoughts, for she began to realize the peril in which she stood. "No, I have not seen her since I ran upstairs on the first alarm."

"I'll talk to you with you?"

"I think so; but I was so flustered, I can hardly tell."

"But you were in the kitchen when I went down for the water and bandage for master."

"And she ain't in the house now, is she, ma'am?" continued the man, addressing Mrs. Mallan.

A brief search established the fact of Jess's absence. The kindness with which she had been treated by Mr. and Mrs. Mallan, who had been reflecting for a minute or two.

"But sho wasn't in the kitchen when I went down for the doctor."

"I'm afraid she hasn't been there."

"Well, my girl, if you can clear things up, so much the better for you, but they look black enough just now."

"What did you say her name was?" said the detective, who had been reflecting for a minute or two.

"Jess Appleby."

"I thought so. You knew her in Sydney?"

"Yes."

"I heard of her too there, when I was in chase of a fraudulent bankrupt who had bolted there. And it is only the other day the news came that she was suspected of having aided the escape of the famous Ned Kelly, the ironclad bushranger, from Sydney jail. If she be here it's most likely he is here too, and they have done the job together."

"Great heavens!" said Mrs. Mallan.

"That's it, and the girl here is their accomplice."

"Oh! no, sir!"

"I cannot believe it," said Mrs. Mallan, but this time with something of doubt in her tone. "You must come along with us," repeated the sergeant.

"No, no," cried the girl, clutching her mistress's dress. "Don't take me."

"Do you want to keep up a row, and oblige us to take you by force?" observed the sergeant. "You know the master you pretend to make such a fuss about is lying in the next room, and that the least excitement, the doctor says, will kill him."

"I believe you, Sarah," said Mrs. Mallan sobbing, and the next moment Sal was led away in custody.

CHAPTER CLVIII.

A BETTER REFUGE.

When Ned bounded through the open doorway, he glanced hurriedly to the right and left.

Not a soul was in sight.

Peace had evidently got such a start of him as to have disappeared, though the bushranger fancied he caught the faint echo of flying footsteps to the left.

He turned sharply to the right and dashed off at full speed, followed by the guests, who had devoted themselves to his pursuit and capture.

Ned was a splendid runner, and the majority of those in pursuit of him could have had no chance with him at the best of times.

And now, having just risen from a hearty supper, there should have been less prospect than ever of their catching a man, not only naturally fleeter of foot, but running as he passed, but in each instance the assailant had paid enough that if this should happen his fate was sealed.

He was profoundly ignorant of the neighbourhood in which he found himself, and no matter how much he had swum, his footing from the shock, and he realized well that if this event happened his fate was sealed.

The yelling mob behind him would, in such a ease, be upon him before he had time to recover himself.

He laboured, too, under another terrible disadvantage. One he had knocked senseless by a blow with his fist, and his shoulder catching the other had hurled him into the middle of the street on the broad of his back.

But on each of these occasions Ned had nearly, lost his own footing from the shock, and he realized well enough that if this should happen his fate was sealed.

The yelling mob behind him would, in such a case, be upon him before he had time to recover himself.

He laboured, too, under another terrible disadvantage.

He was profoundly ignorant of the neighbourhood in which he found himself at that moment.

It was his object to choose the darkest and least frequent streets, in order to get out of sight of his pursuers, if it were possible.

If he could once accomplish this feat he felt he was safe from them.

As he tore along his chest began to burn and his head to swim, from the tremendous pace he was putting on.

He darted sharply down a dark and narrow street.
The pursuers, among whom more than one policeman was now included, kept on his track.

The street was dark and narrow and seemed quite deserted. So he thought that if he could only put on a spurt and get a little way ahead, he could turn sharply to the right or left, out of sight, and thus put the pack off the scent

The street curved somewhat, which was, he thought, a yet further advantage towards attempting this feat, though he could not as yet, in consequence of this, see the end of it.

Suddenly, on turning the curve, he saw its termination right ahead of him.

To his horror, he saw that the street led into a broad and brilliantly-lit thoroughfare, along which, despite the lateness of the hour, he could distinguish a constant succession of passengers and vehicles passing.

To go on would be madness.

To turn back and face his pursuers destruction.

He must turn off to the right or left.

He looked ahead.

Between him and the thoroughfare at the end of the street in which he found himself there was only one solitary turning visible.

It was a narrow street, narrower and darker even than on which he had himself turned, running off to the right.

He turned and plunged recklessly down it at full speed.

At the end of about fifty yards he pulled up suddenly, in horrible perplexity.

There was no thoroughfare! It was a cul-de-sac.

At the bottom of the street was a huge pair of wooden gates, evidently giving access to the yard of some factory or other, and securely fastened.

He glanced around him, but could plainly distinguish the noise of work going on, and see the glare of lights waving and flickering.

His position was maddening. Retreat was cut off, for he could hear his pursuers already at the upper end of the street down which he had just turned, and which had proved such a fatal trap.

He glanced around him. His first idea was to scale the factory gates, but he had already tried the door on this landing in quest of any means of descent.

His pursuers were approaching every moment.

He could not hear their voices but distinguish the dark outline of their advancing figures.

"We've got him now for certain," he heard one of them exclaim in jubilant tones. "There's no thoroughfare here.

"Look into each of the doorways carefully as you pass," said another voice, which evidently belonged to someone in command.

"That must be a police sergeant," thought Ned.

Suddenly another voice cried out eagerly:

"Here he is; see, at the end of the street, close by the factory gates there."

And a rush forward followed these words.

It was all up, they had seen him.

At that moment Ned noticed that the door of the last house on the right hand of the street, a house, which, from its position, evidently had nothing to do with the factory, was open.

He darted through the doorway, but before he had time to do so his pursuers caught sight of this movement.

Swinging the door to almost in their faces Ned groped forward till he found a staircase and began rapidly to ascend it.

He was barely halfway up the first flight when a thundering knocking at the door announced that his pursuers were still closely on his track.

The house in question formed part of the factory, which was a turpentine-maker's.

There was a press of orders on hand, which accounted for the man working at night and for the door of the building in which the offices were situate being open.

As the knocking, a watchman who was making his rounds on the ground-floor, and whom Ned had narrowly escaped meeting, since it was he who had left the front door open a minute or two before, went to the door, the slamming of which had also reached his ears.

"Who is there? what is it?" he asked.

"The police," was the answer. "A murderer has just taken shelter in this house."

"A murderer! Oh, Lord!" and, terrified at the idea of being shut up in the house with one, the man at once threw the door open without further parley.

A flood of people poured in at once, despite the efforts of the police to check them.

Ned heard their voices in the hall.

The rooms on the first-floor landing were all fastened, as he found on trying them in swift succession.

He darted up to the second-floor with the same result.

At last he reached the landing of the third floor.

It was the last.

And he distinctly heard his pursuers mounting the stairs.

The watchman had briefly explained that it was impossible for anyone to leave the hall on the ground-floor without being seen by him unless by way of the stairs, and the police sergeant, after stationed a constable at the outer door and one at a back entrance giving on to the factory yard, began to ascend, followed by the rest of those who had gained admission into the house.

Standing on the landing of the third story, Ned held his breath and listened to their approach.

By the faint light of the moon which had broken through the clouds and was streaming in from the landing window he had made a new discovery.

His hands, his wristbands, and the front of his shirt and waistcoat were stained here and there with the dried spots of blood.

The blood of Mr. Mallan which had spouted out over his coat and waistcoat was streaming in from the landing window he had made a new discovery.

It looked on to the yard of the factory.

It was only to leave another trace for his pursuers.

It would not do to break one open, as to do so would be fatal.

He had already tried the door on this landing in quest of a hiding-place, and found that, like those below, they were fastened.

He drew near to the window in order to get a better view of the damning stains on his garments.

They were not many, but on his right wristband they showed very conspicuously.

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It would not do to break one open, as to do so would be fatal.
He was just in time. The crowd, now somewhat lessened in number as the prospect of meeting a murderer at close quarters increased, locked up the stairs to the landing he had just left, and the lights carried by them flashed across the window.

At that moment the moon, which had been feebly shining a few minutes before, disappeared behind a thick veil of clouds, and all was dark as pitch without.

Ned heard an exclamation of surprise from the first who had ascended the stairs, and gained the landing.

"Not here! Why, where the devil can he have got to?" was his remark, in tones of astonishment.

"The staircase goes no further," said another.

"He must be in one of these rooms, then," said a voice which Ned recognised as that of the sergeant.

"Have you got the keys of them, watchman?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, let's have a look inside. You are sure the fellow went upstairs?"

"Yes; he could not possibly get any other way without passing me in the hall."

Then it strikes me he had some skeleton keys about him, and has let himself into one of the locked-up rooms either here or below, and refastened the door."

"That must be it," chimed in one of the police."

"Well, it's certain he's on either the first, second, or third floor. We'll give these rooms up here a thorough overhaul, and then work our way down in the same fashion. One thing is certain, he can't get out of the house, since all the doors are guarded."

The watchman handed the keys of the rooms to the sergeant, and retreated to a prudent distance like the bulk of the crowd.

They were evidently of opinion that the murderer might jump out suddenly on them like a jack-in-the-box from any of these rooms. The policeman smiled contemptuously as he suddenly threw open the first door.

The room, like those below, was used as a store-room; but on this occasion it happened to be empty of everything.

There was nothing to be seen but bars and shelves, and not a place where even a rat could have hidden himself.

The sergeant looked up the chimney and retired.

The other rooms were searched with a similar result.

Not a hole where he could hide; he must be below," said the sergeant, shaking his head.

At all costs he caught sight of another door in an obscure corner.

"What is that?" he asked.

"Oh," replied the watchman, "it leads to a kind of cock-loft."

Not a hole where he could hide; he must be below," said the sergeant, shaking his head.

"By Jove! that's just the place for him," cried the sergeant eagerly."

"Hullo! the door's locked too," he added, as he sprang forward and tried it."

"Have you the key?"

On hearing these words a ray of hope shot across Ned's mind.

If they all went into the cock-loft he might have a chance of slipping back through the window and trying to make his escape from one of the lower rooms. He heard the door opened, and the sergeant and several others ascended the stairs, and began to rummage the lumber stored away in the cock-loft.

He edged his way back towards the window, and risked a sidelong peep on to the landing.

Three or four figures, among whom that of a woman, were still standing on the landing.

It was only a rapid glance he dared risk under the circumstances, but somehow or other the woman's figure seemed to strike him as a familiar one.

But Ned thought this however, convinced him that this must be impossible.

His plan of re-entering the house by the window was

Not only was there this group of people on the watch on the landing, but most of them had a lighted candle to assist their hands. Yet he felt he must decide on something, for to remain where he was would be fatal, since daylight would at once reveal his situation.

An idea suddenly occurred to him.

It was to edge his way along the cornice as far as he could, in the hope of finding some other window which might open on to it like the one he had passed through.

As far as he could make out in the darkness, the cornice extended for a considerable length.

It seemed to extend as far again as the width of the house on which he had found himself, and he judged that it must therefore run along one adjoining it.

If this were the case, it would probably have another window opening from that one on to it, and corresponding to the one through which he had passed.

If so, he was safe. The task was a terribly perilous one, nevertheless. He would have to edge himself along inch by inch on the verge of a precipice forty feet deep. Still if he could once gain a window he was safe. Suddenly he heard a fresh murmur of voices on the landing.

The police had returned from the cock-loft and were consulting together afresh. They might take it into their heads to look out of the window, and it was necessary above all things for him to keep on beyond the range of their vision.

He no longer hesitated. Moving inch by inch, and with very possible precaution, in order not to lose his balance, he slowly turned so as to get his back to the wall and his face towards the courtyard.

Then he began to edge himself sideways along the cornice, holding on by each window-sill that presented itself to his wide-stretching reach.

In five minutes he had accomplished about twenty feet of the distance, when all at once, despite all his iron nerves and hardihood, a cold shiver ran through his frame.

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“By — if the infernal thing gives way under my feet just there,” was his sudden thought, “I shall be boiled alive.”

At this idea reason again almost forsook him. To fall from the height of a third storey through a glass roof into a huge cauldron of boiling pitch, was a prospect to appal anyone, however bold. But he found this idea impossible to carry out. The portion of cornice that had fallen was not more than two feet in length. To clear this gap of two feet it would be necessary to bound sideways across the void. Even if he succeeded in doing this without losing his balance the shock of alighting on the other side would infallibly carry away another section of the cornice, and himself with it.

Meanwhile, however, he reflected that every moment he remained in one spot increased the risk of the stucco giving way beneath him. He continued, therefore, to edge himself on till he arrived at a spot immediately over the meshes that had caught his attention below. As he worked along this part of his journey he trod as gingerly as ever a cat did on hot bricks. From time to time he glanced to his left, the direction in which he was going, to see if there were any signs of a window he had expected to find. At length he fancied he could discern the sill of it in the darkness dimly and close at hand.

He would be precipitated head foremost into the seething, flaming gulfs below. He could, indeed, distinctly make out the window some twenty paces ahead at the most. But between this harbour of refuge and himself the cornice was missing for a space of at least four or five feet in extent. This was the severest blow of all. To have a place of refuge before his very eyes, and to be delayed by it by a gulf that nothing short of wings would have enabled him to traverse was indeed a fearful one. He could neither advance nor retreat. And he was bound sooner or later to feel the section of cornice on which he was standing crumble away beneath his feet.

Then a fresh hope rose slowly in his breast. "If I could only manage to lie down at full length," he thought, "my weight would be more spread out, and the cornice might hold out till I could call attention to myself, for even capture would be preferable to this. Besides, I might, after all, in daylight see some way of getting off." As the cornice was fully twelve inches in width and Kelly had nerves of steel, or rather no nerves at all, the feat was not a difficult one.

With great difficulty, since every movement threatened to precipitate him into the abyss below, he succeeded, by degrees, in turning his legs sideways and sinking on to his knees. Then he gradually lowered his body till he was stretched at full length, face sideways, on the cornice.

When he had succeeded in accomplishing this, the reaction was so violent that his figure shook, like a leaf in a breeze, with emotion and the prospect of safety, as well as the possibility of being smashed up by a fall. But his hand, he felt carefully the line where the cornice started out from the wall. The least gap or crack here would have been a sign that it was on the point of giving way. He found no trace of this. What, perhaps, is one of them? He felt again, and fancied the stucco seemed very hard at this point. "It is stone, sure enough."

He passed one hand outside over the edge of the cornice, to feel if there was any support beneath, such as the head of a pilaster or a bracket. It seems very firm here, after all," he thought. "It feels quite as hard as stone, too. If it was stucco, it would already have given way. No, there must be some extra stay or other here, and I am safe. I can wait until——"

He was interrupted in this train of thought by a noise so slight that, at any other moment, it might have escaped him, but which at this critical juncture again caused a shiver to shoot through every limb. It was simply, however, a kind of faint, rattling sound, like that produced by a shower of hail against the window-pane. It came from below, and, faint though it was, it filled him once more with terrible anticipations. "What's that?" he asked himself. But, although he knew only too well, he dared not answer.

Yet he felt he must know the worst. Again he passed his hand along the cornice close to the wall. Yes, he was only too certain of the cause of the sound. The cornice was slowly but surely crumbling away beneath his weight, and the sound he heard was produced by its fragments rattling as they fell against the glass roof of the shed below.

He felt again. His groping fingers discovered a crack that he was sure had not existed a moment before, close to the wall. Only, instead of rebounding against the glass, his mauled body would dash through it, bleeding and mutilated, into one of the seething cauldrons. It was horrible, most horrible, to think of. He felt again. His grasping fingers discovered a crack that he was sure had not existed a moment before, close to the wall. It was, he felt, his death-warrant.

The cornice was parting from the wall. A larger piece than had hitherto fallen rattled smartly on the roof below him. It was to him as his death-knell. And what a death! To have fallen in free, fair fight, with his gallant steed beneath his knees, and the shote cracking fiercely around...
him, was a fate he had pictured to himself before now without terror, and at the present moment it rose before him not just like a vision of paradise. Even the hangman and the scaffold appeared ten thousand times preferable, since that fate would give him, at any rate, the glory of dying game in presence of an admiring crowd.

"By jingo! it's all over," he gasped. Involuntarily he closed his eyes. Helpless, hopeless, he set his teeth and, with his heart full of blind rage and hatred against all things on earth and in heaven, doggedly awaited his fate.

"Get over and out of my path," he said, repeating what, to him, was the creed of his whole life. Suddenly he fancied that he heard his name. He thought at first that it must be a delusion. But, lo! again a voice fell on his astonished ears.

"Ned, Ned!" it seemed to say. Was it a wild hallucination of his last hour?

"Ned, Ned, it's me—Jess," was repeated from above in tones unmistakably human. Ned opened his eyes and rose to his feet.

"Jess?" he gasped, hoarsely. "I'm here, at a garret-window, just over you. Don't move, and you are all right."

The next moment a long waving object came dangling past his eyes. It was a rope. Seizing it with both hands, he transferred his weight to it just in time, for he felt the crack in the cornice enlarging as he did so.

"Hold on tight at your end," he called to Jess.

"No fear; it is fast, and, besides, I am not alone," was the encouraging answer.

Grasping the rope firmly, Ned began to hoist himself up hand over hand to a small window which he now perceived some twelve feet or so above the cornice. This was a trick he had often before done, but, in the present case, the agondo through which he had passed had not been without its effect upon him, especially after the reaction.

After mounting about two-thirds of the distance he came to a stop, unable to proceed further.

"Come on!" cried Jess, anxiously watching him. "I'm pretty well burst up! I've gasped faintly. Don't throw up the sponge, old man," cried the girl. "If you stop you're bound to go. Twice more hand over hand will do it, for then I can reach your collar and give you a lift."

Ned, by this appeal, Ned hoisted himself a couple of feet higher. Then, blind and almost senseless, he felt himself seized by the collar and dragged through the garret window.

Ned sank partly insensible on the floor of the species of cockloft in which he now found himself, and which together, Ned, for you're not clear yet," was the reply. "The moral and physical strain he had undergone had pit rather sooner than he anticipated, and vanished, like all demons, in a blaze of fire.

The sergeant felt certain, on comparing notes with his followers, that the culprit had, as the watchman thought at first, put his hand to pull Ned in at the window, the bushranger's history would have ended then and there. But it was also evident that he had not gone down again, and, as a rigorous search in the rooms on the first and second floors revealed no trace of him, the officer began to entertain the idea that he might, after all, have got away somehow over the roof. Once more he ascended to the third floor.

"Is there any chance that he got out of one of the windows?" suggested one of his followers.

"Three storeys high—impossible!" said another. Nevertheless the sergeant advanced to the window and raised the sash.

"Nothing here," said he. "No ladder or anything to help him to get down?"

"No, for if he had we should have heard him crash through the glass down below there," said one of the others.

"You are a rare plucked one," said Ned admiringly.

"How you did Vanessa's," continued the girl. "I had a hard job to keep up, though I am reckoned pretty smart on my pins; but I reached this place just as the door opened, and rushed in with the rest. I slipped upstairs with them, keeping my wits about me, and when the police searched this cockloft I came up too, and managed to hide and remain behind when they left it, on finding you were not here. Then I began to look about me, and going to the window saw you lying on the cornice just below."

"If you'd have been a minute longer you'd have seen me go flying head foremost into the courtyard. It was a lucky idea of yours, the rope."

"It was not my idea. I quite lost my head, and could not even cry out to you at first."

"Not yours? Whose was it then?" asked Ned, in some amazement at this reply. "Kit's," answered Jess.

"What! you have too?" said Ned, catching sight of Kit.

"Yes, I had got to the end of the street when you passed me, tearing along like a steam-engine. I joined in chase with Jess, in the hope of helping you at a pinch, and came on here. But, as the girl says, the job's not over yet. They are still hunting for you through the house," was Kit's reply.

Kit had entered the loft with the police and Jess, and, after they had left, he arranged to return and join the girl in her efforts, whatever they might be, for Ned's deliverance. Had it not been for Kit's leading a hand to pull Ned in at the window, the bushranger's history would have been a trifle shorter; he would have tumbled into a boiler pit rather sooner than he anticipated, and vanished, like all demons, in a blaze of fire.

The sergeant felt certain, on comparing notes with his followers, that the culprit had, as the watchman ascertained, gone upstairs. But it was also evident that he had not gone down again, and, as a rigorous search in the rooms on the first and second floors revealed no trace of him, the officer began to entertain the idea that he might, after all, have got away somehow over the roof.

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"Nothing here," said he. "No ladder or anything to help him to get down?"

Kit, Jess, and Ned, in the garret above, could plainly hear these words.

The situation was as critical as ever, as the sergeant might take it into his head to search the garret again.

The sergeant was going to draw his head in when he suddenly checked himself, and lowered the light he carried down towards the cornice.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Someone has been walking along outside here. I'll swear!

He examined it further.

"Yes, there's no mistake about it; there are tracks of footsteps. It must be our man!"

"Blow it!" muttered Ned; and, glancing round the cockloft, which extended over the whole of the house, he caught sight of another window at the other end and went towards it. "He's on the right track!"

The sergeant thrust his body out of the window as far as he could, and held up his light.

"There's no doubt," he said. The traces of footsteps are plain enough, but whether they come out the cornice or not too. There's a gap that, as far as I can make out from here, is freshly broken away."

"Then he must have fallen," said one of the others.

"No, for if he had we should have heard him crash through the glass down below there. He must have got..."
beyond it just before it fell, for he can't have passed over it."

"Are you sure he has gone on?" inquired a policeman.

"He could not have come back," suggested the other.

"Is there another window he could have got into further on?" suggested the other.

"That's an idea. No, there's only one in sight, and that's a good twelve feet above the cornice, so he could not reach it without wings, and he's not the sort of angel to have those," said the sergeant, who, even with the aid of a ladder, could not reach it without wings, and he's not the sort of angel that's a good twelve feet above the cornice, so he could not have got into it without wings.

"And 'ave another look round there." suggested the other.

"There's no harm in proving it. It must be the window of the cockloft we were in just now, by its position, so we'll get up there somehow or other."

It was the shock of the mass of iron, thrown out by the water-pipe running along the wall, that made the window burst. The sergeant and all the other policemen rushed at once to the window to look out.

"That's him, sure enough," cried the sergeant. "He's got further along the cornice, and this time it's given way beneath him and let him down."

The next moment he and the majority of those with him were hurrying downstairs, the rest remaining looking out of the window.

"Now," said Ned. "We've five minutes clear, and the way is open," and he pointed to the other window, which opened on to a narrow alley.

"But how are we to get down?" asked Jess.

"You by the rope, and me any way after we have lowered you," said Ned.

As he spoke, he placed his hand on a water-pipe running down the wall.

Ned borrowed Kit's large black sailor's neckerchief, and tied it round his neck, spreading out the ends so as to cover his shirt-front.

He loosened his coat over his waistcoat, and tucked his wristbands well out of sight.

Then the three kept their eyes open till they found a drinking-fountain, at which he removed the blood that had dried on his hands.

This completed, he received directions as to the route he was to take from Kit, who knew London well, and, quitting the others, started off for Peckham.

Kit and Jess also separated.

Ned's first thought on waking the next morning was for Peace.

The idea crossed his mind that the latter, finding himself in possession of the whole of the booty, might be tempted to bolt with the lot.

It was with great satisfaction that he espied the little burgher make his appearance in his garden.

Peace had indeed been tempted to act as Ned had fancied.

Two things, however, had restrained him.

One was the fair value offered by Anatole for the diamonds, and the other the chance of losing his share in the other big robbery contemplated by Ned and the Frenchman.

He knew that Anatole, being a firm pal of Kelly's, would only pluck down the coin under the original agreement, which included the whole party; also, that it would pay him better to get closer on four thousand pounds for his share in a lump, than to try and get rid of the lot through other channels in detail.

Accordingly, he strolled close to his garden-wall on seeing Ned, and in a hurried whisper agreed to accompany the bushranger that same evening to the appointment made with the Frenchman.

This was at a little hotel frequented by foreigners, near Leicester-square, at which Anatole was temporarily sojournning.

They picked up Kit on their way, and, on arriving at the hotel and asking for Anatole, were shown to the billiard-room, where they found him engaged in executing a series of his favourite cannons, his opponent being a tall, black-bearded, and rather good-looking Frenchman.

As soon as the game was over, Anatole told a waiter to take some " grogs " up into his room, and invited the three visitors to follow him thither.

To their astonishment the black-bearded Frenchman was one of the party.

When they had entered the room, Anatole locked the door and requested them to sit down and help themselves to liquor.

Ned and Peace glanced at the stranger.

"And now, my friends, we will to business," said Anatole, with a bland smile. He spoke in broken English, but it would weary the reader to give his peculiar English.

The three exchanged looks.

"What business?" asked Peace, sharply.

"What business? Why, about the diamonds." "Stop a bit," said Ned. "Before we go any further, I want to know who this other monsieur is, and what has he got to do with the matter in hand."

"Ah! I see," said Anatole, gaily; "I have omitted to introduce you. I will remedy that. Gentlemen, let me introduce you to my friend Monsieur Chose, of Paris. Chose, mon ami, allow me to present you to my friend Monsieur Brown; he added, with a great affection of politeness.


"I'll take decent good care he don't choose us."
He was not aware that Chose is the equivalent in French for Thangany or Thangumb. 

"Gentlemen," said Chose, who spoke English like Anatole, "I am charmed to make your acquaintance." 

"But what has Mr. Chose got to do with this affair?" said Peace, warily. 

"My friends," said Anatole, facing them, with his shoulders shrugged up to his ears, and the palms of his hands turned outward, "when I say I will buy your diamonds, surely you did not imagine that I was going to buy them on my own account? I am not a millionaire nor a beautiful woman like Mes Jee," and he kissed his finger-tips; "and I do not see what I should do with thirty thousand pounds worth of diamonds. Do you see?" 

"I'm hanged if I do," said Kit. "You promised to buy them and whatever you mean to do with them after, is your affair." 

"Exactly. I promise to buy them, but not for myself. I am the middle man. Where should I find five, ten, fifteen thousand pounds? I am but the agent of my friend Monsieur Chose," said Kit, who understood French and had partly caught the phrase. 

"The trade could easily dispose of the lot."

"Aha! Then I suppose I am to pay you from twelve to thirty thousand pounds worth so many pence? Bah!"

"And what do you get, old Wide-O?" cried Ned. 

"Mr. Chose is not only a capitalist but an expert. He knows the value of the diamonds and is accustomed to deal in them. And as you are all my friends he will give you a fair price." 

"Do you mean to do with them after, is your affair."

"Exactly. I promise to buy them, but not for myself. I am the middle man. Where should I find five, ten, fifteen thousand pounds? I am but the agent of my friend Monsieur Chose," said Kit, who understood French and had partly caught the phrase. 

"The trade could easily dispose of the lot."

"I am prepared to buy thirty thousand pounds worth of diamonds whenever you like to produce them, but I do not think you could dream of a man of my experience would be taken in by such imitations as those."

"Imitations?" screamed Peace. 

"Yes, there does not seem to be a genuine stone in the lot." 

"It's a plant," cried Peace, in a bewildered fashion, after the three had recovered from the stupor in which this announcement had plunged them. "He wants to get the stones cheap." 

"Chump?" retorted Chose, ironically. "I have no wish to deprive you of them at any price." 

And he pushed the lot contemptuously across the table towards him. 

"This is worse than a crime—it is a blunder," quoted Anatole to Kelly, across the table. "You should not try such tricks on your friends, at any rate."

"Tricks on my friends?" cried Kelly, glaring round each of his companion. "Lib's on me the trick's played. By —, and I think I see it, too." 

And he laughed savagely. 

"What do you mean, Ned?" asked Kit. 

"Mean? Why, that this d-d white-faced, pale-writing, double-faced skunk has changed the diamonds."

As he spoke, the bushranger turned fiercely on Peace and seized him by the throat. 

Peace vainly strove to free himself from this terrible clasp. 

For a moment he strove desperately to uncheck Ned's hands. 

Then one of his own wandered to his pocket, but Ned saw this movement, and, removing one of his hands from his victim's throat, pinned both the unhappy man's wrists with his iron fingers. 

Peace was getting black in the face and his tongue was protruding, before the others, who when their first surprise was over had started forward, could succeed in freeing him from the grasp of his assailant. 

For a moment it seemed as though Ned was about to assail the whole lot indiscriminately. 

Peace, who had been left back in a chair, was slowly recovering himself. 

He cast a bitter look of malignity at Ned. 

"Come, come, Ned," said Kit, "you're too hasty. There must be some explanation. Can you tell us anything about it?" he continued to Peace.
Only that I have been a precious fool to break through my rule of working single-handed," said the latter, gloomily.

"But the diamonds?"

"The diamonds are just as I took them out of the cash-box in Mallan's eftice," answered the other. "I had not even looked as them till now."

"This is all very strange," said Anatole.

"After the way in which I have just been treated," continued Peace, "I might with justice refuse to speak. But I want the affair cleared up, as well as you, and I think I can prove that I had nothing to do with changing these stones. In the first place, if I had chosen to bolt with the whole of them the night of the robbery, there was nothing to hinder me from getting clear off, and never facing any of you."

"That's true."

"In the second place, what opportunity have I had since then of procuring unset false diamonds to replace them? And, in the third, if I had changed them, should I have been fool enough to come here with you and risk discovering for no one of us, I suppose, dreams that those gentlemen would buy the stones without examination. I should have let you go on alone with my share, and quietly sloped."

He looked as if he regretted not having done the trick of which Ned had accused him.

"I suppose," said Kit to Chose, "all the stones are false?"

"All," said the Frenchman, who had been carelessly picking them up and glancing at them during Peace's explanation. Some are paste, some natural crystals. But there is not a single diamond in the lot, and no one who has ever handled precious stones would be deceived for more than a moment.

Ned advanced in silence to the table, and gathering up the glittering bits of mineral, restored them to the bag, and placed the latter in his pockets.

"You don't think I'm in this plant?" he asked of Anatole.

"No," said the other, who understood him.

"And I'm blessed if I can quite tell who is," continued Kelly, in a low tone.

"Stop a bit," said Peace. "I want to know something more about these stones. You say they are false, but how do I know, especially after the way in which I have been treated, whether all this is not a get-up affair, simply to make me do out of my share, after I have had the hardest work, and all the arranged beforehand between you and your pal the Frenchman?"

This assertion startled the others, and they looked at Peace in amazement.

"I demand to have the stones tested," he continued.

"That will not be so difficult," said Monsieur Chose, turning to a travelling-bag in one corner of the room. "Here is a book in English on precious stones, describing how to tell a true diamond. Here, too, are the materials for the various tests it mentions. If the stones are good, they will stand them, if false they will be destroyed."

Ned pulled out the bag, and the whole party began to assay the stones, and found Chose was correct. As a further test they called out, and Peace and Chose entered a respectable jeweller's the latter introduced himself as a foreigner in the same line, and requested him to examine half-a-dozen of the stones, to decide a wager.

The man unhesitatingly pronounced them "duffers."

The party separated somewhat downcast.

Chose had lost the chance of a splendid bargain, Anatole, and the other, and their three the fruit of their labours.

But as Ned went, he observed in a low tone of determination—

"Before I've done I'll find out who haunring the changes on me in this fashion. I am certain that little devil has pocketed us somehow."

Mr. Mallan was evidently a cute customer and didn't even trust his household. The real diamonds were elsewhere. He rather ostentatiously let it be known where the "duffers" refused.

CHAPTER CLXI.

A NIGHT ON THE THAMES.

There is a kind of " debatable land," on which the market-gardener and the " ferry-builder " contend for supremacy, stretching eastward between the Old Kent-road and the river.

It is a dreary region, the chief features of which are flat fields given up to the cultivation of vegetables for the London market, unfinished streets leading nowhere, and fringed by houses in every stage of construction, rows of buildings " ears," immense circular hangars, and a network of interesting railway lines, almost devoted to the goods traffic.

At the side of the main thoroughfare, traversing it toward Rotherhithe, stands a quaint, old-fashioned roadside public, bearing the strange title of the Old Gatley Wall.

It is an isolated house surrounded by vegetable-gounds, looking bare and desolate, even in daylight.

Still more bare and desolate looking did they appear to a tall, powerfully-built man tramping along the road in the midst of one evening at dusk, some three days after the scene described in the last chapter, and making his way eastward, and it was with a grunt of satisfaction that he marked the house and noticed the light shining from behind the old-fashioned red curtain of the bar.

"This must be the place," he muttered, "and just about I have had to fight for it."

Crossing over the road he approached the house, and, as he did so, another man, who despite the lateness of the hour had been sitting on a bench just outside the door, roused and greeted him.

"I had got to wondering whether you were coming or not," he observed.

"I'm blessed if I could find the crib," replied the other.

"It got blundering on down streets that ended in fields, and roads that finished up in market-gardens, till I fairly lost all bearings. It's worse than the bush, for there a track is pretty sure to end somewhere, and you've always got the sun or the stars to travel by, but in this cursed mulligatawny sky you've got nothing, day or night, to guide you. The beastly place! I'm dead sick of it, I观测ed."

"Well, you're here at last, though a bit late. We'll have one drink, and I'll put you up to the business as we go along."

The two entered the bar, and, by the light, stood revealed as Kit and Ned.

After tossing off a glass of spirits and water a-piece, they set out together in the direction of Rotherhithe.

On their way Kit explained to Ned the service he wished him to join in.

Although the days of Wilf Watch and his followers are past and gone for ever, and it is no longer possible to run a cargo of smuggled goods ashore in the very teeth of the coastguard, and beat them off with the assistance of the entire countryside, there are still a number of men who devote a great deal of spare time to what is known as defrauding Her Majesty's Revenue, an offence which, some how or other, is practised without compunction by gentle and simple.

Of course, now-a-days, ingenuity has replaced force, and counties are the dolges adopted.

Kit had become acquainted with some men engaged in this kind of enterprise, and had joined with them in a venture.

They had brought a quantity of tobacco over in a brig from Hamburg.

He to Custom-house officers, however, and got an scent of the scheme, and were on the lookout.

The tobacco, previously compressed to the smallest pos-
and they used just to squint as he drove past, and nothing more, and regular as clockwork every day. But after that they used to go through and they would

"So I should think," assented Ned.

"There's an old chap in the swim who was telling me some of their little tricks the other night. Once he came across towards Christmas time with a whole lot of French walnuts. Whoppers they were, he said, and several score of bushels of them. But he said he felt devilish nervous at their looking so tempting, lest one of the tide waiters should fancy cracking a dozen." "Why?"

"Because, having a sprinkling on the top, all of them had been carefully emptied and the shells glued together again, with a small-sized kid glove rolled up inside each of them. The duty made it worth while then."

"Tobacco wouldn't do that way, it would smell too strong."

"Oh, he'd done tobacco lots of ways—in reams of printing paper with a square cut out of the middle of the inner sheets, and in plaster of Paris buds made hollow, only their breaking so easily made it risky."

"Ah! Anatole was telling me that that was the way they used to smuggle the pamphlets attacking the Emperor, into France."

"Ay, I've heard of that."

It was indeed in this way that Rochefort's famous Lanterne used to be brought across the Belgian frontier, the busts selected being those of the Emperor himself, as being less likely to arouse suspicion of such a thing.

Anatole told me a pretty good yarn about a dodge he and a pal of his were working in Paris, when he was there.

"Yes, but that wasn't all. It seems he used to empty the engine-rooms of some of the big river-steamers regularly through the day at different points."

"Anatole told me a pretty good yarn about a dodge he and a pal of his were working in Paris, when he was there last," remarked Ned.

"Yes, and filled them from hat to boots with spirits. Of course, for the first week or so there had been a real barrier, and used to drive out rounds in a lieutenants uniform, and the end was they ran through a lot of bushels."

"Yes. Our agent used to live just outside the barrier all round, with gates, and customs officers at each."

"Yes, I know."

"Well, Anatole's agent used to live just outside the barrier, and drive in every morning in a light dogcart. There was a rage for English turnouts just then; and he'd got a neat trap and a pretty stepper in the shafts, his arms folded and never a smile on his face."

"Wait a bit. Everyone used to carry him his tobacco, especially the groom so awfully well-trained, sitting with his arms folded and never a smile in his face."

"Was he an Englishman?"

"I'll tell you. Well, one day he was driving in as usual, a runaway van came biting down the street. He tried to clear it, but the gates were narrow and there were other traps in the way, and the end was they ran right into him, took off his wheel, and shot him and the groom and the trap clean over."

"Nice that."

"They picked up the master first and carried him into the customs-house, for he was cut about the head."

"They left the trap lying quite still under the trap, for it had turned over on him, and the horse had fallen with it."

"There he lay, with a little pool of something spreading out round him, which they thought was the poor fellow's blood, and which kept growing larger every minute."

"There he lay, with a little pool of something spreading out round him, which they thought was the poor fellow's blood, and which kept growing larger every minute."

"They thought he must be dead, and that it was his blood; but directly they came close, they began to sniff a very strange smell, and when they laid hands on the car-case they twigged the dodge at once."

"Yes, and filled from hat to boots with spirits. Of course, for the first week or so there had been a real barrier, and the end was they ran through a lot of bushels."

"What an artful dodge."

"Yes, but that wasn't all. It seems he used to empty the dummy at a crib inside the barrier, drive out by another gate, and come back through that one with a fresh lot. In fact, he used to run three or four cargoes regularly through the day at different points."

"Then he used to run three or four cargoes regularly through the day at different points."

"If the engine-rooms of some of the big river-steamers here could speak, they'd pitch some queer yarns," said Kit.

"They're the best hiding-places, for people don't like poking their noses too closely into furnaces and boilers at the risk of getting burnt, or scalded, or blown up."

(The to be continued.)

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NED KELLY
THE IRONCLAD
AUSTRALIAN BUSHRANGER
“Right you are.”

“Tell me then, what’s your own craft ready?”

“Not too well,” answered one of the men, whose speech rather belied his dress. “There’s a supervision-boat prowling about up and down in a way that shows there’s something about it.”

“Well,” said Kit, “how are things looking?”

“Well again, the sooner we get afloat the better.”

The tide was running up, and had almost reached its height. They simply entered the bar, had a drink, and went out for half-an-hour at least, over a pot of porter, finished it up, and went out also.

Ned and Kit were loitering at a corner when these two came up to them.

“Well,” said Kit, “how are things looking?”

“Not too well,” answered one of the men, whose speech rather belied his dress. “There’s a supervision-boat prowling about up and down in a way that shows there’s something about it.”

“Is your own craft ready?” asked Kit.

“No,” answered the man who had before spoken, “that’s that cursed police-boat dodging up and down, i.e. there’s another hiding behind something away on this side, and ready to pounce on you over there.”

“Hush, no Thieves at work. Be quiet.”

Emboldened apparently by the silence, the plunderers were seen to descend into the cabin of the craft they had boomed.

Suddenly, from behind a tier of barges a few dozen yards above the point where Ned and his friends were lying, a boat shot swiftly out into the stream.

She was manned by three oarsmen pulling tandem, and was unmistakably a police boat.

She headed straight for the plunders, and had made nearer to the men before the last of the boat noticed her approach which was as stealthy as swift.

Directly he did so, however, he warned his comrades, and they came boiling up from below and tumbled into their craft.

Seizing their oars they pulled desperately, with the police boat in hot pursuit, the latter striving to get them off from the Surrey shore, to which they were endeavouring to make their way.

“Now’s our time,” cried Kit, as pursuers and pursued were lost for a few moments behind some shipping.

“Yes,” answered the man who had before spoken, “that boat was watching the Welcome, but now she’s in for a good chance on the top of the ebb, and the other will probably help her, so we’ve got a clear field. They’ll be some time working back.”

A few minutes later and they were alongside the brig they had been watching.

They were evidently expected, for a low hail greeted them as the bow oar looked on to her.

Several figures appeared moving on the deck.

“How are the things ready?” asked Kit.

“Yes,” was the answer. “Will you come aboard?”

“No; tumbled in sharp. We’ve just got a chance of getting clear before that beggar down there has time to work back again.”

Several bulky packages were lowered in quick succession over the brig’s side and received into the boat, where they were quickly stowed at the bottom of the little craft. All went well till one of the last of them was being lowered.

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NED KELLY.

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It sank at once.

"Catch all!" said the stroke-oarsman; "there's a pretty job. Who the devil hitched the rope round that lot in such a clumsy fashion?"

"Look out; that splash is bound to be heard," whispered a voice from the deck.

"Ned," said Kit, bending over Kelly, who still lay at the bottom of the boat. "Ned, are you hurt?"

There was no answer.

Kit stooped quite close to the prostrate form of his brother, and endeavoured to ascertain the extent of his injuries.

The moon was still behind the clouds, but as far as he could make out Kelly had been stunned by his head coming against one of the seats in his fall.

A couple more packages were lowered.

"Put off at once," said Kit.

Ned, who was evidently insensible, was placed in the stern of the boat, and the two oarsmen pulled the boat out into the stream.

The haze was clearing, but it was still dark.

All at once the moon broke forth; behind the clouds and lit the scene, making it appear as bright as daylight, by the contrast.

Kit stooped down once more in order to get another look at Ned, who continued insensible, by the improved light.

As he did so an exclamation of rage broke from the stroke-oarsman.

The moon had revealed to him a four-oared galley right astern of them, and evidently about to attempt to overtake them.

"Here's that infernal supervision-boat astern of us," he exclaimed, fiercely.

"Does she see us?" said Kit, who had just dipped his head under the stream and was dashing the water from it over Ned's face.

"Yes, and she's after us." A hail from the stranger confirmed this.

"Pull on like devils, then," said Kit, who had glanced round to measure the distance between them, "we may dodge her yet along the other shore.

A species of green escaped Ned at this junceurce, and he opened his eyes.

"Ned, Ned!" cried Kit.

"What is it?" he answered, sitting up.

"Can you take an oar?"

Making a desperate effort to shake off his giddiness, Kit had continued to edge still further to the left.

He took the stroke-oar's place, the latter seizing on a couple of packages from the bottom of the boat, tossed them overboard.

A couple more followed.

"Hold on at that!" suddenly cried Kit, "and pull away like mad. I see a chance of doing it, after all."

The man resumed his oars, and the boat, thus lightened, went considerably faster.

The tide had been running down some time, and several vessels had pushed up to get under way.

Harges and sailing-vessels were slowly drifting down, and more than one big steamer, lying in mid-stream, had slipped her moorings, and was making her way along under easy steam.

Time of the tide was coming along behind them, taking a course almost parallel with that of their pursuer, but nearer to the Middlesex shore.

She was going at about the same rate as the police-galley, and both were gaining on the fugitives.

"If we keep straight on we are bound to overtake another police-boat," said Kit. "Our only chance is to double, and I mean to risk it."

First he began to edge a little towards the Surrey shore, as though intending to try to land there.

The police-galley followed his example to cut him off.

Then he steered once more out towards mid-stream, and straightened the boat's course.

The galley partly imitated this, and thus still kept a little nearer the Surrey shore than the smugglers' craft.

These little manœuvres had somewhat delayed the direct advance of the boats, and the steamer had gained on them considerably.

She was creeping up towards the port quarter of the boat steered by Kit, her long, wall-like sides towering like a castle out of the water.

Kit began to edge a little towards her.

The steersman of the police-boat noticed this, and began to make sure of his prey.

The advance of the steamer would cut the smugglers off from all chance of gaining the Middlesex shore, except by going astern of her.

"Now!" he suddenly cried. "Pull every ounce you can for your lives!"

And, altering the boat's course, he headed her straight across the steamer's bows for the Middlesex shore.

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And, altering the boat's course, he headed her straight across the steamer's bows for the Middlesex shore.

There was a yell from the look-out man on board the steamer as the boat rushed in, as it were, to certain destruction.

But Kit had judged speed and distance to a nicety.

There was no time to alter the steamer's course, and it was the nearest thing that he managed to clear her.

As it was, her outworn missed his stern by about a yard.

The look-out man cursed him heartily, after the manner of his kind, for not getting swamped, as he deserved.

But once across, and with her bulk intervening between them and the police-galley, there was a chance of escape.

Heading for a tier of vessels moored near the shore, Kit pulled along behind them.

The galley had no chance of passing as he had done, but had to wait and go astern of the steamer.

This caused a delay of some minutes, during which the chase was hidden from view by the hull of the large craft she had so narrowly avoided.

When, at length, the galley passed across the steamer's wake, those on board her could discover no sign of the fugitives.

However, they pulled in towards shore, closely scrutinising every lurking-place.

Meanwhile, Kit had steered into the first stairs that presented themselves.

The boat was soon alongside.

"This is lucky. I think we can find shelter close by for ourselves and the swag," said the oarsman.

Each man seized upon one of the remaining packages, hoisted it on his shoulder, and, abandoning the boat to its fate, set off up the lane.

As they approached the summit, the tramp of a heavy footstep caught their ears, and the next moment the light of a bull's-eye lantern flashed upon them.
CHAPTER CLXIII.

DOWN WAPPING WAY.

The position of Ned and his companions was a ticklish one.

To go back and take to their boat again was to expose themselves to almost certain detection by the police on the river.

To go forward was apparently to run right into the lion's jaws, for there was evidently a policeman at the end of the alley in which they found themselves.

Perhaps more than one.

But an uncertain peril is always easier to confront than a certain one, with the majority of mankind.

So, after a momentary hesitation, they proceeded onwards up the alley.

Before they had gone many steps the light of a bull's-eye was flashed upon them, and a voice cried—

"What's your game?"

The presence of four men stealing up from the river, each with a sack on his shoulder, was in itself suspicious enough to cause this interrogation.

There was no time to stop and try to give a more or less plausible explanation.

The pursuers were too close behind.

"All right, bob—bob—by," hiccupped the rower, who was leading the way, staggering forward as he spoke with the voice and gait of a drunken man.

"Oh! Soul where you are, or——"

The policeman had not time to complete the sentence.

Suddenly dropping his load, the other sprang forward on him like a panther on a goat.

The policeman was a powerful young fellow, and if he had had to do with this single antagonist he might have given a good account of himself in spite of the sudden surprise caused by this unexpected attack.

Before, however, he could disengage himself, or even utter a word for help, Ned, Kit, and their remaining companion had in turn dropped their burdens and joined in the ferocious and unequal assault.

There was a brief but desperate struggle.

A closely-interlaced group of human figures writhed and swung around to and fro in the blackness of the alley.

The hurried trampling of their feet, their hoarse breathing, a muttered oath, and a gasping cry for aid, choked back in the throat of the helpless bobby, who vainly strove to utter it, were the only sounds that rose out of the inky darkness.

Kit and the second rower had pinioned the policeman's arms whilst his right hand was grappling his throat with one hand and thrusting a handkerchief into his mouth with the other.

Meanwhile Ned had possessed himself of the unfortunate fellow's truncheon, which he had withdrawn from the case.

Two crushing blows followed.

The thickness of the intended victim's helmet saved him, however, from their full effect, and, node to desperation by the peril in which he found himself, he succeeded in partly freeing himself from the grip of his assailants by one desperate effort.

"Help! man——" he shrieked, as they again secured him.

There were hats, if not "wigs upon the green" in this melee, during which Ned kept a hold upon the safety-valve or throat of his antagonist, whose helmet, his only protection, now tumbled to the ground.

In the struggle the group had reached the end of the alley, and the rays of light from a neighbouring lamp partially lit up their figures.

Those left seemed to concentrate, as it were, on the white, horror-struck face of the doomed victim, which was revealed by them in all its ghastliness of aspect.

A wild look of despair flitted across his distorted features, as Ned raised the truncheon.

"Murder!" again broke in half-strangled tones from the terror-parched lips of the poor fellow.

Ned saw at once that unless the constable's voice was silenced, the career of himself and his companions would soon be decided by the tribunals of the country.

His strength struck the poor wretch in his grasp a heavy blow with the truncheon he had wrested from him.

The man tumbled like a sack, and for a moment the mutes paused, as if paralysed by the atrocity they had committed.

The poor fellow was a corpse, although of this fact the crew who were responsible for his death were not quite certain.

Not that Kelly or Kit cared much for the chance, still that uncertainty of results which would follow perhaps and somewhat escort them.

The four ruffians gazed at one another for a few seconds in silence and with half-frightened looks.

Ned and Kit were unnerved; both had seen too much blood in their time to trouble themselves about a little more or less spill on their path through life.

But the other two were not so hardened.

A little smuggling they did not mind, but killing a man—even a policeman the natural enemy of their class—was quite another matter.

Ned was the first to speak.

"Now, then, don't be chicken-hearted, my lad. It's done, and you're all in it, so let us slide, and be quick about it, if we mean to slope. Pick up the plunder, and don't stand staring like frightened calves."

If the other two were more civil than Kelly liked.

The struggle had carried them to some distance from the spot where they had thrown down their loads, and in the darkness of the alley it was not easy to discern them, despite their bulk.

The policeman's bull's-eye had been extinguished in the scuffle to which he had fallen a victim, so they had to grope for a few moments in the darkness.

Just as they had managed to lay their hands on the packages, the sound of a boat running sharply to shore reached them from the bottom of the alley.

The noise of someone scuttling to land and of a voice exclaiming, "I'm certain they ran in here," also fell upon their ears with most unpleasant distinctness.

Hastily lifting their packages, they scuttled out of the alley into the main street.

As they stood for a moment and seemed to hesitate whether to turn to the right or the left, the noise of footsteps approaching from the latter direction decided them.

They turned sharply to the right.

Flitting cautiously onward as silently as possible past huge and gloomy warehouses, they made their way in a s stealthy direction, with eyes and ears on the alert.

"We must spread," suddenly observed the man who had pulled strok-ear in the boat, and who answered to the name of Dick amongst his friends, and to that of Lomax on police summonses.

"Why?" inquired Kit.

"We shall get into the livelier streets in a minute or two in this direction, and four men carrying bundles are bound to be spotted by somebody or other and remembered."

"Besides," remarked his companion, "there is bound to be a bobby at the swing bridge just ahead, and he is sure to stop and question us like the other bloke."

A rapid council of war was held.

As Ned was a perfect stranger to the rendezvous to which they were all bound, and which was situated in Wapping, it was absolutely necessary that some one or other should guide him thither.

Kit was about to suggest that he should do so.

Before, however, he could open his mouth for this purpose, Ned sought to hinder and impede—

"You and Dick Lomax both know your way to the meeting-place, and can get there separately. Let Bob here stay with me to show me the right road."

The others acquiesced, though Bob did not seem particularly well pleased at this little arrangement.

This feeling he strove as best he could to conceal.
As it happened, this plan had quite a contrary effect to
what he anticipated as regarded Ned and his friends.
They were, as has been said, in a street bordered by
huge and gloomy warehouses and running parallel with
the river.
A short distance ahead it led over a swing-bridge
crossing an inlet to one of the numerous docks of
the locality.
Beyond this bridge there were several turning leading
to the street, by means of which the party could
separate.
But between the spot in which they were and the bridge
there was no such way of getting clear.
It was absolutely necessary that they should cross the
swing-bridge, now some ninety or a hundred yards ahead.
But it was already pretty equally certain that a policeman
would be found on duty at that very point.
The difficulty was how to avoid him.
Suddenly Ned's keen ear caught the sound of someone
approaching from the direction in question.
The peculiar heavy clumping step of a man aloof with
the regulation police boots was unmistakable.
At the same instant the whole of the rafters sprang by the
inspector sounded far in the rear.
Swift to conceive a plan, Ned dragged his companions
into the dark archway of a warehouse door.
The result answered his expectations.
The policeman, who was the man on duty at the bridge,
had been keeping himself warm by pacing up and down.
But directly he heard the raclle he darted off at full speed
in the direction from whence it proceeded, in order to
render the assistance it called for.
He bolted past the archway beneath which the four
fugitives were lurking without glancing to the right or
to the left, blundering along like a steam fire-engine.
Directly he had passed them they darted out in turn,
and rushed in the opposite direction to that he had taken.
In another minute and a half they were over the bridge,
and soon separated, making their way up the different
effects beyond it.
The rendezvous to which the smuggled goods were to
be conveyed was situated at Wapping.
According to the original plan, which had been inter-
rupted by the appearance of the police boat, they were to
have pulled down the river and landed in close prox-
imity to it.
Now they had to make their way thither on foot.
Kit and Dick departed by different routes.
Bob, upon whom Ned's guidance now devolved, led the
way in sulky silence, followed by Kelly.
Avoiding the main thoroughfare, he made his way
through a series of streets so dark, narrow, and deserted,
as to excite even Ned's astonishment.
Lights were few and far between, and several times
Kelly stumbled over a pile of garbage lying in the road-
way, and had a narrow escape of coming to the ground.
His companion, however, seemed to know every square
inch of the district they were traversing, and never once
made a false step.
Narrow grew the streets, darker the way, and wider
the stetches they had to encounter the further they ad-
vanced.
They were in a network of filthy little streets bordered
by houses almost in ruins.
Suddenly Ned, for about the twentieth time, stumbled
against a heap of some kind of filth or other, and the next
instant measured his length in the roadway, which was,
fortunately, tolerably clean.
Growing like thunder he rose to his feet, and, after
picking up his burden, looked round for his companion.
Bob had vanished.
There was no sign of him anywhere.
For a moment Ned thought that he too might have fallen
over something.
"Bob, are you down?" he asked softly.
There was no answer.
“Bob—Bob! where the devil are you?” he cried, in louder tones.

Still no reply.

“Bob, what’s your little game?” yelled Ned, setting prudence at defiance.

Then a thought struck him.

There could be no doubt of it—Bob had bolted from him on purpose.

He recollected the peculiar look he had noted on his late companion’s face, and which had led him to insist upon his company in order to watch him.

Bob had evidently profited by his fall to bolt up one of the side streets, and knowing the ground, as he clearly did, was long since out of reach.

But what had he bolted for? Ned guessed only too well.

He stood still a moment to ponder on his next movement.

He knew his pal was off to hand the lot over to justice, and get the reward—for reward there certainly would be—for the capture of the policeman’s murderer.

He ground his teeth with rage as not having removed this witness from the face of the earth when he had the chance he might never have again—no one near, night as dark as Erebus, the policeman’s trampe on, everything so handy!

What a tender-hearted fool he was! It was losing the best chance he would ever have—it was a regular flying in the face of Providence, it was—at least, so thought Mr. Edward Kelly.

It was as Ned surmised.

Bob judged that the murder of the policeman was too serious a matter to be involved in, and had, therefore, made up his mind to secure immunity for himself by denouncing his comrades, on whom he intended to lay the lion’s share of the deed at once.

CHAPTER CLXIV.

ORTON AS GUIDE, PHILOSOPHER, AND FRIEND.

Ned’s situation was not a pleasant one.

He was in a neighbourhood with which he was utterly unacquainted, and which was not the most pleasant in the world for a stranger to be wandering about at night in.

He did not know in what direction he ought to proceed, and, moreover, there was no one to ask.

He knew that he was in a neighbourhood of wild beasts in the shape of men—that the place was about as safe to an unarmed man as the woods and wolves of Russia in winter.

But fear was an element of the human mind unknown to Kelly.

His courage was ferocious, brutal, and the reckless pluck of the unreflecting; it was the courage of the brigand, not of the soldier.

The great peur d’eau had never yawned before him, and crime has lost half its terrors when it has lost all its responsibility.

He knew that all was fish that came to the net of the human tiger who infect these quarters, and that, despite the Scotch proverb that “hawks will no’ pick out hawks’ een,” they would plunder a bushranger as readily as a bishop.

With his bundle, too, he had something of the appearance of the favourite game or tax district—the newly-landed sailor.

As to asking a policeman for guidance, if he could come across one, that would, in his idea, have been rather risky.

Bob had no doubt by this time lodged all particulars of the crime and its perpetrators with the police, and it was certain the hounds were on the scent.

He stumbled along, keeping a sharp look-out as he went, and carefully avoiding any human figure he saw or fancied he caught a glimpse of.

At last he found himself in a broader and more respectful-looking, though equally-deserted, street, and began to breathe more freely.

He looked round about to see if there was anyone at whom he might venture to ask his way.

Suddenly he caught sight of an advancing figure.

Or was it two, walking arm in arm?

For one man could hardly have such a massy back as the object he could dimly make out approaching him.

He looked again.

His first impression had been right.

There was only one pair of legs, and therefore it was only one body that was advancing towards him.

But on these legs was a body big enough for two, and resembling that hêmis nature, a turlene on eastors.

The stranger was muffled up in a huge pea-coat, buttoned to the chin.

The lower part of his face was swathed in the folds of an immense woolen comforter.

The upper was hidden by a kind of travelling cap, with a projecting peak that was pulled right down over his eyes.

Notwithstanding this, there was something in the vast globular rotundity and rolling movements of the newcomer, that struck Ned as being strangely familiar to him.

He could have sworn that it was not the first time he had met eyes on that “biggest circulation in the world.”

The vast pendulous cheeks, like a couple of well-stuffed carpet-bags, that he could make out under the shadow of the cap, he felt certain he had some kind of acquaintance-ship with.

He stopped to the moving flash-mountain and asked the way to—street.

“Fourth turnin’ to the right and then the first to the left, and that’ll take you hinto hilt,” was the reply.

If Ned had been in doubt as to the figure, the voice at once decided him.

“By the living Jingo!” he exclaimed, “it’s Castro, Orton, or whatever you call yourself.”

It was indeed the ex-butcher of Wagga-Wagga, the ex-horse-stealer of Reedy Creek, who was prowling about, muffled up to the very eyes, in the streets of Wapping.

“Hush!” exclaimed the other nervously. “Let’s see if I couldn’t get out of this blessed forest of houses; blowed if I couldn’t get out of the Malace scrub as easy—and there ain’t no sky to travel by in this cussed country.”

“Why you want to go to—street, eh?” enquired Orton.

“Yes,” replied Ned.

“Well, Hi think this here’ll be the nearest way,” said the fat one, giving a lead down a side-street.

“I say, mate, you seem to know this quarter as well as a rabbit does his warren,” remarked Ned, as he stepped along beside him.

“Well, I dessay you do think it rum for a B. of B. K. to know’s way habout here so well.”

“What the devil’s a B. of B. K.” growled Ned.

“Why a Barrowknight of the British Kingdom, to be sure,” was the reply.

“Ohi, so you’re a baronet now, are you? What’s your lay?”

“Ain’t Hi told you afore? Ain’t Hi told you as ’ow my poor dear mother, Lady Felliseet, known me the very minute as she first clapped heyes on me?”

“Well, you are coming it strong, you are!”

“Yes. She was like a marine with joy. Ah! Hi’ve got no head of swells on my side, now; and his won’t be long afore Hi henter hinto my property, and live like Hi did when Hi was a hornt.”

“What a police officer?”

“No a hornt in the carbineers, a fine regiment, a thousand strong.”

Ned’s knowledge of the strength of a British cavalry regiment was on a par with that of his companion, and this statement did not strike him as peculiar.

“Not but what they were rather rough on us last
Then, raising his hat, he went on his way.

"Some blooming fortune her brother," remarked Orton, in a contemptuous tone.

"Frenchman, I think," said Ned.

"No. He should say 'e was a Portuguese now. He should've hundreds of 'em. I tell 'e to speak his French, you know," was Orton's reply, "because I was fooled there."

"Dre's your street," he said, indicating a turning a little way further on; "but afore you goes down hit you'd better step hit to this ere crib—It mean public-house—and have a drink."

Before going in, Orton peered into a little snug alley with the position of which he seemed fully acquainted, in order to be sure that there was no one there.

Then, pulling his cap still lower over his eyes and his collar still higher up over his mouth, he stepped in, and, in a voice that Ned could tell was an assumed one, ordered their drinks.

A middle-aged woman behind the bar stared hard at him, but said nothing, after serving him.

"I do my hollow hitches," said Orton, rubbing the portion of his anatomy in question against the bar. "Hit's a sign, Ii should say, as we was a-goin' to save rain tomorrow."

"How's the wind?" asked Ned.

"Nearly went, that's the beat that way." And, as he spoke, he jerked his head towards one corner of the little compartment in which they were standing, whilst Ned speculated on the strangely perfect acquaintance shown by him of all his surroundings, including the points of the compass.

Orton's knowledge, in a room at night, of the points of the compass showed his familiarity with the locality.

No man ever lived who could enter a strange room and tell what was east or west, north or south.

Orton, being bred up in the locality, knew the four points of the compass there.

An old fellow, who stepped in that moment from putting up the shutters, took a long look at the fat stranger, who appeared uneasy at this scrutiny.

As the two men stepped out after drinking their liquor, he said to the woman behind the bar—

"If that fat chap ain't Arthur Orton as went out to Australia with a couple of ponies, I'm a blessed Dutchman—hang me if I ain't."

"Light you are, Sam," said the woman behind the bar.

"I've been puzzling ever since he came in as to who he is, and now you've been hit."

Meanwhile Orton had taken leave of Ned, and the latter proceeded down the street pointed out to him, halted in front of the number that had been appointed as the place of meeting by his late companions on the river.

Before knocking, he glanced carefully round to the right and left in order to be certain that no lurking spy was observing his movements.

He gave the peculiar knock at the door as he had been instructed by Kit.

There was no light in the front of the house.

After watching a few seconds he heard the shuffling approach of footsteps, and then the withdrawal of slumbered bolts and bars, which had a very suspicious sound, as, from the appearance of the place, the idea that there was anything to rob would never enter the brain of the most tyro in burglary.

The door was cautiously opened on the chain, and the head of an old man was protruded.

With its yellow skin, its skull as bald as a basin for a couple of tusks of fluffy white hair above the temples, its sharp aquiline features and its huge hooked nose, it resembled rather the head of a bald-headed vulture than that of a human being.

"What do you want?" echoed this apparition.

And answered by repeating a password which he had received from the other companions of his late expedition.
The old man unfastened the chain, and silently beckoned with him away from the house. Ned followed. Carefully redoubling the door behind them, he took up a flaring, stinking paraffin-lamp, and led the way along a dirty, dilapidated passage to the bend of a pair of stairs. Down these he proceeded, followed by Ned, whose eyes were tingled as if it was by the burden he carried, caused the rickety steps to creak and groan in an ominous fashion.

At the bottom of the steps was a strong oaken door, from behind which came the murmur of voices. The old man threw it open and ushered Ned into a spacious underground apartment, half cellar, half kitchen.

In it about a dozen men were already assembled. Amongst them were Kit and Dick Lomax. The cellar was long and tolerably lofty. The space near the door was taken up by a table, on which liquors of various kinds were set forth, and by the benches on which the men were seated.

The further end was encumbered by bales and packages of different shapes and sizes, piled up in some instances to the arch'd roof itself.

CHAPTER CLXV
TAKING CARE OF NUMBER ONE.

Kit and Lomax advanced to meet Kelly.

"Where's Bob?" enquired the first-mentioned.

"Blessed if I know," answered Ned. "I fetched a cropper over a pile of muck, and when I picked myself up Bob had clean vanished."

"What's the meaning of this?" said Kit, looking a little scared, and starting in a solemn fashion.

"I suppose he must have gone on, thinking you were close behind him, and then, missing you, turned back, and somehow or other did not come across you," said Lomax.

"Yes, that must be," remarked Kit. "Very likely he passed you without seeing you, and is hunting about for you now, near where you parted." Ned beckoned Kit to come closer.

"No, no, that's not it," he said in a low voice. "The beggar bolted on purpose to peach."

"To round on us?"

"Yes, about the Bobby that fell against his truncheon. I noticed the fellow's face, and I swear he was in a blue funk about this job directly it was over. Curse it all, and listen to a song. There are one or two chaps hero who thinks nothing of dropping a cursed copper than of cracking a clay-pipe."

The old man threw it open and ushered Ned into a room, which had long been suspected.

The further end was encumbered by bales and packages of different shapes and sizes, piled up in some instances to the arch'd roof itself.

The space near the door was taken up by a table, on which liquors of various kinds were set forth, and by the benches on which the men were seated.

The further end was encumbered by bales and packages of different shapes and sizes, piled up in some instances to the arch'd roof itself.

The警察 were not accustomed to such a reception. As a rule the dangerous classes, when cornered, would demand some explanation. They were as silent as if suddenly turned into stone. They stared with alarmed consternation towards the stairs.

The solution was furnished in a somewhat unpleasant fashion. As it turned out.

The door of the cellar, which no one had thought of securing, was thrown wide open.

The light flashed on the uniforms and accoutrements of a number of policemen. One of these, stepping forward into the cellar, called upon the whole party to submit quietly.

On bolting from Ned he had hastened to one of the nearest police-stations. There he had given himself up, and, as an earnest of his sincerity, had volunteered to guide the police at once to the place where he alleged his accomplices had taken refuge, and, at the same time, to reveal the whereabouts of a large depot for smuggled goods, the existence of which had long been suspected.

The inspector on duty had at once accepted his offer; but had refrained from telling him that the policeman was not dead after all, though severely injured by Ned's blow. A party of the force were at once despatched under the guidance of the traitor to the house in Wapping.

Bob, stepping up to the door alone, had been let in by the old doorkeeper. Once inside he had suddenly seized and pinioned the old ruffian, and re-opening the door admitted the police.

No sooner had those made their appearance at the door of the cellar than Ned sprang to his feet.

Drawing a pistol, he sighted the man who had called O.T. and demanded.

The effect of this shot was twofold.

The police were not accustomed to such a reception. It was a little before the time of "the revolver epidemic," as it is styled, which has since set in with such severity, as far as they are concerned, and they were not used to "stand fire" unless in company of some friendly and amorous cook.

As a rule the dangerous classes, when cornered, would yield themselves without resistance and not make targets of their would-be captors.

So when their leader dropped with a bullet in his shoulder, for Kelly had sought to disable him, not to kill him outright, they remained for a minute or two quite stupefied.
But Kelly's companions, with the exception of Kit, were equally taken abash by his proceedings. They did not mind "chopping a duffer's head like a bucket," with a brickbat when the opportunity presented itself, but firearms were rather out of their line at this epoch.

Hence the two parties gazed at one another for a moment in equal amazement. Ned was first to recover himself. Just as Ned was about to throw himself forward and try and profit by the panic he had created to force his way through the police into the street, he laid a hand on his arm.

"Don't try that," he said, "there's a better way." And at the top of his voice he gave the order that had long ago been arranged should such an event as the present intervene.

"Down the stairs, my hearties, and hark," shouted Kit, and, in a moment, the place was in utter darkness. The police held the door, but were afraid to move lest a way for escape should be left open.

Kit knowing his herculean strength was for grasping the police and forcing his way out.

The thieves were the more numerous, and could certainly have carried the pass; but the indefinable something that surrounds the executors of the law quite cowed the vagabonds for some seconds.

"Blowed if I ain't got it," whispered Kelly to Kit. "Let's knock their blessed heads off. We know where they are, they don't know where to find us in the dark. Let's give 'em bricks and smash the lot. Don't give in without a fight. D'ye see it, let's have a shy at 'em before they are, they don't know where to find us in the dark."

Ned took in this at a glance.

"Kit, who had preceded him up the steps, and was waiting for him, had cast down a heavy piece of wood with which he had covered himself on the arrival of the police.

It was about four feet long, and as thick as a man's wrist. Putting him Ned slipped it through the two rings in the cellar flaps, rendering it impossible for anyone to open the trap from within.

A novel of despair from the men behind him announced this fact too plainly.

Kit was the only one who witnessed this act of treachery, all of the others who had gained the street having already scuttled off at the top of their speed.

"Hang it all, Ned, what are you up to?" he cried.

"Look here, capture for those coves means quod for six months, but for us it means a morrow picture in a white nightcap I don't care to make—at Newgate. If it was a fair fight, and with the rope round all our necks, I'd have stuck to my pals like wax," was the reply.

And whilst his unhappy companions, caged like rats, were forced to yield to the police, who now had command of the only issue from the cellar—namely, the door by which they had first entered, kit and Ned soon placed themselves in safety.

The trapped men never learnt to whose hand they were indebted for board and lodging at her Majesty's expense, but they had a sured suspicion.

CHAPTER CLXVI.

A GAME OF CROSS-PURPOSES.

Of course, the great diamond robbery in Hatton-garden created a tremendous sensation. The papers were all full of it. Innumerable callers, interested in various ways, or simply moved by curiosity, besieged Mr. Mallan's house.

For some time, however, they were unable to gain access to the master of the establishment.

The wounds inflicted by Kelly on the worthy diamond merchant were not fatal. Though severe and for a short time dangerous, they had not reached any vital part.

When once the healing process had fairly set in, its progress, thanks to the wounded man's excellent constitution, was rapid and unheeded.

At length, the doctor was able to pronounce his patient in a fair way to recovery, and to withdraw his prohibition against anyone whatever entering the sick chamber, save Mrs. Mallan and the nurse.

He had given strict orders to Mrs. Mallan not to let his patient hear any news whatever of a nature likely to excite or distress him.

This order the poor woman had nobly obeyed, though it needed a terrible effort to enable her to keep silent, as regarded the overwhelming loss that had befallen them in their old age.

At last, with the doctor's permission, she ventured to speak of it to her husband.

She touched first of all on the great danger which had endangered his life, then the injuries which had followed it, and finally she mentioned that his life had been spared, and in

steps and hence the street, they would be so closely on the fugitives' track that the chance of escape would be considerably lessened.

He rushed up the steps at the top of his speed.

Several of his companions were close behind him. But, instead of waiting to allow them to come out, he deliberately slammed down the two flaps that closed the opening.

The trap, as usual in such cases, consisted of two flaps, one opening to the right and the other to the left.

In the centre of each was a large iron ring serving as a handle to raise it.

The trap had been arranged should such an event as the present intervene.

"Hang it all, Ned, what are you up to?" he cried.

"Look here, capture for those coves means quod for six months, but for us it means a morrow picture in a white nightcap I don't care to make—at Newgate. If it was a fair fight, and with the rope round all our necks, I'd have stuck to my pals like wax," was the reply.

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She touched first of all on the great danger which had endangered his life, then the injuries which had followed it, and finally she mentioned that his life had been spared, and in...
this the poor woman was sincere enough, for she was deeply attached to her husband.

"My poor old man," she said, with the tears in her eyes, "I cannot think how grateful I am to have you still with me!"

The sufferer pressed her hand without speaking.

"But, oh, John," she continued sadly, "I have some very bad news to tell you."

He looked at her inquiringly.

"You know that the villain who stabbed you managed to get clear off?"

"Did he?" he asked, for he had been kept in ignorance of this.

"Yes. He's broke away from you and rushed out of the house."

"Did you—did you notice what he was doing when you discovered him?" she asked, hesitatingly.

"Yes," sighed Mrs. Mallan, "he was.

There was a pause.

"He must have been at it some time before you heard him," she said, at length.

"Very possibly."

"And he had had time to pack up his plunder," she observed with a sigh.

"What?"

"Yes, dear. When we came to examine things, we found that not only the safe but the cash-box in it had been forced, and that the diamonds had disappeared altogether from the place."

There was a moment's silence.

"You can leave us, my dear," said the former, rightly interpreting his glance.

"Pray do not excite yourself too much, John," said the latter, somewhat drily.

"Certainly, ma'am, certainly, we will take care not to bruise the shattered vessel," was the reply.

No sooner was the door closed on Mrs. Mallan, than he turned briskly towards the sick man.

He was dressed in semi-clerical style, with a black coat and white shirt.

He glanced from Mr. to Mrs. Mallan in a most significant manner.

"Hand this letter to me, my dear," said the former, rightly interpreting his glance.

"Pray do not excite yourself too much, John," said the good woman to her spouse, as she prepared to leave the room.

"You'll take care of that, won't you, sir?" she continued appealingly to the visitor.

"Certainly, ma'am, certainly, we will take care not to bruise the shattered vessel," was the reply.

No sooner was the door closed on Mrs. Mallan, than he turned briskly towards the sick man.

"I am a detective."

"I presumed as much."

"Hush! Don't talk more than you can help. If you will just content yourself with answering you and no to my questions it will do. You heard what your good lady said?"

Mr. Mallan smiled.

"My dear sir," resumed the little man, "you have, I believe, suffered, under Providence, from a severe affliction, you have been robbed of property representing a value of from twenty-five to thirty thousand pounds."

"Yes," answered Mr. Mallan, "that's it, property, representing a value of thirty thousand pounds."

"Don't say more than you can help. You would like to get it back, I suppose?"

"Yes," was the answer, given in a calm tone.

"Hum!" said the stranger, who seemed to have the habit of thinking aloud. "He does not seem to excite himself much about it. I think they as well go into the business at once. My dear sir, I have mentioned before that I am a detective. A private detective?"

"Ah."

"Yes, I am Mr. Tunstall, of Tunstall and Bigwood, Private Detective Office, 304, Little Smith-street. Business at once. My dear sir, the world is frail," and he sighed heavily, and then continued, "But—?"

"Exactly. I was merely repeating our advertisement. Matter of business. But to resume. We devote ourselves especially to the recovery of stolen property."

"Indeed."

"Yes; and, under Providence, I am glad to say that the Lord has usually blessed our labours. We have, I make bold to say to you—and, considering the loss under which you are suffering, I feel I can venture to speak openly—certain sources of information, certain connections which, I flatter myself, are available in the first instance."

A smile passed over Mr. Mallan's shrewd features.

"We have I assure you, before this, been able, by a merciless dispensation, to recover very valuable property in this way to the mortification of the thieves. Did not we?"

"Yes; and, in such cases you, I know, will not dispute the fact that thelabourer in the vineyard is worthy of his hire."

He was dressed very much after the clerical style, with a black coat and white shirt.

"I suppose so.

"Then you are prepared to offer a reward for the recovery, if it should be so decreed by Providence, of the lost property."

"I believe I must."

"My dear sir, let me assure you that there is not the slightest chance otherwise of getting it back. Not the slightest, let me assure you. The world, you know, my dear sir, the world is frail," and he sighed heavily, and then continued, "But what sum do you think of offering?"

"Of course, this will entail trouble, not to say expense, to me. But I think we are rather diffuse things to dispose of in large quantities, and I feel certain that if the thieves try to get rid of them we shall hear of it."

"Through your connection?" said the diamond merchant, somewhat dryly.

"Yes; exactly: through the mysterious working of Providence and our connection," was the unabashed answer; "and I have no doubt that, with very little trouble, the lost property could be placed once more in your hands!"

Mr. Mallan smiled once more, but somewhat ironically, rather than with the hopeful exclamation of a man anticipating the restoration of a lost treasure.

Of course, this will entail trouble, not to say expense, and in such cases you, I know, will not dispute the fact that the labours of the vineyard are worthy of his hire."

"I suppose so."

"Then you are prepared to offer a reward for the recovery, if it should be so decreed by Providence, of the lost property."

"I believe I must."

"My dear sir, let me assure you that there is not the slightest chance otherwise of getting it back. Not the slightest, let me assure you. The world, you know, my dear sir, the world is frail," and he sighed heavily, and then continued, "But what sum do you think of offering?"

"Well, as you have said, I have been deprived of property representing a value of thirty thousand pounds."

"Thirty thousand pounds? repeated the other, rubbing his hands with anticipation.

"Yes; and, in such cases you, I know, will not dispute the fact that the labourer in the vineyard is worthy of his hire."

"I suppose so."

"Then you are prepared to offer a reward for the recovery, if it should be so decreed by Providence, of the lost property."

"I believe I must."

"My dear sir, let me assure you that there is not the slightest chance otherwise of getting it back. Not the slightest, let me assure you. The world, you know, my dear sir, the world is frail," and he sighed heavily, and then continued, "But what sum do you think of offering?"

"Well, as you have said, I have been deprived of property representing a value of thirty thousand pounds."

"Thirty thousand pounds? repeated the other, rubbing his hands with anticipation.

"I think the best plan will be to offer a percentage."

"A percentage, my dear sir—a most excellent idea."

"And, as you are experienced in such matters, I think I cannot do better than ask your advice as to the amount."

"Quite so, my dear sir, quite so. Your ideas are excellent, worthy of a chosen vessel. Indeed they are. It is most singular, I was about to suggest a percentage on the amount..."
recovered myself, and I have here already drawn up a little form of agreement, which I trust you will sign. Thirty thousand pounds worth of diamonds, you see," he went on, producing the agreement and a pen instead. "I will fill that amount in. And now for the percentage—I think we may say—"

"Ten per cent., eh?"

"I say, twenty-five at least. Consider the time, the trouble."

"Fifteen per cent. will repay them amply."

"Well, twenty—say twenty. There, that is filled in. And now, my dear sir, your signature here. Stop a minute, I will call the nurse and your good lady to witness it," and as he spoke he rang the bell.

A few minutes later the little man was rushing down the street with a paper in his coat-tail pocket, by which Mr. Mallan bound himself to pay twenty per cent. on the value of the diamonds recovered by his agency. As he went along he muttered to himself—

"Any odds I get on the track of the diamonds at last. Whoever holds them ought to snap at fifteen per cent., of course."

"Any odds I get on the track of the diamonds at last. Whoever holds them ought to snap at fifteen per cent., of course."

The private detective had leisurely left the house before the bell ringer, and another visitor made a most pressing request to be immediately introduced with Mr. Mallan.

The new-comer offered a striking contrast.

He was a very tall and powerfully-built man of a somewhat portly outline, set off to advantage by a tightly-belted black coat of dark blue cloth.

He complexion was ruddy, his sleek and close-cropped hair iron grey, with his small side-whiskers, trimmed with military accuracy, were jet black.

He gave his name as Superintendent Smith, of the Metropolitan Police Force.

Mrs. Mallan was rather anxious at first not to admit him, fearing the two visits might excite her husband. But her visitor was not to be checked.

"Madam," he remarked blandly but firmly, "I am especially entrusted with this affair by the authorities at Scotland-yard. I am willing to wait a little time to allow Mr. Mallan to recover himself from the interview you mention, but it is most necessary I should see him."

Mrs. Mallan was fair to agree.

The superintendent said that during the interval he should like to inspect the scene of the burglary. He visited the workshop and office under Mrs. Mallan's guidance, inspected everything, looked autifully wise and impenetrably mysterious.

The London police are notoriously the most wooden-headed body of respectable men in the world. When on enquiries, "from information they have received," they appear pompous and cold, and rarely, if ever, show any intelligence in detecting criminals.

But it must be admitted that for civility they are unequalled.

On this occasion the detective speculated with pomposity—"Hum?" three times, and shook his head solemnly four.

"Certainly. Let me see, the Government offer twenty."

"Yes."

"I don't mind putting another hundred to get hold of the ruffians."

"Yes; but as regards the stolen property, sir, I should suggest—"

"Just so. I am coming to that. For the restoration of the stolen stones, I don't mind going as high as—"

And here he paused in mental calculation.

"Yes, sir, as high as?" said the superintendent in an eager tone.

"Well, a hundred more," remarked Mr. Mallan quietly.

A hundred more! exclaimed the superintendent, in a tone of amusement, and with a look at the visiting as if he began to entertain serious doubts of his sanity.

"A hundred more. I have reason to believe it will be sufficient," repeated the diamond merchant.

"Well, sir, you know best," said the police officer, with a somewhat disconcerted air, "but, as man to man, I may tell you I don't think there is much chance of your ever seeing your diamonds back again."

"Probably not," assented Mr. Mallan mildly.

"As regards the man who did the job, though, it may be another matter, and, with the clue we've got, I should not be surprised if we held him in a few days."

"Ah, what clue is that?"

"The superintendent looked as if he wished he had not said quite so much.

"Well, I think his accomplice will say something in the end, although she does keep precious quiet as yet."

"His accomplice? Whom do you mean?"

"Why, the girl."

"What girl?"

"The girl you had here—Sal her name is."

"Good heavens! Do you mean to say she is in caressay? That explains it. I thought it strange she had not come into my room to see how I was, since she always professed such devotion to me."
="Or for your diamonds, sir."
"Nonsense, I know the girl too well. So she is in custody, eh? On what charge?"
Being conscious in the robbery of thirty thousand pounds' worth of diamonds?"
"Is that all? No other charge, eh?"
"No," replied the superintendent, who was fast getting somewhat bewildered.
"And who gave her in charge?"
"Your good lady, sir, I am told."
"At your instance, eh?"
"Yes; at least, as the instance of the police."
"Ring the bell for my wife."
The superintendent complied.
"My dear," said Mr. Mallan, when his wife entered, "I want you to withdraw at once this charge against poor Sarah, and have her released."
"Certainly, my dear," was the answer.
"Well, sir," said the thoroughly bewildered superintendent, "as you withdraw the charge, I don't see the good of opening it, and the bench will discharge the girl when next she comes up on remand, for want of evidence. But I must say that if you ever think of getting back the thirty thousand pounds' worth of diamonds, either through us officially or in any other way, you will be very much mistaken."
"I certainly don't expect to get them back through you, or in any other way."
"Ah," said the officer, in puzzled surprise.
"And I am really sorry you should have put yourself to so much trouble and taken such a trilling loss so seriously to heart," and Mr. Mallan smiled in that peculiar and enigmatical way that had already puzzled those about him.

CHAPTER CLXVII.
SOME NECESSARY EXPLANATIONS.
His wife and the superintendent looked at one another. There could be no doubt about it. It must be the fever from his wound, rendering him utterly delirious, that made him talk like this.
Her husband saw this. Mrs. Mallan could not help bursting into tears.
"Come, Mr. Superintendent," he said, "let us have a clear explanation. You and I are playing at cross-purposes."
"In what way?"
"You would like to lay your hands on thirty thousand pounds' worth of diamonds belonging to me?"
"Yes," was the reply, in a very decided tone indeed.
"Well, if I chose I could grant you that pleasure in about ten minutes. They are all in the house now."
"In the house now?" exclaimed the other two simultaneously.
"Yes, and what's more, they never went out of it. Don't you see now, eh?" and Mr. Mallan fairly chuckled.
Then, as his wife and Superintendent Smith were too stupefied to answer, he went on—
"It is known that I am a diamond merchant, that I live here, and that I keep a large quantity of precious stones on the premises. What more natural than that some day or other an attempt should be made to rob me. But I was quite prepared for that attempt. I said to myself, Where will the robbers, when they do come, look for the diamonds? Why, naturally in the place where they are supposed to be kept. Is it not so, eh, Mr. Superintendent?"
"That is my safe. I tell a few in the strictest confidence that I have stones representing a value of thirty thousand pounds in my safe. Do you see, eh?"
"Not quite," was the somewhat dazed answer.
"Well, I have there stones which represent, I say, a value of thirty thousand pounds, but which are in reality not worth thirty thousand pence."
The superintendent whistled in amazement, and regarded the invalid with admiration. He wouldn't be out of place in "the force."
"Now do you see? A thief enters the house. He looks first of all in the most natural place for valuables, the safe. He finds what he thinks is thirty thousand pounds' worth of diamonds, and he hurries out of the house without looking any further, eh?"
"That's so," remarked the superintendent, emphatically.
"If he is a bit cleverer than his fellows, he says to himself, What a fool this diamond merchant must be to keep all his diamonds down here on the ground floor in a back office! But he does not, even in that case, think of looking any farther, and, meanwhile, the real diamonds are hidden away in a place known only to myself—not even to my wife—and which is so snug that you might pull the house three-parts down before you came on the slightest trace of their hiding-place."
"The devil you might!" exclaimed the superintendent, fiercely, starting to his feet. "Why, if—"
He checked himself.
His almost gigantic figure seemed to dilate as he glanced round the room, and, as his eye appeared to rest for a moment upon the fire burning in the grate, it's pupil seemed to grow too like a living coal of fire.
A grim smile curled his lip as he looked from Mr. to Mrs. Mallan, and drew near the latter.

(To be continued.)

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NED KELLY
THE IRONCLAD
AUSTRALIAN BUSHRANGER
CHAPTER CLXVII—Continued.

At that moment the bell of the front-door rang. Mrs. Mallan stepped to the window and lifted the blind. "Ah! Mr. Superintendent," she exclaimed, looking out, "there are two of your men down below at the door. Ah! and the doctor too."

"Darn!—I ejaculated the superintendent, and springing to the window by her side he glanced into the street in turn.

"Ah! two of my fellows, as you say, Mrs. Mallan," said the superintendent, recovering his coolness. "I will run down and see what they want. They must have come here after us."

He at once left the room, with the parting remark to Mrs. Mallan—

"All right, I'll see about the girl being released."

Then swiftly descending the stairs he swept by the sergeant and constable standing in the hall, whether they had just been admitted by the nurse who had answered the bell, opened the door, passed into the street and walked rapidly away.

The constable and sergeant waited below till the doctor had seen his patient, whom he found suffering from excitement, consequent upon the two interviews just related, and for whom he prescribed absolute quiet.

They then sent up a request to see Mr. Mallan.

"Do you think it as well, doctor?" asked Mrs. Mallan.

"No, I think you had better not let him see anyone else to-day. If you like I'll step down with you myself and see what they want." Accordingly the doctor and Mrs. Mallan went downstairs.

The two police officers, whom Mrs. Mallan recognised, stated that they were the men specially entrusted with the case, and that they wanted to know if Mr. Mallan had recovered enough to give any information likely to be of service to them.

Mrs. Mallan replied that her husband had just had a long interview with Superintendent Smith.

Whereupon the two simultaneously asked who was Superintendent Smith.

They were told the tall man who had just come down and spoken to them in the hall.

"No one spoke to us," said the sergeant.

"A tall man why he bolted past us like a rabbit without saying a word," cried the constable.

"Besides, there's not a Superintendent Smith in the force," they continued, simultaneously.

"Good heavens!" cried Mrs. Mallan, "it must have been a mistake."

A little comparing of notes established this theory beyond all doubt, especially as the doctor had recognised in the stranger a gentleman who had called on or waylaid him several times with inquiries as to Mr. Mallan's health.

It was arranged that Mrs. Mallan and the doctor, with the sergeant, should at once proceed to Scotland-yard and explain everything, including the fact of the real diamonds not being stolen, to the authorities there, whilst the other policeman should remain on guard in the house in case of a renewed visit from Superintendent Smith.

This plan was followed.

The Scotland-yard people, like the sham Superintendent Smith, were staggered when the trick by which the diamonds had been preserved from the robbers was revealed to them.

But they were still more staggered to learn of the impersonation of the sham superintendent.

Rapidly they ran over the names of some of the most daring and successful criminals in London.

Not one of them seemed to tally with the description given by the sergeant and Mrs. Mallan.

"There's only one man, I believe, in the world who could have the pluck and cleverness to play such a trick," said an old detective, whose duty had led him at different times half over the globe, and who had just returned from an excursion to Australia, "and it does not seem quite clear, after all, whether he is in England just now."

"Who's that?" inquired one of the others.

"Oh, you know nothing about him, never heard of him. He was in full blaze in Melbourne when I went out there after a holter last year. He was robbing every bank in the Colony, openly in broad daylight."

"Do you mean Kelly? His might be in London, for all we know. Is it like his work?"

"Yes, it is," replied the sergeant. "I saw a notice from the Australian authorities to the effect that Kelly was supposed after his last crime to have quitted the colony, and it was thought for England or America, and we were to look out, as he would most likely give us a look in on his way. I'm blessed if it ain't like his work and himself too. We have his description, and the sham superintendent ain't very unlike him."

"Well, we shall soon hear of the beggar again if he is amongst us. We can only keep a sharp lookout until he turns up."

Another singular surprise also awaited the doctor and Mrs. Mallan in course of the day.

Knowing of the document that Mr. Mallan had signed, they thought it as well to call on Messrs. Tunstall and Bigwood at Little Smith-street, to explain to these gentlemen that it was not worth while for them to trouble themselves about the matter any further.

But what was their surprise on learning at the address indicated that the firm in question had only engaged a single room as an office the preceding day, paying a week's rent in advance, and that it appeared to consist of a single individual, a very pious old gentleman the landlord said, who stated that he could not be reached, nor could they write the landlord said, who stated that the last few days he should only call in and see if there were any letters.

Strange to say he never did call for the expected correspondence.

The explanation of this was simple.

No sooner had Mr. Superintendent Smith got out of the diamond merchant's, than he darted into Holborn as fast as his legs could carry him.

He hailed a hansom to drive him to Waterloo Station, and there took a ticket for Clapham Junction, and got into
He was once more Mr. Dawes, alias Ned Kelly. On reaching his residence he kept a lookout till he spied his neighbour Smith, alias Peace, in the garden, pottering about in his usual style and humming a hymn tune. He at once saluted forth, and imperatively signalled to him, “he had wanted to speak to him.”

There had been a certain amount of ill-blood between the pair since the affair of the diamond robbery and the attempted sale of the spoils. Ned had suspected Peace of having changed the stones between the night of the burglary and the visit to Anna Meade’s, to dispose of them. Peace could not resist the impression that by some sleight-of-hand the real stones had been replaced by false ones on that very evening with Ned’s connivance.

Rapidly Ned related to his accomplice the particulars of his visit to Mr. Mallan in the character of a superintendent. He had profited to do so by the information he had extracted from the doctor the day before, that Mr. Mallan was well enough to receive visitors, and had easily copied the bearing and manner of one of those police officials with whom he had such an extensive series of dealings. He remarked, in conclusion, after describing Mr. Mallan’s startling revelations as regarded the diamonds and their place of concealment—

“For a moment I was knocked all in a heap!”

“I think that would have awoke the pair up pretty bright!”

And Ned chuckled at the thought.

“Truly, the only way to defeat the wiles of the artful man is to assail him with his own weapons,” resumed Peace, turning up his eyes.

“Perhaps after all, though, it was lucky,” resumed Ned, “that the doctor and the police rang when they did, and not ten minutes later, or the blessed noiseling of the lot would have spoilt my little game, and got me into quod. I’d be some time spoiling that, like a yelping pack.”

“But how about the nurse?” inquired Peace, who, if pious, was eminently practical.

“Oh, I had thought of her, and meant to tie her up downstairs as soon as I had collared the other two, and before grilling them.”

“What a valuable assistant in the vineyard,” smiled Peace, clasping his hands in evident admiration.

“I’ll tell you what it is, old patter-noster. I thought you’d grabbed all the grapes from that vineyard, and left none of the bunches for me; but now I see I was on the wrong track, and that you acted on the square.”

“Shame!” rejoined Ned, “wrong track is the way.”

“We should always pursue one path, my friend,” ejaculated the pious one, exposing the whites of his eyes.

“You’re better nor a dozen parrheroes, you are.”

“I’ll try and meet your favourable opinion,” responded Peace, with a solemn twinkle in his eyes.

He did not, however, on his part tell Kelly that he also had visited Mr. Mallan that morning, disguised as a private detective, determined, if he could only get an inkling of the whereabouts of the diamonds, either to betray their possessors to justice, for the sake of the twenty percent reward, or to make a safe bargain for their restoration.

He did not mention how Mr. Mallan’s conduct towards him, and the remark, “stones representing a value of thirty thousand pounds,” confirmed Ned’s statement.

And, above all, he took care never to return to the offices he had taken in Smith-street, where a real detective waited for several days in the hope of an explanatory interview with him, but waited in vain.

CHAPTER CLXVIII.
BACK HIM, YOU FOOL.
COUNT ANATOLE, as he delighted to style himself, had more than one string to his bow, and, pending the robbery of the mail on which he had set his heart, was gathering together as much spare cash as he could in various ways.

Chiefly, however, by card gambling, though not carried on in London to the which it reaches on the Continent, is pretty well well worthwhile nevertheless. This has been especially the case within the last years. Many men who used to risk their money on horses now prefer to stake it on a card, and not often on the correct card.

The reason is, that, at cards, a man who chooses good company to play with is safe from being cheated, which, on the Tard, has become impossible, since horse racing has ceased to be a sport and has become a matter of serious business to one and all engaged in it, and is, in nineteen out of twenty cases, sheer swindling. So openly is this swindling carried on, that it almost ceases to be regarded as a game of religion. An owner's horse is catered for, he lays all the money he can against him, and then, at the last moment, scratches him. He never intended but to rob the public, and attempts to palliate his dishonesty by the poor excuse—"I don't run horses for the amusement of other people." A man might as well say, when cheating at cards, I don't play cards to amuse other people.

With the exception of Lord Portland, Fred Johnstone, and one or two others, all runners of horses are blacklegs—pure and simple. There are a number of clubs now existing in London...
that befits the gravity of the stakes, and the eminent re­

cpectability of the players.

an aspirant for holy orders.

to obtaiu, and the character, habit and social position of a

the morality of the present is not an improvement on

back to Lord de Roos would at present be met with. As

beaujoueur.

tell each man when it was his turn to deal

is but little change since the days when a Leader of the

which, like the Parisian" cords, are wholly and solely de­

rooms of his own at which he could get a few men quietly
together, he might do better.

Chances, he argued, might throw into his way one of

those occasions with which she sometimes loves to tantalise

her votaries.

She might dangle a golden prize before him, in which

case, provided the prize was big enough to justify the risk,

he meant to throw chance overboard, and trust to his ability

to hoodwink his adversary.

Having taken a suite of rooms near Piccadilly, and fur­
nished them with a combination of English comforts and

French taste that made a pretty large hole in his recent

winnings, he installed himself in them.

A few days later he sent a note to Kelly, requesting him
to call and to be as well dressed as possible.

Kelly lost no time in complying.

His make-up was exactly the one that Anatole desired—

namely, that of a wealthy, ostentatious, and perhaps some­

what vulgar, colonial, who had made his pile and come

over to the Old Country to spend it, but who, if ignorant

of certain points of social conduct, was by no means a fool

to be tricked by the first comer.

His rough but determined way was equally removed

from the polished blandness of the hawk, and the sim­

plicity of the pigeon.

"By — governor, but you've got a tidy crib here," he

said, throwing his huge bulk into a magnificently up­

holstered chair, and glancing round approvingly at the

fittings of the apartment.

"Yes, pretty well," said Anatole. "But, look here, I

want to see you on business. I know you play a good

game of cards."

"I think I do," answered Kelly, with truth.

"Very well. I want you to dine with me this evening,

and then take a hand here."

"What at?"

"Oh, whatever they play—that is the others who may

look in. It may be whist, or baccarat, or caroue, or Nup;

I don't know."

"All right."

"Only look here, you must play perfectly fair. You

understand me?"

"Yes," replied Ned. "But I don't see what you are

driving at. Can't you open out a little more?"

"Well then—have you money?"

"Plenty for the time being. I have lived very quietly

since I have been over here."

"Well, I want to introduce you to some rich men and

good players, as a rich man and good player. Play well,

back your luck when it is in, and don't make a fool of

yourself when it is out; and, above all, behave yourself."

Kelly complied, and that evening was introduced by

Anatole to several rich men as Mr. Dawes, a rich squatter

from Australia.

As he was a good player, a good-tempered loser when

everybody and had done pretty well, though taking the utmost

care to play fair.

Still, the thought struck him that if he could have good

rooms of his own at which he could get a few men quietly
together, he might do better.

Chances, he argued, might throw into his way one of

those occasions with which she sometimes loves to tantalise

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Still, the thought struck him that if he could have good

rooms of his own at which he could get a few men quietly
together, he might do better.
A CLOSE SHAVE.

"Where did you get that dodge from?" inquired Ned.

"It's the latest Parisian novelty," answered Anatole, and "I had it direct from a friend there. What do you think of it?"

"It's clever, but risky, if a man has his wits about him."

"Yet you, with all your suspicions, could not see how the trick was done. Besides, you are fresh and fastidious, but a man after supper would be less wary, and I only reserve it for such occasions."

"You are up to a trick, too, with the pasteboard."

"Yes; but, although I'm pretty sharp, I don't like trying such things except as a last resource. I had a very narrow share in Paris the other day which rather took the conceit out of me."

Anatole alluded to an adventure which had betaken him as a well-known gambling-stone in the Rue de Heiller.

He had been carrying on for some time a pretty successful campaign, under the name of the Marquis d'Albano, representing himself as an Italian nobility who had emigrated to America, and returned with a fortune.

He played high, and, when his money could short, was in the habit of staking vast numbers of stones, chiefly sapphires, a number of which he always carried about him, and which he said he had acquired during his travels.

Like all true gamblers he claimed to be extremely superstitious, and declared that these stones were so many fetishes for him, and that directly he staked them his luck would always turn.

This belief in a fetish is very common.

A bit of the rope with which a man has been hanged is considered on the Continent an infallible talisman in such cases. A hunchback, too, is supposed to bring luck, and, if he wins, those about him will touch his hump in order to share it.

Whether the stones staked by Anatole were fetishes or not, it was observable that luck turned on his side directly he staked them.

The truth was, that they were simply very good imitations, and whenever he was forced by his losses to bring them out he at once began to cheat, since, if they had once parted into other hands, their worthlessness would have been discovered.

He had an accomplice in the shape of a little old fellow of forty and inimitable manner, who was known by the nickname of "The Counsellor."

The so-called Marquis d'Albano used to have recourse to the usual tricks of the professional card-sharper, packed cards and the like.

But his accomplice had a rather original dodge, which went far to help him.

He always had in his hands an immense silver snuffbox, which he polished till it shone like a mirror.

His habit was to stand behind the individual who was playing against the marquis, and, by the way, frequently changed, of tapping his box and taking snuff, telegraphed the cards of the marquis's opponent.

It happened one night that M. Claude, the celebrated chief of police under the Second Empire, was at the gambling-house of the Rue de Heiller in disguise.

He had gone thither in search of information concerning a political plot, on the track of which he then was, and some of the men mixed up in which were in the habit of meeting there to play.

Fully versed in all the card-sharing tricks, he became convinced that the Marquis d'Albano, alias Anatole, was a cheat, and watched his play a little time.

The adversary of the so-called Marquis was a young fellow of two or three and twenty.

At first he was favoured by that luck which so often favours beginners, to their ultimate destruction.

He completely cleared the marquis of his ready-money, amounting to some forty thousand francs.

D'Albano pulled out his sapphires and emeralds and asked for his revenge.

The other conseunted. From this moment luck turned to the side of the sharper.

In twenty minutes he had won back his forty thousand francs.

The other wanted to go on for higher stakes.
The marquis was perfectly willing, and continued to wait.

A group soon gathered round the table at which the two were playing, attracted by the importance of the stakes.

M. Claude, who was seated in the front rank behind Anatole, watching every movement, not only detected his trickery, but also the mannerisms of the Counsellor with the sharpest eye. He had only to declare himself and arrest Anatole and his accomplice, as cheating at cards is an offence in France, but this was precisely what he did not want to do, for it would have revealed that he was a police-officer, which he would have lost all chance of observing the political conspirators.

So, when he noticed Anatole take a card from his sleeve and substitute it for one in his hand, in order to announce the king, he simply opened his eyes sharply in a feigned voice—

"Sir, you are a cheat!"

This sudden exclamation broke on the profound silence which had been observed during so important a match, acted like a bombshell.

None knew exactly to whom it was addressed.

The young man started up indignantly.

The marquis, quite taken aback and also at a loss as to where the accuser's voice had come from, lost his head. He also jumped up hastily, leaving two kings of hearts on the table.

Evidently one of the two players was a sharper.

A cry of indignation broke from the lookers-on. Claude thought that Anatole would be exposed, but he reckoned without the cleverness of the Counsellor and also of the mistress of the house, who was also his accomplice. They profited by the confusion that prevailed.

The young man had darted forward and, accusing Anatole of being a cheat, aroused the greatest excitement.

The hostess and the Counsellor threw themselves before the marquis, quite taken aback and also at a loss as to where the accuser's voice had come from, lost his head. He also jumped up hastily, leaving two kings of hearts on the table. Evidently one of the two players was a sharper.

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rope, but he managed to gain his feet, and cross the room to the window, which he opened.

This was the worst thing he could have done. The cold air at once overpowered him, and he toppled over senseless into the arms of Anatole, who had followed him, on charitable thoughts intent.

Their last words by this time had all quite enough of both supper and play, and rather too much wine, and began to take leave of their host.

Kint, however, was so helpless, that Anatole declared that it would be quite impossible for him to leave, and said that he would give on his bed to him, and sleep on that.

When, however, the other guests had departed, the Frenchman found that this had already an occupant in the person of Ned Kelly.

Ned was very drunk. The liquor he had taken seemed to have set upon him precisely as that swallowed by Kint. It had bowled him over all at once.

A few minutes before he had been one of the loudest and jolliest at the supper-table, and now he had collapsed, and lay as helpless as a log.

Anatole shook him roughly by the arm, and tried to rouse him, but in vain.

The Frenchman seemed annoyed at this. But, after uttering two or three wicked words, he appeared to make up his mind to make the best of a bad job, and left Ned to his slumber. He passed into the inner room, where Kint had been placed on the bed, taking the light with him, and pulling to the folding doors behind him.

No sooner had he disappeared, than Ned opened his eyes. When he rose to his feet, huge as was his bulk, he could, at a pinch, step as softly as a cat, and, taking every precaution not to betray himself, he stole quietly across the room.

On reaching the folding doors, he applied his eye to the crack between them.

Kint was lying on his back on the bed, breathing sternly.

Anatole was engaged in an operation, the bearing of which Ned entirely failed to comprehend.

His idea was that the Frenchman would probably abstain from what he had with them, and it was with this view that he had himself feigned drunklessness, in order to step in and claim snake.

This belief was, at first, confirmed by seeing Anatole thrust his hand into the scrumpers's pocket.

But, instead of pulling out his money, he contented himself with some of the wine, and passed into the room, and sat down in a chair, smoking a cigarette.

Kint lay in precisely the same attitude, with the handkerchief still over his face.

The sound of his breathing, however, had died away. He lay still and silent as a corpse.

As a corpse:

A thought suddenly flashed across Ned's mind. If he were one...

And then memory, shaken by the wine he had consumed, returned to him.

"The trick's done. Kint is a stiff 'un," he thought.

He remembered hearing of the manoeuvre which he had practised on the helpless Frenchman, and now he felt he had not mistaken his opportunity. The saturated handkerchief intercepted air, and suffocated as effectually as a feather-bed, and had, besides, an advantage over chloroform and other anaesthetics, as it left no smell to set doctors puzzling over. The features bore the expression of suffocation, but also of apoplexy.

Ned reflected.

"His sparing me looks as if he meant to stop and brave it out; for if he had meant to bolt, one more corpse would not have mattered. But I'll settle the question."

If Kint had been sober he might have thrown it off," thought Ned; "but he was drunk, and will never wake again."

And, as he recollected how Anatole had approached him a few minutes before with a handkerchief, he was glad that his own intoxication was feigned, as it was evidently a toss-up whether the Frenchman "cooked his goose," as he did that of the Belgian.

Ned reflected.

"If Kint had been sober, he might have thrown it off," thought Ned; "but he was drunk, and will never wake again."

And, as he recollected how Anatole had approached him a few minutes before with a handkerchief, he was glad that his own intoxication was feigned, as it was evidently a toss-up whether the Frenchman "coocked his goose," as he did that of the Belgian.

As he turned to retire for the second time Ned named opening an eye, and noticed that he carried a wet handkerchief in his hand.

"Ah," he thought, "he wants to see if I'm as bad as the other chap, but he judges that I don't need docs"...

At the expiration of two hours Ned rose again and returned to his host of observation, still on robbing thoughts intent.

Anatole was not asleep, but was quietly seated in a chair, smoking a cigarette.

Kint lay in precisely the same attitude, with the handkerchief still over his face.

The sound of his breathing, however, had died away. He lay still and silent as a corpse.

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This money was transmitted to Kint's heirs, who were
distant cousins, and who, after sending instructions to
London concerning his funeral, did not trouble themselves
any more about him.

CHAPTER CLXXI.
A NEW FRIEND AND A FRESH PLAN.

With the money he had thus acquired Kelly, like all his
class, who are utterly destitute of other resources for con-
sumption, had only simply indulged in the coarse dissipations
that suited his temperament.
The fact that such men have no settled plan for the
future, and that the excitement of crime is as necessary to
them as drink to the drunkard, leads to their rapid cap-
ture.

Like the gambler who makes a good "coup," they can-
not be content to even retire from "active service" until it
is consumed. They weary from inactivity—they go in for
another "coup," and so on, until the end comes.

In company more lively than select, he came across a
sitting captain Montevray Howard, a good-looking and
well-get-up man, of about six or eight and thirty,
who was the idol of a certain circle.

The captain was one of those men with no apparent
means of livelihood, who convive, nevertheless, to raffle it
with the best of the swells at town.

He picked up a certain amount at billiards and cards,
and was said to be uncommonly lucky in backing winners
at race-meetings.

After their first meeting, he attached himself wonder-
fully to Ned, who continued to keep up the character of
the wealthy returned Australian.

Howard looked upon him as a vulgar beast—but then,
the calf was a golden one.

Kelly grinned to himself, for he guessed that the fasci-

nation Captain Montreal Howard, a good-looking and
well-get-up man, of about six or eight and thirty,
who was the idol of a certain circle.

"You think, my fine fellow," thought Ned, "that you
are going to get some pretty picking off me, but you'll
find you'll break your grinders against my bones."

"Why, a smart fellow like you ought to make your for-
tune here in no time, if you haven't made it already. I
suspect you're not what you seem.

"Go ahead," laughed Kelly; "split it out. What the
devil do you take me for—a greenhorn or a yokel, that you
could pluck as easy as a devil's goose?"

"No. I take you for as sharp a blade as ever I nearly
out my fingers with. Do you want money? I mean a
cheating bump of the coin, that will set us both up for the
rest of our lives."

"Do I want coin? Ha! ha!" chuckled Kelly. "Do I
want plenty of victuals and wine, and what will keep the
life in my body, and will in my pocket? What next will
you ask, I wonder? I want this, and I'll tell you what
more I want. I want something to do. I feel shrinking
and drying up in this do-nothing life and beastly old coun-
try—I do. I shall have to break somebody's neck or rob
the Bank of England, if I don't have something else to
work at; but I can't go on with the card-sharping lay
That ain't my game. Paint big enough for me.

"Well, my kid, you're the fellow for my little game.
You've got nerve, and pluck, and strength. All these are
useful in our profession. I can show you how to use them
all, and with profit, too."

"Is it a big thing?" said Kelly.

"You are the devil you are, and what are you?"

"Never you mind who or what I am. I'm up to you,
anyways, and if you mean business, out with it, and don'
bother about me. What the — is it to you who I am;
if I'm fit for work? You're blooming cow-poke, you are."

"Don't be offended, my boy. I think you're the right
sort. You ain't too squammish, I hope, when one's in
a mess as to the way to get out of it?"

"If it's any satisfaction to you to know it, I may just as
well tell you I'll cut your blessed wizen or choke it, if
there was no other way of clearing out of a mess."

"Much obliged to your candour! Charming frankness, I
must admit, my friend; and as I know your ultimate,
I shall be as particular as ever in keeping the little life-pro-
tector, I always affectionately wear near my heart, in the
most possible condition for the contingency you so graphi-
cally anticipate."

And the speaker languidly produced a likely-faced
six-shooter from the breast-pocket of his paletot.

"That popgun wouldn't serve you much, my lad, for I
could chuck you and six out of any wing-shots in England,
and would do it, too, if I had the least suspicion of foul
play."

"I don't much fancy the dramatic tone of our friendly
conversation, Mr. Dawes, and it would be quite as well
under the circumstances of this amicable meeting if we
restrained from discussing the effective methods by which
we could indulge in mutual murder. I'll take this
for the deed, if you will be so good as to fall in with my
views upon this head, and talk of something more profit-
able than making cold meat pies of one another."

"Oh, I'm agreeable, my tulip," laughed the other
ruffian. "Now, then, uncover your plant, and let's see
if it's worth anything."

"Well, the plant I have in view is risky—devilish risky
under the circumstances of this amicable meeting if we
restrained from discussing the effective methods by which
we could indulge in mutual murder. I'll take this
for the deed, if you will be so good as to fall in with my
views upon this head, and talk of something more profit-
able than making cold meat pies of one another."

"Perhaps you've hit it," answered the other.

"Very well. I'm game for anything from blowing up
Windsor to burning down Westminster Abbey," said Ned
recklessly, and with a string of oaths.

His manner impressed the other, who began—
"Do you know anything of bank-notes?"

"I know a good one when I see it."

"You're a wit, too, I see," said the captain, with a slight sneer.

He rose, and went to a secretary, which he unlocked.

From it he took out a travelling desk, and unlocked this also.

Then, from a little secret recess in the desk opened by a spring, he took out a folded piece of paper, and handed it to Ned.

"What do you think of that?" he asked.

Ned unfolded it. It was a Bank of England note.

It held it up to the light and examined it carefully, scanning every line on it, and then rustling it between his fingers.

"It's a genuine one, in my mind," was his comment.

"You think it would do?"

"Rather. It looks the real thing."

"Do you know what the difficulty has always been in imitating Bank of England notes?" enquired the captain.

Ned had made the acquaintance on the other side of the herring-pond of several gentleman who had got into trouble from attempting to infringe upon that monopoly of produce claimed by the Old Lady in Threadneedle-street as regards the articles in question.

"The water-mark," he answered, without hesitation.

"Look at that again."

Ned did so.

"Well," he exclaimed, after a lengthy examination, "any living soul would swear that that is a real quid."

"Right you are. So it is," answered the other.

Ned looked at him with anger, and impatiently cried—

"Do you take me for a child or a fool, or what the deuce do you mean by this humbug?"

"I suppose your hand was closed?"

"Well, as well as I remember, it was."

"That was very unkind, wasn't it?"

"Accidentally, of course," said Kelly, laughing encouragingly.

"The fact was that I was looking into a shop-window some time ago, and so I saw the note, and thought I would like to have it."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Don't let's have any more blessed riddles," said Ned.

"Oh, sir—please, sir, for mercy's sake, leave go—"

He glanced round, and found that he was holding the wrist of a tall, pale, shabby-genteel looking young man of about five or six and twenty.

The pressure of the crowd was so great, that no one of them noticed their relative positions.

Still retaining his grip, Ned led his captive aside into a by-street.

"Now, then, what's your little game?" he demanded abruptly.

"Oh! I mean the other, for mercy's sake let me off, sir. I was starving, I assure you. I was driven to it by circumstances. I have never tried such a thing before."

"So I should think, by your blood-stained arms," said Kelly's grim remark.

"Indeed, I never did. I'm an honest, hardworking chap."

Kelly lifted the hand he had retained his hold of, and looked at it.

It was white and soft.

"That's not the hand of a hardworking man," he said.

"Tell me, sir. I'm an engraver."

"Don't you quite understand, sir?"

"Yes. sir."

"Where were you working last, and why did you leave your place?"

The fellow hung his head.

"I see how it is," said Kelly. "I can hang you over to the police for trying to pick my pocket, and as you are pretty well known to them it will go hard with you."

An "engraver" sounded most opportunely in Kelly's ears. He saw in the pickpocket the instrument he wanted.

A few minutes later he and his new protege were seated at a table in one of the numerous cafes of the neighbourhood.

The only occupant of the next table was a quiet-looking little man, reading an evening newspaper.

"Now, listen to me," said Ned; "it's no good trying to patch me up again. I know you. I'm a hardworking man, and I'll do what I can to serve you."

"Stow that, my bird, and tell me how often you've been in quod, and what for; or I'll hand you over at once."

"I had eighteen stretch, sir."

"Accidently, of course," said Kelly, laughing encouragingly.

"That fact of Ned's understanding that eighteen stretch means eighteen months, seemed to encourage his companion.

"They called it robbery with violence; but that was quite a mistake."

"Yes, indeed."

"The fact was that I was looking into a shop-window when, all at once—I don't know how it happened—but my sleeve-link caught in an old fellow's watch-chain."

"Accidently, of course," said Kelly, laughing encouragingly.

"Of course. But before I could offer any explanation he began to cry out, 'There's a police officer!'"

"That was very unlucky, wasn't it?"

"Yes, especially in the street, before a number of people. So I thought the best thing I could do was to drop my hand down and to keep him on your face and told him I had hold of his watch-chain in my hand, and he was only trying to unfasten it from my sleeve-link."

"Well, as well as I remember, it was," and the samp smiled. "Appearances might have been against me, and, unfortunately, they were. I was laid hold of, and the old idiot swore that I had hold of his watch-chain in my hand, and he was only trying to unfasten it from my sleeve-link."

But not only did he swear this, but also, that instead of putting my hand to his mouth, I had given him a
crack with my fist that sent two of his teeth down his throat. They must have been false ones, for I hardly touched him; but the bear believed it, and ran me in."

"Ned laughed, saying—"

"You'll do, my chicken. Is it true that you are an engraver?"

"Yes. I served my time at one of the best firms of copperplate-printers in London."

"Why did you leave them?"

"All through a bit of professional vanity. I used to have some very hard work set me, and, instead of extra pay, as I got was the praise that I could imitate anything put before me. I thought that it really must be so, but resolved to test the matter fairly by the unbiassed judgment of others. But it turned out that it was difficult to meet with an unbiassed judgment. The thing I tried to copy was my master's signature, and his bankers were so biassed as to examine it a great deal more closely than there was any need to. In consideration of my youth and innocence, I suppose, the governor didn't prosecute, but I got the sack."

"And what is your name?"

"Samuel Higginthorpe."

"I suppose your present lay is not up to much?"

"Not very."

"Well, if you like, I can put you up to something handy."

"Blest if I didn't think it," chuckled the engraver, as he looked at Kelly. "Why, jiggered if you ain't one of us. Ain't I in luck, and no mistake!" and he laughed again and again with heartfelt satisfaction.

"And who are you, my friend?"

"Slimy Sam, into a neighbouring public, at which he had installed himself in a compartment of the bar. A few minutes later the old fellow of the cafe entered the adjoining compartment. The little old fellow who had been sitting at the next table, sauntered out after them. A few words of their conversation only had reached him.

"It looks as if Slimy Sam had got hold of a mug," he soliloquized. "It won't be the first he has landed, and I think it will be just as well to keep an eye on him. The big fellow is evidently a yokel, and I should not be at all surprised if Mr. Sam wasn't going to land him with the consequences."

And full resolved to protect Ned from any such attempt, the stranger— who was a detective, followed the pair.

Ned was quite unconscious that, for the first time in his life, the police were playing the part of guardian angel to him.

CHAPTER CLXXII.

"I KNOW A BANK."

Quite unconscious that he was the object of any such solicitude on the part of those whom he regarded as his natural enemies, Ned led Mr. Samuel Higginthorpe, alias Slimy Sam, into a neighbouring public, at which he had appointed to meet the captain.

They installed themselves in a compartment of the bar. A few minutes later the old fellow of the cafe entered the adjoining compartment.

By getting close to the dividing partition, he found himself able to hear a great deal of what was going on on the other side of it.

Hardly had he taken up this position than someone entered the compartment occupied by Ned and his new acquaintance.

It was the captain. Kelly began a kind of speech which was to serve as an introduction to the two.

As it turned out there was no need of it.

Captain Montmorency Howard and Mr. Samuel Higginthorpe were perfectly well acquainted with one another.

In company they had, like the old Scotch wedded pair, "climbed the hill together" in the form of a peculiarly-constructed rotating stair, with which some genius had endowed some of her Majesty's jails.

Their first meeting was not particularly cordial. We do not like to meet with living reminders of our past misfortunes.

But when Ned had informed the captain of Mr. Higginthorpe's peculiar talents, that gentleman's manner perceptibly thawed.

In a little time the three were literally "thick as thieves."

"Mr. Dawes," said the captain to Ned, "I know you will excuse the question, but have you ever come in contact, unpleasantly that is, with the London police?"

"No," answered Kelly, boldly, "but if I—I shouldn't mind if I did. It's my belief you could square any man in the force if you'd coin enough." Recent subsequent revelations have proved that Ned was not far out—see Dragovich and Company.

"Well," observed the captain, "I think that if this affair goes on we had better arrange to meet at your diggings. I think less suspicion would be aroused."

Ned agreed, and after some further consultation it was arranged that he should hire a lodging in Sloco, at which the others should meet, and where the work of planning out their programme should be gone into.

When he left the place the detective had considerably altered his opinion with regard to Ned.

"The big fellow seems to be boss of the show," he thought. "Who the deuce can he be, though? I don't recollect such a fellow nailed up in any case. I've had the handling of those one thing, though. As I don't know him it's pretty sure that he doesn't know me, and I'll be the safest one of the three for me to keep watch on. I can always find the other two when I want them, they're old friends."

He had heard a great deal of their talk, but had not quite been able, as he phrased it, to spot their lay; but that there was something up their eager whisperings and the reputation of the card-sharping captain and the engraver, convinced him.

He heard the word "bank" repeatedly used, and recked his brain to guess what was up. His face assumed that eager look a dog has when his nose is in a rabbit-hole.

After consulting with his superiors and with the bank authorities, it was decided for the present merely to keep a strict watch as possible over the suspected parties.

The aim of the bank people was twofold.

They wanted to catch the rogue in some overt act that would ensure them a lengthy sentence.

They also wanted to lay their hands on the rest of the paper, which had been stolen from their mills, and the actual thieves of which were undergoing their sentences at the time.

They felt that as long as this paper—a quantity of which had never been accounted for—was in dangerous hands they would always be menaced.

The imitation of the watermark and of the peculiar crisp paper of the bank has always been a stumbling-block to bank-note forgers, and here it lay all ready to their hands.

Consequently, it was resolved to spare no trouble to bring matters to such a climax as was desired.

But, although a detective was keeping watch and ward over Ned, he never identified him, either as the famous bushranger or as one of the men engaged in the diamond robbery in Hatton-garden.

Ned was always prompt in action.

On leaving his new friends, he had gone home, and the following morning, after announcing to his landlord that he was going to spend a few days in the country, he packed up a portmanteau and came to town.

He called on the captain, and the pair allied forth in quest of quarters.

They did not notice that they were followed by
belly-looking fellow, who had been lounging about the street in which the captain resided all the morning. The detective, knowing that he could always lay his hands on the captain, whose face, as a man always knocking about in certain quarters was familiar to him, had changed his route, and followed Ned on the evening on which he had discovered the plot. He resolved instead to keep a watch over the captain's residence, whither he divined Kelly would call, and to commence his espionage on the latter from that moment. He saw Ned arrive, and the two new friends start on their inquiring expedition, and stole after them.

After several enquiries, Ned found quarters that suited him very well in Soho. A few hours later an elderly gentleman applied for apartments at the same address. He was a very particular old gentleman. He made minute inquiries as to what other lodgers were in the house, and the accommodation it afforded. Then nothing would suit him but a room with a south aspect, and the only one vacant was one immediately adjoining Ned's sitting room. It was not very large, but the old fellow declared he preferred it to any other. During the next day or two the captain and Mr. Higginthorpe made several calls on Ned. Ned was not aware he had the old gentleman for a neighbour, and, indeed, it would not have mattered much if he had, for the room was separated by a good thick wall from Kelly, and nothing therefore could be overheard.

The little old gentleman was intensely interested in the arrival of these visitors, and would have given a great deal to hear their conversation, but the fates were against him. Several times he stole noiselessly from the room and applied his ear to the keyhole of Ned's door, which opened on to the same landing as his own. But although his ears were quick enough to catch the sound of any approaching footsteps, the noise of which made him run back into his room like a frightened rabbit, he was unable to seize on any part of the conversation carried on within.

After musing a little while he went out and made some purchases. He descended and had a very long and important interview with the landlord, at the close of which the latter was considerably overcome with astonishment. Well he might be on receiving the intelligence that one of his lodgers was a man contriving some fraud, and the other a detective engaged in preventing it.

The next day the detective entered Ned's room during his absence. The first care was to see if there was any paper of a compromising character lying about. In this respect he was doomed to disappointment. Kelly being unable to write was consequently not in a position to make compromising memoranda. To this very fact he owed much of his immunity. He never sent or received letters, and as a natural result his correspondence never went astray or fell into the wrong hands.

Baffled in this respect, the detective turned his attention to the general arrangement of the room. He seemed thoroughly puzzled and somewhat vexed at the absence of all clues. He cast an almost despairing glance round the apartment. All at once his glance was arrested; his eyes were attracted as he observed a picture which hung against the wall that divided his room from Kelly's. By the aid of a two-foot rule he ascertained the exact position on the wall.

Then returning to his own room and measuring from the picture to the door, in order to be certain of the spot, he cut away a hole through the partition immediately behind it-taking care to do this work in Kelly's absence. Over this, in order to mask it, he shifted one of the numerous works of art with which his wall was ornamented. The next time Ned and his friends were in council the detective unhooked his own picture, revealing the hole.

Then he put his car to it, at the same time pushing the picture in Ned's room a trifle away from the wall.

So gently was this done that no one even actually engaged in closely watching the picture would have observed it.

By this means he was well able to overhear the whole conversation.

Matters were going on smoothly. Ned had hired a house at Hackney, that was to be the scene of their operations.

Higginthorpe had purchased a press and had it conveyed there, and had so given the requisite touches needed to complete the plate with which the captain had furnished him.

The captain had got hold of the bank-paper, which had been carefully packed up and warehoused under a false name for some time past.

He had arranged that it should be delivered at Ned's address at Soho that night. As the house was too small to have it sent to his own quarters, a piece of attention for which Ned thanked by a look that caused him to feel somewhat uncomfortable.

It was finally arranged that Higginthorpe should return to Hackney, that the captain should call in at Ned's the following morning, and that Ned should follow a little later.

The detective had heard quite enough to settle on his course of action. He had neither a warrant nor a sufficient force to secure the three, so he resolved to obtain the requisite authority without delay to secure the three at Hackney.

The following morning Mr. Higginthorpe being aroused by a ring at the bell opened the door and was immediately taken into custody by a couple of policemen in plain clothes, who were soon joined by several others. A search of the house revealed the existence of a print-press and plate concerning which this usual fluent individual was quite at a loss to give any satisfactory explanation. A couple of hours later a cab drove up and a gentleman of gorgeous exterior stepped out, holding beneath his arm a parcel which appeared an object of intense solicitude to him.

On stepping into the house and into the arms of a detective-sergeant he was promptly relieved of it and was conveyed in company with Samuel to a back room to curse his luck and lament ever having yielded to the temptation of engaging in this once so promising little "plant."

This began to slip on and there were as yet no signs of the third party.

The detective, who knew the hour at which the bushranger had arranged to leave Soho, began to grow uneasy, and the prisoners, who possessed a similar knowledge, to indulge in anything but pleasant wishes towards the man, who had apparently deserved the fate that had befallen them and resolved to steer clear of it.

The fact was that Ned had reflected that three bachelors could not well keep house together without inconvenience, and without exciting the suspicion of their neighbours.

It was absolutely necessary that they should have a woman of some kind to look after their domestic arrangements, though then there was the risk that she might disclose the very things were wrong and unconsciously or intentionally betray them.

In this dilemma he thought of Jess. He at once hinted her up, and got her to agree to keep house for them.

This, however, took time. It was late in the afternoon when a hansom drove up to the house in Hackney.
A lady and gentleman alighted.
"Run up and let yourself in, Jess," said the latter, "whilst I settle with the ca­man. Here's the key."

The girl complied.

She ran up the steps, opened the house door, and went in.

The gentleman helped the cabman to get a couple of boxes from the top of the cab, and then was going to pay him.

Whilst he was feeling in his pocket for some silver, and the man was carrying the boxes up the steps to the door, it was suddenly thrown open.

The girl appeared in the doorway.

Opening the door suddenly, she cried—
"Run, Ned! The copper's!" and banged to the door, which she quickly locked, and threw the key through the glass window into the street. She was soon knocked down by the police inside, who had witnessed her proceedings, but too late to frustrate them.

Ned took in the situation at a glance.

The police had been waiting for him in the house, ready to pounce on him. Jess had discovered them, and, despite their efforts to restrain her, had succeeded in throwing the door open before they could lay hands on her, and, when in their grip, had shouted out those words of warning recorded above. Simultaneously the bushranger saw his danger and his chance of escape.

With the quickness of a harlequin he bounded on to the driver's seat of the hansom, seized whip and reins, and, lashing the horse furiously, tore at full speed down the road.

The police started in pursuit, but in vain, as on foot they had no chance, and the locality was one in which vehicles do not abound, and are not to be had at a moment's notice.

Once under way, Ned took two or three turnings in succession, and, having secured a start, abandoned the cab.

He then made the best of his way to Kit's lodgings, and, having communicated his new address to Anatole, awaited events.

CHAPTER CLXXIII.

HOW THE CALAIS MAIL WAS BOBBED.

A FEW days later Ned received notice from Anatole that the time had come for carrying out the plan he had so long been maturing—namely, that of robbing the Calais mail.

Accordingly, it was settled that the affair should be attended to with the least possible delay; and, after a good deal of difficulty he had succeeded in getting a guard in the employ of the French railway to be a fair haul of English and French notes, amongst other things.

"But what will the rest of the swag be?"

"Securities, scrip, stock, coupons, and the like."

"Well, but what use will they be to us?"

"Why, there comes in the risky part of the job. What we have to do is to negotiate their restoration."

"On the risk of being nabbed?"

"No," answered the Frenchman. "I don't think there's much risk."

Ned remained in meditation for some time.

"Who's the fellow on the other side that is to help us?"

He asked, after a pause.

"Ah, that is a curious thing," answered Anatole. "He is a man whose acquaintance I made under rather peculiar circumstances. The first time I set eyes on him I saw a great deal more of him than one usually sees on a first acquaintance."

As he made this remark the Frenchman laughed heartily.

"What's the joke?"

"I'll tell you," replied Anatole, and he went on to give the particulars of the circumstances under which he had first set eyes on Henri Daudet.

(Tob e continued.)
CHAPTER CLXXIII.—Continued.

It appeared that Daudet in his younger days had taken to a species of robbery much practised in hotels.

It consisted in entering a room during its legitimate occupants' absence and walking off with whatever he could lay his hands on.

It happened on one occasion that in prowling about a hotel corridor, he noticed a room with the key in the lock and the occupants' absence and walking off with whatever he could lay his hands on.

After knocking softly, in order if there was anyone within to pretend he had called at the wrong room by mistake, and receiving no reply he turned the key and entered.

There was no one within.

The tenant had apparently been called away just as he was about to dress for a suit of clothes was placed ready on a chair, and a clean shirt was spread out on the bed.

It consisted in entering a room during its legitimate tenure, and appropriating a suit of clothes, the door suddenly on the outside.

But noticing how his room had been pillaged, he stripped the room.

As Daudet had really stolen nothing he got off with a sentence better suited for a warm bath than on the Parisian Boulevards, was such as for the moment to render him speechless.

At first he thought he had to do with a madman.

But noticing how his room had been pillaged, he shouted for help, and soon the other inhabitants of the hotel flocked to the spot.

Amongst them was Anatole, who had a wonderful memory for faces, and the would-be thief had a remarkable one.

Ugliness had marked him for her own. He had an enormous nose, and a red splotch on his right cheek was as he used to say, the only mark of affection he had ever received from his parents.

It was these peculiarities that enabled him to recognise, in the garb of a railway-guard, the man he had seen, without any hesitation, and stripped the room.

It was evident that Daudet, and the performance of Black Bass, are tame beside those of ‘Ned and His Nag’; in addition to which Ned’s history is true, and Turpin’s is pure fiction.”—Press, July.

The tenant had apparently been called away just as he was about to dress, for a suit of clothes was placed ready on a chair, and a clean shirt was spread out on the bed.

It was evidently the tenant, of the room returning.

The wretched fellow was at his wit’s end.

On the contrary, he rapidly divested himself of his clothes till he stood in the condition of Adam before the fall.

But just as he was about to slip on the shirt, lying in readiness, he heard a hand on the key of the door.

He glanced towards the place where the suit he had in his hiding-place.

What was he to do?

In desperation he slipped under the bed, trusting that the new-comer would dress and go out again, and above all that he would not notice the cast-off garments thrown down in one corner.

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At first he thought he had to do with a madman.

But noticing how his room had been pillaged, he shouted for help, and soon the other inhabitants of the hotel flocked to the spot.

Amongst them was Anatole, who had a wonderful memory for faces, and the would-be thief had a remarkable one.

Ugliness had marked him for her own. He had an enormous nose, and a red splotch on his right cheek was as he used to say, the only mark of affection he had ever received from his parents.

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It was fresh from the provinces, where I had been brought up in that ignorance which some people hold to be bliss, and had just entered on a career in Paris. I was, as I said, green, not a bad looking chap, and I had some sin.

I was always in love with someone or other—and always being in love is what I call the true jeunesse dorée. But you do not know what that means? Nothing like it—*vrai amour!*” shouted the excitable Gaul, to the utter amazement of Ned, who holloed out—

“Damn your gibberish! Speak English, man. I don’t know what on earth you mean by John Dey or Cother fish you name!”

The Frenchman laughed at Ned’s ignorance, and the words “*bête causeux au nez*” escaped his lips.

“At that time, amongst the flower-girls on the boulevards who used to stroll from café to café with their baskets of posies, was a most charming creature,” continued Anatole.

“Now she would have loved beautiful, and in the coquettish Swiss-peasant kind of costume she had adopted she perfectly ravished.

Her raven hair, as fair hair and blue eyes, was coiffure, itself resembling one of those delicious heads that Greuze had the secret of putting on to canvas—but *que diable*, what do you know about Greuze?”

“Don’t you be so blooming conceited. Don’t I know about Greuze? I’ve seen a pretty lot of them.”

“Don’t you be so blooming conceited. Don’t I know about Greuze?”

“Kit has shipped.”

“Nothing about crews? I’ve seen a pretty job lot of them from the provinces, where I had been fresh from the provinces.”

“Don’t you be so blooming conceited. Don’t I know nothing about Greuze? I’ve seen a pretty lot of them.”

“On the contrary, I know a lot about the celebrated French painter—Greuze.”

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“One of them told me, and the third stopping forward opened a trap in the floor. The agency of that moment was intolerable, and I cannot recall it without a shudder.”

“I could read murder plainly in the eyes of the fiends who held me, and hear below me the rush of waters which cannot recall it without a shudder.”

“The thought was maddening.

“To die like this, marred like a rat in a trap, with no chance or hope of being avenged, cut off in the prime of youth and enjoyment, when all things smiled upon me, in a vile den with gloating devils around me.”

“I begged and prayed for mercy, I promised secrecy, and anything they liked to name, but gave them no ‘safer’ from the devil who had lured me thither, made the men who held me drag me yet closer to the horrible gulf.”

“I bit and kicked, and tore and howled like a madman, to get loose, but all in vain.”

“I was young and strong, but the villains had sprung upon me before I had time to put myself on my guard, and Natalie quickly swinging to the massy door cut off all chances of my escape at all costs.”

“I was always in love with someone or other—and always being in love is what I call the true jeunesse dorée. But you do not know what that means? Nothing like it—*vrai amour!*” shouted the excitable Gaul, to the utter amazement of Ned, who holloed out—

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"I got off with severe brain fever: I wonder I was not a mummy for life; and on my recovery learnt that Natalie and her companions, no marier being actually brought home to them, had been sentenced to a long term of penal servitude."

CHAPTER CLXXIV.

HOW THE PARIS MAIL WAS ROBBED.

As Anatole concluded his story, the boat entered Calais harbour.

The two travellers made their way at once to the station.

Despite the hushness of the night there had been but few travellers—a fact which helped their plan.

At a station Anatole pointed out to Ned a little dark fellow in the guard's van, whose eyes were eagerly scanning the passengers who arrived.

"That is our man," he remarked.

Ned was about to advance towards him.

"No, no," said Anatole; "we must not be seen in communication with him. He has seen us, and that is enough."

The time approached for the travellers to take their places.

"Everything favours us," said the Frenchman.

This remark was called forth by the fact that they were able to secure a compartment for themselves, usually a matter of difficulty on French lines, in the arrangements of which a puerility of accommodation, as regards the number of passengers carried, is conspicuous.

By a yet greater "act of good luck," the compartment was the end one on the carriage coupled next to the guard's van in which the mails were deposited.

The mails for Paris were placed in a separate locked-up compartment.

After this had been locked it was further secured by bands of linen with seals at the ends.

They were, of course, no extra security from actual violence, but they enabled them to pass from one carriage to the next one with ease.

Firstly, to show if the compartment had been tampered with; and secondly, to render even an unsuccessful attempt to rob the mails a criminal offence, breaking an official seal constituting one in France.

A few minutes later and the train steamed out of the station.

The time approached for the travellers to take their places.

"Now," said Anatole, consulting his watch, "we have a little under an hour for our job, which must be done.

The guard Daudet knew that it was during this part of the journey that the robbery was to take place.

The guard Daudet knew that it was during this part of the journey that the robbery was to take place.

He had, firstly, to pass before the compartment holding the break, which intervened between him and the one containing the mails.

In this break-van was the guard, Henri Daudet.

But Ned was also aware that there was another guard as well sharing his vigil.

To pass in front of the window in an upright position was impossible.

He would be certain to be detected.

It was necessary, therefore, to crouch down and advance along the step in a creeping form.

Before crouching he paused for a moment.

The reflection of the lighted windows of the train was plainly visible on the side of the line as it flew by.

Kelly could make out the outline of the passengers in several instances, and could plainly recognise that of Anatole standing at the window.

There was no shadow cast from the guard's van.

At once a shadow blocked the light that a moment before had been streaming full from the window.

The shadow of a man. From its outline it was evident that this individual either had his back or his face to the opening.

In the latter case he was bound to see Ned as the bushranger crept past, and it was useless to risk it.

But, in the former? All at once a thought crossed Kelly's mind.

Instinctively he divulged the real state of affairs.

The guard Daudet knew that it was during this part of the journey that the robbery was to take place.

It must be he who was standing by the window in order to mask it from his colleague.

Stooping down, Ned crept cautiously along, helping himself onwards past the guard's compartment by the aid of the handle of the door.

Once past this compartment, he rose and continued his progress by the aid of the rail.

In a few moments more he had arrived opposite the door of the van containing the mails.

It was secured by the sealed bands already mentioned.

A few slits with his knife disposed of these.

Then, inserting the key Anatole had given him into the lock, he opened the door.

After a few instructions from Anatole, Ned was ready to set out on his perilous expedition.

Standing there for a moment, he looked around him.

The train was tearing furiously through the dark night, seeming almost to sway from side to side in its velocity.

So swiftly was it moving, that the rush of air against him seemed to threaten every moment to make him lose the rail outside the carriage to which his hands clung.

Anatole had closed the door, which Kelly had pulled to after him.

After a little time Ned began to get accustomed to his novel position.

The rocking, jerking motion of the train, no longer threatened at every movement to wrench away his hold of the rail, as well as to hurt him down amidst the whirring, clattering wheels beneath him.

The rush of air became less awkward as he gradually grew accustomed to it.

The steps of the French railway-carriages are broader than those in England, it being the practise for the guards to pass from time to time along the whole length of the train in order to collect tickets.

To facilitate this, there is also a rail running along about head high, which the men lay hold of with their hands.

After a few minutes spent in standing on the steps and holding on to the rail, Ned grew accustomed, as it were, to his novel situation.

He felt that he could have passed from one end of the train to the other with ease.

But this was not his task. He had but to pass along his one carriage, and to step from it to the next one while the train was in motion.

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Then, inserting the key Anatole had given him into the lock, he opened the door.

He plunged his hand in, and seized on the first bag he could lay hold of.
CHAPTER CLXXV.

FOUND OUT.

HOLDING this between his knees, in order to prevent it from being shaken from the step, he relocked the door and then commenced the return journey.

This was even more difficult than the former. He had only one hand to help him, having to drag the bag with the other. The getting past the guards' van was exceedingly difficult for him.

But when he reached the end of the steps, further progress seemed impossible, encumbered as he was. It had taken him all he knew to get across from one carriage to the other with his hands free, but the mail bag was a terrible impediment.

How was he to get it over?

At length an idea struck him. Taking off his necktie, he managed with the aid of that and his handkerchief to secure the bag firmly to the end of his rope, improvised a kind of rope.

With this he started again on his expedition.

Again he crossed the space between the carriages after fastening one end of his rope to the one he quitted. The other end he attached to the bag.

Then, crossing the gulf, he made his way to the compartment where Anatole was waiting.

The Frenchman did not utter a word till Kelly had entered the compartment again, lest their converse should be overheard.

"Where is the bag?" was his remark.

Kelly explained the difficulty that had arisen.

Then by the aid of the straps that served to fasten their rugs, improvised a kind of rope.

With this he started again on his expedition.

This time he did not look back. The Frenchman did not utter a word till Kelly had entered the compartment again, lest their converse should be overheard.

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With this he started again on his expedition.

Again he crossed the space between the carriages after fastening one end of his rope to the one he quitted. The other end he attached to the bag.

Then he loosened the fastenings confining the bag to the rail, stepped back to his own carriage, and by the aid of his rope hauled the bag after him, and a minute later had swung it through the window to Anatole.

"Shall I go for another?" he whispered, with his head thrust into the carriage so as not to be overheard.

"Yes, there is time," was the answer; "but try to give back the key to Daudet."

"He's wide awake. I'll do that like a shot," said Ned.

Taking the rope with him this time, he set out again on his journey.

Practice was making perfect in his case, and he gained the door of the mail-van with comparative ease this time. He noticed the shadow of the guard still blocking the window.

Securing another bag and relocking the door, he again commenced his retreat.

Then he loosened the fastenings confining the bag to the rail, stepped back to his own carriage, and by the aid of his rope hauled the bag after him, and a minute later had swung it through the window to Anatole.

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But once in Paris, with, as Madame McGregor exclaimed, "My foot on my native heath," it was emphatically, d'Amsterdam.

Quiet, fourth-rate hotel in the Rue in racing parlance, Anatole first and the rest nowhere.

Formed the basis of a Frenchman's diet, and that every cucus-riders, and the like, either engaged in Paris, or passing through that city.

The manners and customs of some of these "members of the profession," as they delight to style themselves, are often curious in the extreme, and their ignorance of the social amenities of life positively dismaying.

Hence Anatole felt sure that any awkwardness of Kelly's was so slight, and that he was not, unmindful, by the people of the hotel or by the other guests.

Another great point was that English was spoken and English fare provided, for Ned, in common with many of his fellow passengers, had the freest conviction that frogs and snails formed the basis of a Frenchman's diet, and that every dish that he could recognize was one of the other of these two things disguised in a more or less artificial fashion.

At first Anatole tried to remove these impressions.

He took Ned to dinner at Bredants, and devoted as much attention to the composition of the men, or bill of fare, as ever the House of Commons did to a clause of the Land Bill.

But all in vain.

Kelly expressed an opinion that supérieur de vinaigre à la mode was beastly rot, and left his stomach as empty as if he had been eating an old kid glove served up with butter sauce. It was a blessed kickshaw, and only fit food for them blessed snakes that swallow their blankets.

He had evidently heard of the boa constrictor at "the Zoo" who had performed this operation.

He went through the menu from curiously alone, and then swore he was more hungry than when he began.

Rumpsteak and onions and a bottle of gin was his idea of a first-rate canine. That was something to fix down on.

French wines! Bah! disguised poison.

Anatole's first care on his arrival had been to rush, in swift succession, to tailors, bootmakers, shirtmakers, and hosiers, and to rig himself out from top to toe in the singular array of the Parisian dandy.

With cuffs reaching down to his knuckles, and shirt-collar rising above his ears, it was his delight to be driven in a victoria in the Bois de Boulogne, to sit sipping French wines! Bah! disguised poison.

In his heart he was ever afraid Kelly would get into some haggish-looking women hanging around you, and try to wheedle you out of your winnings or else to grab 'em before your very eyes.

Kelly expressed himself as "jolly glad" to clear out of this blessed nest of jabbering monkeys, was his way of putting it.

"Well, my friend, we can, I think, arrange all that," said Anatole.

The first thing to be fixed, though, is to share the sway.

"Très bien, very good. We will share it."

They adjourned at once to the double-bedded room they occupied.

They had been carefully locked and a hanger-chief hung over the keyhole, for the mere leaving the key in the lock was not considered a sufficient precaution, they set to work.

The plunder was spread out on the table.

It was, as has been stated, a very miscellaneous lot, consisting, for the most part, of those foreign stocks, shares, and bonds which are payable "to bearer," and are therefore easier to negotiate than most of our own securities.

Ned gazed in silence at the heap of papers printed in black, red, blue, green, and marine blue, with wonderfully ornate headings, and long tails of attached coupons.

He knew an English "flimsy" well enough, and, since his sojourn in Paris, he had learned to recognize the notes of
He stared in astonishment, but, at them, he and his hand were received from my clients—my customers abroad, at Sydney, Rio, Hong Kong, where you will; and I show my books, all correct, to prove it.

"You're up to a thing or two."

"Only it will take time, and it will be necessary to spend a lot of time fixing myself in Paris. If I do it in three years I shall be lucky."

"Three years!"

"Three years. Now, I am willing to take your share and work it off in the same way for a little commission."

"Three years!"

"Hum, hum!" replied the Frenchman, very slowly, as though in doubt; "I do not see how it can be managed otherwise. No; to hurry faster would be to risk the loss of all."

There was a minute of silence.

"Listen to me," said Anatole at length. "You are a brave fellow, un bon camarade, and we have done well together. You are my friend, and I love to help my friends. I tell you what I will do. I will buy your share half-and-half—no, I mean out-and-out—as you say in England, now, and take all the risk."

"Ain't that a little bit too good to be true?" answered Kelly, whose suspicions were aroused by the other's manner.

"What do you say?"

"What's the worth of the whole lot of the swag?" asked Ned, doggedly.

"In English money, as near as I can make it, it is fifteen thousand pounds!"

"Then my share is what?" asked Kelly, who could not even divide fifteen by three.

"Five thousand, naturally," replied the other, a little puzzled at such a question.

"Five thousand? Well, what will you give me for it?"

"Well, I will either give you four thousand by degree as I dispose of the value of the securities, or I will pay you now two thousand and take all risk."

"Oh, that's the game, is it?"

"Take your choice—take it or leave it. I don't care which."

Ned mused a bit.

After all, the proposition seemed a fair one.

"Cash down?" he said.

"On the nail, as you say," was the answer.

"All right; for over the tin, then."

Anatole had still the money stolen from Kint, and some more he had subsequently won in England. He handed Ned the amount in French and English notes.

After some puzzling, Kelly was satisfied that the sum was right, and stowed it away about him.

"Come and wet down the bargain, Frenchy, won't you?" was his next observation.

"Not just yet," answered Anatole, who was restoring the securities to their hiding-place.

"All right. In forty-eight hours I slope out of these diggings," remarked Ned, as he left the room.

Left alone, Anatole could not conceal the exultation he had with difficulty suppressed in Kelly's presence.

"Ah, quel bonheur! quel coup de la vie! what luck! Can I believe my eyes? Mais c'est incroyable! Nearly one hundred thousand pounds, and nearly half of it for two! Anatole, mon ami, you are a great strategist, greater than the great Napoleon. He crossed the Alps; so did Hielbo, and others before him. He had his luck—his coup; but this is the bargain, Frenchy, won't you?" was his next observation.

"Not just yet," answered Anatole, who was restoring the securities to their hiding-place.

"Ah, all right. In forty-eight hours I shall be out of these diggings," remarked Ned, as he left the room.

"Left alone, Anatole could not conceal the exultation he had with difficulty suppressed in Kelly's presence.

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"Alone! let us see," he resumed. "I cannot hope for
such luck with Daudet. He will want at least thirty
thousand. That will leave me seventy. I go on the
Bourse with that. In three years I realise, in three more
I divide my attention between watching Anatole, and work­

Visions of a landed estate and a seat in the Chamber
of Deputies floated across his mind.

"Stop a moment, Anatole, you see," he resumed, as
his thoughts flew back to the present. "You must keep
a close watch on our friend whilst he remains in Paris.
He has the money, and you have the securities, and if he
took it into his thick head to denounce you that would be,
note, awkward. He may baffle, too, in his cups, of his
coin. He is naturally boastful, and suspicions may be
aroused. No, you must not let him out of your sight till
he leaves Paris; you must stick to him like his coat. He
might even run against Daudet and have an explanation,
which would be awkward!"

Thus musing, he saluted forth in quest of Ned.
He did not find him in the hotel, but, knowing his
haunts, went on to Coney's.
On the way, however, he fell in with a friend, who
delayed him in conversation for some time, and it was
upwards of half-an hour since he had parted from Ned
before he again set eyes on that worthy.

He found Kelly seated at a little table in Coney's bar,
drinking alone, a thing foreign to his habits.
His face was flushed almost to blackness, his eyes blood-
shot, and his appearance that of a man labouring under
some violently stilled emotion.
He was like a suppressed volcano.

Anatole set down to hard drinking, consequent
upon their recent haul.
Ned seemed to make an effort to recover himself at the
sight of the Frenchman.

Anatole, faithful to his plan of not losing sight of Ned,
proposed that they should go to the Alcazar that evening
after dinner.
Ned consented readily, and the programme was carried
out.

Anatole, seated in a fauteuil with the air of a conquer­
ing hero, shared his glances between the occupants of the
stage and the fairer portion of the audience.

Ned, however, seemed more abstracted than usual, paid
little or no attention to what was going on, and seemed to
divide his attention between watching Anatole, and work­
ing out some mental problem.

After the performance the pair went into Peters' to sup,
and Anatole found himself in such pleasant company, that
they remained in France.

After the performance the pair went into Peters' to sup,
and Anatole found himself in such pleasant company, that
they remained in France.

There was not a very great choice of boats, and they had
to content themselves with a somewhat cranky but heavy
craft, with the oars working on a single thoie-pin by an
iron ring, such as abound on French rivers.

Anatole knew that Kelly was thoroughly at home in a
boat, and too much of a waterman to play any foolish
tricks, despite his apparent intoxication.

The result justified his impression.
Kelly took the oars, and, after a little growling at the
way in which they were adjusted, began to urge the boat
along with powerful strokes.

The air was heavy, and there seemed every prospect of
a storm before morning.

All was profoundly silent save for the splash of Kufl's
wasp under the moonlight.
The right-hand arm of the river is a kind of watery no­
thoroughfare, all progress after a certain distance being
hindered by a dam stretching right across it, over which
the stream flows in a miniature cataract.

On one side was the island fringed to the water’s edge
by a dense growth of alders and willows.

The spot was a terribly lonely one.

"Eh, my friend?" said Anatole, who, after one or two
attempts to engage Ned in conversation, had given it up,
and had bent back heavily in the stern of the boat, yielding
himself to that pleasant sense of half-drowsy enjoy­
ment that is apt to steal over a man under such circum­
stances. "It is getting late. Is it not time to return?"

Ned pulled half a dozen more strokes, and then rested
on his oars in silence.

In the dead calm of the summer night the only sound
that fell on their ears was the faint roar of the cataract.

The Frenchman stammered out with an effort, "I
really do not understand."

"Now that you want to understand, do you. Well,
you shall, and a good deal more before we part, you
robbing hound.

When I left you, feeling that you were not a bad sort to
stump up the ready as you did, yesterday afternoon,
I went straight round to Coney’s. There were two
thieves there talking about the railway robbery.

Those chaps must have got a pretty good haul," said one.

"Tylish," I thinks to myself. ‘Over a hundred
thousand,’ says another. I pricks my ears at this. ‘Is
that true? ’ I says to him. ‘See for yourself,’ he says;
‘here’s the advertisement in the paper. Bonds to the
value of a hundred and fifty thousand pounds stolen,
and twenty thousand reward for their recovery.’ I felt for
a moment knocked silly, just as if someone had landed me
on the nut with a neddy, and I thought I was going to
drop down in a fit.

‘Aye, but consider,’ begun Anatole, ‘the risk——’

‘Risk be blowed! There was no risk,’ cried Ned
"I got the fellow to read me the whole boilin’. They
offered twenty thousand for the papers, and no questions
asked. That, I worked out, would make my share about
seven thousand. And you, you mean, pitiful, frog-eating,
soup-swilling, kangaroo-rat, tried to fob me off with two
thousand. I swore I’d pay you out, and I mean to.

It was a blessed lucky thing for you that you did not come
home last night, or I should have served you the same way
you did that foreign cove in London.”

Kelly’s tone and manner were so unmistakably ruffianly
(more so than can be here depicted), that Anatole felt his
limbs begin to tremble. Trembling in every limb, he abjectly
implored Kelly to hear him.

"I’ll give you the whole of the swag if you’ll only give
me a chance to show you what a mistake you’ve made,”
and he clasped him round the executioner’s knees.

"Hold off, you swilling varmint. Do you think I’m
going to give you another chance against Ned Kelly?
Not for Joe, if I know it. A lot you’d fork up if you got
yourself ashore, wouldn’t you? No,” said Kelly, with brutal
calmness, “I’m just going to send you to——, where
they’re waiting for you, and hounds like you. Dead men
tell no tales,” and pulling out a pistol he levelled it at the
Frenchman, who, in his frightened movements to escape
the contents intended for him, nearly overbalanced the
boat, which capsized, and sent him to the river’s side on
which it marked.

Like a flash of lightning the Frenchman sprung over the
side of the boat into the water, and dived like a duck,
completely escaping from Kelly’s view.

The report of the pistol was so loud, that even in his
rage Kelly recognised the folly of taking the chances
of the night and alarming the police.

CHAPTER CLXXVII.

A NOVEL SWIMMING MATCH.

The imminence of the peril, however, served him to
mediate action.

"Well, I’m sold after all," cried Ned. "I opened
my jaw a little too soon. I ought to have put my claws on
him before giving him a bit of my mind. Can use swim
I wonder?"
He was long without an answer to this question.
Ten paces or so from the boat down stream, the glittering expanse of the water was suddenly broken by a dark object rising to the surface.
It was the head of Anatole, who was swimming vigorously towards the shore in the moonlight.
Many Parisians are good swimmers, and he had acquired quite a good reputation as a Crack practitioner amongst the frequenters of the large floating-baths of the French capital.
And by the current, he was making his way rapidly towards the shore of the island which was the nearest.
"Confound it! he swims like a shark after a nigger," said Ned; "but he's not clear yet."
A couple of powerful strokes shot the boat in the direction of the swimmer.
Just as it reached him Ned sprung up again, and, raising one of the oars, aimed a blow at his enemy's head.
The blow merely fell on the water, which flew up in a shower of glittering pearls.
Anatole had dived again as it descended.
The boat, with the impulse of Ned's strokes still on her, shot past the spot some distance.
A minute elapsed before Ned could check her way, and bring her round to ascend the stream.
With eager eye he again scanned the surface of the water.
"If the moon goes in," he growled, "It's odds that the varmint gets off after all. It's that feeding on frogs, I Harry of glittering pearls.
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A minute elapsed before Ned could check her way, and bring her round to ascend the stream.
With eager eye he again scanned the surface of the water.
"If the moon goes in," he growled, "It's odds that the varmint gets off after all. It's that feeding on frogs, I
Anatole was getting spent.
The surface of the stream was again broken about a dozen yards up stream, and Anatole reappeared.
He was striving to gain the yet distant shore, and, at the same time, to make headway against the current which threatened to carry him down towards the boat.
Thus, my blower," said Kelly, "I've got you as safe as a tewed 'premum."
He began once more to urge the boat in the direction of the fugitive.
Anatole was getting spent.
He had managed to kick off his shoes, but he was heavily handicapped by his wet clothes, which were dragging him down, and the two long dives had told on him.
Again the boat came up with him, and Ned raised his oar.
Again he made a desperate effort and dived.
Ned uttered a tremendous oath.
"There's only one way of getting hold of this slippery cove," he muttered.
He felt that if the Frenchman escaped he was done for, as the police would be at once put on his track.
He kicked off his shoes, tore off his coat and waistcoat, and, opening his knife, thrust it in readiness in the waist-band of his trousers.
His eye ranged over the expanse of water.
In a few seconds Anatole again emerged from the depths, this time half-suffocated, and breathing heavily.
He was not ten feet off.
Ned plunged into the stream in his turn.
Anatole made another attempt to dive, but before he could do so, Kelly's hand was on his collar.
But the Frenchman chung to Kelly, and dragged him under water; being the better swimmer, he got over Kelly, who was obliged to lose his hold to get to the surface to recover his breath.
Anatole, released for the moment, struck out for dear life.
Kelly lost sight of him for a minute or two, but swiftly struck out for him whom he discovered his whereabouts.
The Frenchman, who was carried along by the current, threw himself on his back, and somewhat recovered from his exhausted and breathless condition.

ALMOST CARRIED—A RESURRECTION.

Although the night was young when Ned left St. Germain, and he had only some sixteen miles to cover, the morning was pretty far advanced before he reached the Rue d'Amsterdam.
He had taken his time pretty leisurely over the journey for one thing, and had halted near the fortifications, at a tavern open for cutters and market people.

But the delay had been chiefly caused by the fact that though it was very easy for him to find Paris, it was a very different matter for him to make his way to the street of which he was in quest.

Several people to whom he addressed himself could not understand him, and he on his part was equally at a loss as regarded the instructions given him in French.

Hence he wandered about at haphazard for some hours, till he recognized certain landmarks with which he was familiar, and made his way to the hotel.

He was not over pleased at this delay, as his idea had been to pack up and leave at once with the whole of the stolen bonds before any news of Anatole's "misfortunes" arrived.

He felt under the circumstances that a cautious approach might be advisable.

Just as he was nearing the door he noticed an official-looking person in plain clothes, accompanied by a couple of police in uniform, approaching at a brisk rate in the opposite direction.

He ascended a round towards the nearest shop-front, and became intensely interested in a very elaborate display of marvellously embroidered baby-linens in its window.

A woman behind the counter, who caught sight of him, took him for a newly-married man, intent upon the purchase of /baby/, and bustled about in quest of a christening-robe, and smiled towards him in the blandest fashion.

But whilst pretending to admire the embroidery, Ned was watching the policemen out of the corners of his eyes, and waiting for them to pass by.

He was, however, disregarding them, and started to see the official-looking individual enter his hotel, and the two gardes take their stand at the door.

At the same moment two Englishmen were coming out of the hotel, laughing heartily at the enquiry they had heard made, by the official before named, for " Monseur Tome Smith, of London."

The words acted like an electric shock upon their auditor, who immediately made tracks for the St. Lazare railway, as he thought the enquiry boded him not much good.

He never thought of his traps in the hotel, and, as he always carried his capital on his person, he was prepared for a start from the post. This said capital he had in his own bank, as he styled the leather waist-bag.

The Gare St. Lazare, the terminus of the Western Railway line, was close at hand.

Entering an outfitter's close by the station, where the announcer, " English spoken," denoted that travellers of that nation could hear their language murdered, on condition of paying about forty per cent. more than a Frenchman would have to pay, Ned bought a travelling rug, a comforter, and a few other necessaries.

He then made his way to the station.

In previous conversations with Anatole, the latter had once explained why he had, when bolting from Paris, chosen the Havre line. It was a less suspected route than the direct one to England via Boulogne. Kelly subsequently studied this line, should his visit to the gay capital be suddenly averted. He had a first rate memory especially where it was likely to be of importance to his future movements.

He did not feel at all easy in his mind. The police could only have wanted him upon one plea, and that plea could only be advanced by Anatole; and yet Anatole dared say nothing, as he might be caught in the same net.

What the decree they wanted with him, puzzled him sorely. He little suspected that Anatole was in communication with the Paris police, and that his real and assumed names were well known within the last twelve hours.

Ned Kelly was on the point of giving a start from the post. This said capital he had in the hands of the police shortly after the appearance of the newcomers. The police found plenty of Tom Smith, and went on their way in the search for Anatole, who might sometimes be seen consuming a modest cutlet like any other ordinary mortal, in the little saloon a n d f a n c y.

He seemed to be in clover, was well dressed, and generally had two or three " patriots " in his wake. These gentlemen were very outspoken, and the sanctimonious Saxons were denounced with an influence of adjectives more forcible than elegant.

Kelly was sitting rather moody and anxiously in his vicinity, and happened to ask " when the stage restarted? " with a brogue that instantly recommended him to his listeners.

The violent denunciations continued to pour from the Fenians' lips like lava, and nearly as hot, as from Vesuvius. Warned with the few goes of brandy he, like the rest, had imbibed, he examined his " Fenian " pass for Ireland, and was duly sworn in.

But the soundots entered the conference for two reasons: firstly, he would be out of danger from detectives; and secondly, if big enough reward was offered—why, he'd think about it. He should like to make another haul before he returned to the bush, which he felt was his natural home.

But to return to Anatole.

After striking out from the boat, as before-mentioned, he managed, half-drowned and wholly exhausted, to reach the shore. Keeping Kelly well in sight, he watched him catching the boat and pulling himself up out of the water, to take another survey of the surface in search of his slippery friend.

Under the shadow of the neighbouring trees, which threw a dark shade over the spot he had reached, he kept perfectly quiet, and at last had the satisfaction of seeing Kelly drift on behind the craft to land. He observed that he again entered the boat and pulled off.

Anatole congratulated himself upon his "narrow squeak," but made up his mind for a due revenge, even if he left Europe and wrote an anonymous letter to the authorities, giving particulars of Ned's hand in the mail robbery, and other items, that would be sure to lead to his apprehension.

But he was not quite sure that Kelly might not continue to have him arrested with part of the stolen bonds in his possession. This thought made him pause. If he went back to Paris Ned might find him out, and in his hate and desire for vengeance smash him where and whenever he set eyes on him.

He knew the man's savage and reckless character, and trembled when he contemplated their meeting. Would it not be well to go to the police and give information at once against him? He would be handed over, in pursuance of the Extradition Treaty, to the English authorities, and this would not only remove a pressing danger, but give him time to get rid of the bonds, and make his plans for the future.

Kelly and he could not exist in the same hemisphere. However, his next move was to return to Paris; but why...
Annie. Left her Home, a Tale of Female Delilah, or the Little House In A Region of Wild Heath, Dotted with Furze and Thistles. There they grew until they got sick of it, and moved for the city of Cork. Hew the gendarmes were ’sold.’ Commanded by that most genial of navigators, Captain by sea, and a few hours later was on board the Shamrock, whistling through the skeleton thorn bushes, frill till maw the wind came sweeping fiercely down the hillsides, and heaven wore the same grey tint of desolation, whilst the sea began to roll and thunders. He had bolted, and made enquiries at the railway station. The wet vestments were soon baked dry on the stove, and his clothes, and distorted, to the surface. As he reached it Kelly’s train was rolling in an opposite direction slowly through the same station. They were, no doubt, still waiting at the hotel for the up train to Paris. Meanwhile Ned was speeding onwards to Havre, and the police were patiently awaiting him at his hotel. When they got tired of this, they began to suspect he had bolted, and made enquiries at the railway station. They thought it most probable that he would have gone by Calais and Boulogne, or, at any rate, Dieppe, and hardly thought of Havre. The arrival in Paris of Anatole, who walked blindly into their clutches, helped to draw off their attention. Consequently Ned reached that port safely, and, to his great satisfaction, primed by his recent “patriot” friends, took the Southampton steamer. He imagined Kelly would think of him as food for the fishes. He consequently entered a fifth rate cabaret, a low drinking shop, boldly and he had swam across the river for a wager, and offered the gong two francs to enable him to dry his clothes, and provide him with a chamber & couchette while that operation was performing.

Daylight was fast fading from the sky, and earth and heaven wore the same grey rain of desolation, whilst the wind came sweeping fiercely down the hillsides, and whistling through the skeleton thorn bushes, frill in the teeth of the small party of men making their way in the direction of the hills.

Ned was looking out of the window. He suddenly started to his feet with a very unparliamentary exclamation. Was it possible? or was it his ghost? No, it could not be. He would never show until his body rose, swollen and distorted, to the surface. No, and Anatole it was! He, at all events, little guessed he had been recognised. He imagined Kelly would think of him as food for the fishes.

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The Lady with the Camelias.
CHAPTER CLXXX.—Continued.

About twenty minutes more brisk walking brought them to the scene of the tragedy just narrated. Half a score of men were already assembled in the ruins. Amongst them was a stiller looking fellow with fiery red hair, who stood somewhat apart from the rest, leaning his back against the crumbling wall, and crouching on the now comes.

"What is it that Martin Freeny now?" inquired Lismahone, one of the men, who had adventured to meet him.

"What! it's jist out of all patience with himself, he is. Sure, an' he thought he was goin' to play first fiddle in this matter o' the colonel's, and now here's Captain Kelly sent by the Head Centher to put his purty nose out of joint intirely, the red-headed nagur!"

The saints be praised! He's been tryin' to cower over the whole bilin' o' us for a long time, and his heart's every bit as black as a kitchen chimney that man's been swept since the Battle o' the Boyne."

Kelly advanced into the centre of the ruins, and the men, with the exception of Freeny, gathered round him.

"Are the arms all ready?" he asked.

"Yes, captain, jewel," was the answer.

And in a few minutes a number of weapons, produced from a hiding-place in the wall, were distributed amongst the party.

"And now, who amongst you knows the way to the colonel's hut?" inquired the bushranger.

A loud and sneering laugh broke from Freeny at this remark.

"What are you scoffing at?" asked Ned, fiercely, for he guessed that he had, in some way, provoked the other's mirth.

"Och, sure now, and mayn't a man laugh when he likes?" was the snarling reply, at which several of the other men grunted.

"None of your chaff to me, you Murphy-faced mole, or ill be that ugly mug of yours until it's as flat as a new shilling," said Kelly, with a ferocity of tone and manner that clearly showed very little would make him use in striving to conciliate.

"Shut up you pot-faced, moth-eaten looking sneak!"

"How'd your whist, Freeny, sure it's the captain you're after all, the providence he was so fond of canting himself to the devil for a charm to render his carcass bullet-proof."

Kelly looked at the powerful frame of the spokesperson, and felt it would be more prudent to sing small.

"Come," said Ned, "if the job's to be done, let's do it."

"Maybe ye know the way, and don't want my 'chaff to show you. I suppose, if you're the captain, you'll lead the way?" sneered Freeny.

"Shut up you pot-faced, moth-eaten looking sneak!"

"How'd your whist, Freeny, sure it's the captain you're bothin' entirely."

"Och, him, it's a pity they didn't send someone that knew more about the work he's got in hand. It's a queer thing, now, that the captain shouldn't know his way to the scene of action, when there's not another boy amongst us who could not find his road there blindfolded."

The words had scarcely left his lips when he was lying sprawled on his back from the effect of a heavy "planter" from Kelly on his jaw.

"Pick him up, or kick him up, some of you," said Ned; "and let me tell you I'm not going to stand any of that sort of game. How long will it take us to get to the colonel's?"

"A good half-hour," replied one of the men.

"Very well," said Ned, consulting his watch; "a friend, you know, has promised to meet us there half an hour after midnight. It's only half-past ten, so we've got nearly an hour and a half to wait. We may as well settle down and have a drop of whisky."

Accordingly the men made themselves comfortable.

"It's an illbegotten flat the captain has," observed O'Shane to Mulvany.

"Indeed, an' it is, and the saints preserve my face from being better acquainted with it." was the reply.

Colonel Townsend, to whom Ned and the friends purposed to pay an uninvited visit that night, was a wealthy landed proprietor of the district.

He was a man of about fifty, slightly severe in manner, but frank, open, and entirely unprejudiced, save as regarded his dealing with his tenants.

The terrible fate of his uncle had had an effect upon him, which nothing could remove.

He had grown to regard his Irish tenants as a sort of bloodthirsty and vindictive savages, whom it was no earthly use in striving to conciliate.

For eleven months or so out of the year he was an abse­mee, and during this period they were delivered over to the tender mercies of his agent, a rambling, blue-nosed Presbyterian from the " Black North," named McGuire.

The tender mercies of the wicked nec, we know, cruel, but it is to be doubted, after all, if they are not preferable to the tender mercies of one of the "unc's" kind, and such was McGuire, who, as one of the "elect," seemed to hold it his bounden duty to make earth as much like a hell as possible for all he was brought into contact with.

His argument was, that as nine thousand nine hundred and ninety men out of ten thousand are doomed by predestination to perdition, such a course of action is a positive kindness to them, as it prepares them for their future state, and, as it were, serves to let them down by degrees.

Between him and the colonel, who put perfect trust in him, the tenants had rather a hard time of it, and compared their situation to that of the man between the devil and the deep sea.

At first they had tried shooting McGuire, but three suc­cessive attempts had only resulted in putting a bullet through his hat, blowing off one of his handy side-whiskers, and killing his horse.

And, as the three men who had made the successive attempts had all been caught, they began to think that, after all, the providence he was so fond of canting himself to the devil for a charm to render his carcass bullet-proof.

In the secret council presided over by "Rory of the Hills," or " Captain Moonlight," or "Molly Maguire," or whatever else presided over the Agrarian Inquisition, the colonel had been tried, and sentenced as a bad landlord, and "justice to Ireland" was to be propitiated by his death.

Lives had been drawn, and the party now on the
way to his house, were the assassins chosen, and bound, under pain of assassination themselves, to carry out the murderous decree.

The colonel, however, only came to his Irish estate to shut for a few weeks every year. He had always refused to rebuild the manor house which had been burnt on the night of his uncle's murder, and contented himself with a small stone building, which he had furnished as a shooting-box, and which stood at some little distance from the ruins of the former dwelling.

He was sitting in the parlor in company with his nephew and son-in-law, about an hour after Neil's arrival at the ruins, and just thinking of going to bed, when his nephew's valet entered the room, and announced that a man wanted to see him on very important business.

"What is it, Simmons?" he asked.

"He won't say, sir," was the reply; "except that he must see you at once."

"Go and ask him what he wants. It is just like these Irish fellows to come pestering one at this time of night, with some cock-and-bull story of a grievance against McGuire," he continued.

After a few seconds' absence the valet returned.

"He won't say what he wants, sir; all I can get from him is that he must see you yourself, sir, and that it's a matter of life and death."

"Perhaps you'll better see him," suggested the colonel's own French来 from France, "it may be something to do with the Fenian business we hear so much of."

"Hum—yes; well, show him in, Simmons."

"He won't come inside the house, sir; he's standing outside the door, and says he'll speak to you if you'll come down to him."

"Confound his impudence! let him go to the devil then!" cried the exasperated colonel; "does he think I'm at my beck and call?"

"I'll go and see what he wants," said Harold Townshend, the colonel's nephew.

The colonel gave a gruff assent, and the young man went to the front door, his uncle calling after him as he went along the passage—

"Look out you don't get shot, Harold!"

Harold started when he saw the strange guest who was standing about four paces from the door. His hat was pulled down over his brows, and a handkerchief tied about the lower part of his face, so as to entirely hide his features.

"What is it you want?" asked Harold, keeping a wary eye on the fellow, lest he should draw a weapon.

"Are ye the colonel?" was the reply, in a voice evidently Irish.

"I am his nephew; but I represent him. What is your errand?"

"My errand is, to warn you and yours that in about half an hour's time those will be here who will trust with my life ten times over. He is one of those old family retainers who continue the tradition of his uncle."

"What is the matter?" inquired Harold, somewhat anxiously.

"Your son-in-law, Mr. Blamire; "it may be something to do with the Fenian business we hear so much of."

"What is it, Simmons?" asked the latter, somewhat anxiously.

"There's not an ounce of it fit for use. Some treachery, perhaps?"

"Every cartridge in the gun-room and in Blamire's room," replied Harold, rather astonished.

"Go and see about yours, there's a good fellow." Harold was absent some time on this errand, and they heard him call Simmons.

At length he returned to the sitting-room.

"I can't make it out," he said. "I had a lot of cartridges in my drawers, both for my gun and revolver, and I can't find one of them. Simmons declares he saw them in the drawer only this morning."

"This is a nastier affair than I thought for, Harold," said Blamire, somewhat anxiously.

"Tell me, who are you? Why do you warn us?"

"But who? Blamire's man is English, and Booney is an Irish fellow, and his butler was an old servant, greatly trusted and esteemed by the colonel."

"When Booney and the rest come back they must knock," observed Harold. "I wish he had not gone, though.

"You are right; there may be something in that," replied Harold.

"In fact, all the servants employed about the place indoors—namely, the butler who acted as the general's valet, the cook and two girls, together with Mr. Blamire's man and the grooms, had started off as usual, by permission, to a fair and a dance held in the neighbourhood."

"If you'll just give an eye to the fastenings, Harold," said Blamire, "I will have a look at the fire-arms."

"Turn over these ridges in my drawers, both for my gun and revolver, and you will find many of them," replied Harold.

"My errand is, to warn you and yours that in about half an hour's time those will be here who will trust with my life ten times over. He is one of those old family retainers who continue the tradition of his uncle."

"The fellows could not, however, have chosen a better night," observed Mr. Blamire, "since most of the servants are away at the fair."
Caleb Balderstone and who look upon the head of the house as a kind of deity."

"Yes," assented the colonel, "he is a regular servant of the house.

"It must be one of the womanfolk," said Blamire, "who has been talked over by a Fanini sweetheart."

"But is there not a bit of ammunition fit for use in the place?" cried Harold.

"Not a charge," replied his uncle, gravely; "even the guns in the gun-room have all been unloaded."

"Good heavens!" gasped Blamire, "are we to be butchered here like rats in a trap? Can't we get away?"

"Impossible! They would track us, and shoot us down like rabbits."

"There is only one thing," said the colonel, "to die as my uncle died—firm to the last amongst these treacherous devils. We must trust to cold steel, not to save, but toaveng us ere we fall, on some of the scoundrels at least.

At that moment Simmons entered the room.

"I fancied, as I was putting away your things, sir," he said, with the bland manner of a well-trained domestic, "as though quite oblivious of the peril in which they were, and all stood, "that I felt some loose cartridges in the pocket of your grey jacket."

"Well, are we all ready now?" asked Ned.

"Yes—all."

"Is the door lined with iron?" he asked Darby.

"No fear of that at all," chuckled Darby; "the devil can't enter a house with a bullet-proof door."

"Sure and you're a born general, Darby," was the reply whispered at this encouraging announcement.

"One at the top and the other at the bottom."

"Then I'll cut two holes, and you can slip your hand through and draw them back."

"I think we'd better wait a little bit, captain; sure they have not long gone to bed. I have been watchin' and waitin' here the last half-hour. I could not get away from the dance before, and the lights have only just been put out in the house."

"Did you notice anything at all?"

"Well, when I first got here, the lights seemed to be moving about upstairs and downstairs as if they were a house on fire. We'd better give 'em time to get fast asleep."

After waiting the time indicated, the party resumed their advance towards the house, which was all dark and silent.

"Like shadows they glided softly up to the back door."

"You've got the key?" whispered Ned, to the man who had met them.

"Yes," answered Darby, "and the lock is greased like Micky O'Keagh's head on Sunday."

As he spoke he inserted the key in the lock.

The well-oiled wards obeyed its pressure, and yielded without resistance, and the bolt of the lock shot back with only the faintest possible click.

Darby pushed the door gently. It was immovable.

He pushed harder, with the same result.

"Oh! murder!" he muttered, in amazement.

"What is it?" whispered Ned.

"Sure, some murtherin' fool—has been and shot the doorbolt."

Kelly looked simply disgusted.

"What's to be done?" asked Linahan.

"Let us burst the door in," suggested O'Shane.

"Rough 'em up, that they may be pepperin' at us all the time out of the widow," protested Mulvany.

"No fear of that at all," chuckled Darby; "the devil an ounce of powder have they to pepper with. I took care of that."

"Sure and you're a born general, Darby," was the reply whispered at this encouraging announcement.

"Yes, there's a quater was—than that," said Ned, and as he spoke he produced an implement from his pocket. "Look here, here is a centre-bit that will go through oak as a knife goes through a pat of butter."

And he held up one of the finest implements of the kind that the virtuous town of Birmingham ever supplied a burglar with.

"Is the door lined with iron?" he asked Darby.

"Of glory be to God!"

"Where are the bolts?"

"One at the top and the other at the bottom."

"Then I'll cut two holes, and you can slip your hand through and draw them back."

Ned set to work to cut the lower hole, whilst the others stood round in silent admiration at the device which was new to them.

The instrument made very little noise while boring its way into the wood.

It was a considerable time before the hole near the bottom, which was the first selected, was completed.

There inside, in perfect darkness, divined what was going on, and were fully prepared to frustrate it. They at first feared fire, but that was not an easy weapon to employ upon stone walls and oak doors. The working of the drill was perfectly audible. The sound could not be mistaken. The colonel's nephew quickly withdrew and returned with a lantern covered with a cloth to conceal the light. He had also a slip-knot rope. With terrible anxiety they listened to the progress that was made and the suppressed whisperings outside.

At last it was done.

"Put your hand through and pull the bolt," said Ned to Darby, "you know best where to feel for it."

He put his hand carefully through the hole, and began to grope for the bolt.

The light from the lantern was turned close on the door. And there was a man wheezing about in search of the bolt. While thus engaged, the slip-knot, which..."
was greased to make it run easily, was quietly and quickly thrown over and pulled tightly with a sudden jerk, round the front of the window. A loud cry of pain and alarm followed, with frantic efforts to pull the hand away from the hole. So furious and reckless were those attempts that the flesh was almost cut off to the bone. Tight hold was maintained by the rope-holder, who even pressed his foot upon the projection of the porch, to keep it from shifting in the least.

"Holy Vargin!" he gasped, in low, horror-stricken tones, "what's this now?"

"What is it?" said Ned.

"My hand's caught," replied Darby, forcing the words with an effort through his white and quivering lips.

"Well, pull it out, you madman."

"But I can't, they've got it in a slip-knot. Och, I'm murdered entirely, that's what I am. Och, master, jewel, colonel, agrah! Sure it's Darby Rooney that's murdered intirely, that's what I am. Och, master, jewel, you omadhaun."

"Sure you'll let me go and loose the rope. Don't I know your neck, and I'll take good care you shall feel it there yet."

"You vagabond," was the answer, "we've got a witness against you and your gang, and instead to keep him dead or alive."

"He can't be much of a witness, I'm thinking," replied one of the gang, "if we stop here much longer."

There was a significant threat in this remark that made Darby's knees knock together.

"Arrah, don't be on a poor boy, colonel. Sure they pushed my hand through the hole, bad luck to them. Oh, wrrasthrue! wrrasthrue, and the master, too, I'd die for you, and whinned the frightened villain.

"Let him go, colonel," cried a strange but steady voice outside, and we will leave you at once. You've fairly won the game, and I'm — if I don't like one who's real grit."

"You vagabond," was the answer, "we've got a witness against you and your gang, and instead they pushed my hand through the hole, bad luck to them. Oh, wrrasthrue! wrrasthrue, and the master, too, I'd die for you, and whinned the frightened villain.

"Tell him you'll burn the stables and farm-buildings, if he won the game, and I'm if I don't like one who's real grit."

"You vagabond," was the answer, "we've got a witness against you and your gang, and instead they pushed my hand through the hole, bad luck to them. Oh, wrrasthrue! wrrasthrue, and the master, too, I'd die for you, and whinned the frightened villain."

"Tell him you'll burn the stables and farm-buildings, if he won the game, and I'm if I don't like one who's real grit."

Ned cried out, "He's not worth the cost of the outbuildings colonel. I'll fire then, if he's not free in five minutes."

"Fire and be —," shouted the colonel, "the blaze will be a beacon to the police; I wish to heavens you wouldn't sacrifice every brick in the place to see you deal with the hooligans on.

"Arrah, don't be so like a haythen, master, dear," groaned Darby. "Let me go for the love o' God, and I pray for you every night an' mornin'."

"Come, come," said Kelly, impatiently, "we've had enough of this. One way or the other, we must finish this little job."

"Oh, thin," cried another, "I'm afeared Darby's prayers are like the judge's, when he puts on the black cap—they won't do any poor boy much good."

The Irish would enjoy a joke in the jaws of death.

At this moment a shot rang out from an upper window by the back door, his hand as fast as if in Milo's oak. Ned and his followers opened a scattering and random fire in reply, but without the least effect, while Rooney shriamed and shook, and moaned as he covered down by the wall, as hard as if in Meeke's oak.

Another shot from the house hit its mark, the victim this time being Freeny, who thus paid dearly for the warning he had given Harold.

Freeny would not have been present, but he feared the penalty of absence.

Dubly underseved by this reception, after the assurance they had had that there was no powder whatever in the house, the panic-stricken assailants broke, and the majority retreated, carrying their wounded, and sought shelter behind some outbuildings from farther shots.

Ned, however, remained close to the door, where owing to the projection of the porch, it was impossible for a shot to reach him from the windows.

He had caught hold of the arms of Linahan and Mulvany, and obliged them to remain with him.

"Look here," he said, hurriedly, "there's no chance of this job being done to-night; but there's one thing we must do—we must take care of our necks, and to do so we can't leave a witness behind us, and especially this one, who's sold us like pigs to the butcher.

"What d'ye mane?" said Mulvany, with a frightened, awe-struck air. "Is it murder you'd be after doing upon poor innocent boy? Howly mother! have yis no conscience?"

"I've a neck which is a blooming sight to me more than anybody's conscience, and, if you don't care for your conscience swinging in the morning air, I do, that's all."

Mulvany seemed struck with the force of Ned's logic.

He scratched his head in his perplexity, and quietly said to Rooney—

"Darby, jewel, as yis can't have a priest, maybe ye can have a bit of a prayer that's handy to ye."

"Oh! praying to the colonel, is it? You might as well pray to the rock o' Cashel, an' you'd move it just as soon."

"Have you ne'er a paternoster convenient?"

"What for?"

"Because, you see, Darby avick, your present position is rather convenient for you nor for us, and we'll relieve you of it as soon as you're ready and willing," said Mulvany, in tones intended to be soothing and tender.

"Then be quick about it, Jimmy Mulvany, for the hand is nearly cut off me, and I'm dying with pain. Oh! don't leave me here behind.

"Dead an' we won't, Darby, no fear. We won't leave you behind—alive."

"Mother o' Mercy! what d'ye mane?" was the frightened reply, gasped out with difficulty.

"In the name of all the saints in the calendar, Darby, try the last taste of a bit of a prayer."

"Let me out, ye brute bastards!" roared Rooney, now guessing the dreadful intention of his associates. "If you don't take me wid ye I shout out all your names, this blessed minute, to the colonel!" roared the frightened wretch.

Ned and the others now clearly saw there was no time to be lost.

He looked at Mulvany and nodded.

"What's that ye're saying?" said Darby, whose ears, sharpened by terror, had caught some of their words.

"What! what's never mind!" said Mulvany, and he added to Kelly, "Must it be done?"

"Of course; there's no other way."

"I suppose not; poor wretch."

"What are you whispering about?" said Darby. "why don't you cut another hole in the door and get me free?"

"Fa! Darby darlin', I'm afeared that same's impossible," said Linahan, gravely.

"But you're not going to leave me here?" said the prisoner, "to be caught by the murderous colonel?"

"Oh! have no fear, you'll not be caught alive.

Darby made a desperate effort to free himself, but had to leave off, moaning with pain.

"The rope has cut to the bone," he groaned.

"Are ye sure you can't get loose at all?" said Linahan.

"Make another try for it," said Darby.

"Darby, ye know the oath you swore when you joined us, that ye'd give yourself up body and soul to the cause?"

"Yes, but not be caught like a hare in a trap."

Well, you are caught, and it won't do for your own soul's sake, let alone for your necks, or risk breaking that oath. You might be tempted to do it if the colonel talked to you to-morrow; and where would your soul go to then?"

"The devil a word they'll ever get out of me, if you'll
just be off and let the colonel take me inside. Say the word, Mulvany, or I'll give you the word now.

"Satisfied the job?" growled Kelly. "Do you think I'm going to trust my neck to that hound?"

"Captain, Jewel," almost screamed the unfortunate villain, making a last effort for his life, his eyes starting from their sockets, his hair on end, and perspiration bursting from every pore, "for the sake of the mother that bore ye, spare me, and I'll kiss the Book and swear that the devil a word you'll ever get from the lips of Darby Rooney, but a blessing upon you, captain, dear!"

"You'd better make your peace up there," said Mulvany, with that strange perversion of thought which belongs alike to the Irish and Italian lower classes. An Italian brigand robs and murders with an image of the Virgin in his hat, and often a crucifix on his breast.

"It's no use," said Kelly, "Go to work, or I'll--"

Seeing the hopelessness of the situation, and thinking as a last chance to scare the murderers from the scene, Darby routed out the names of the gang.

It's cries rang through the silent night.

"Help, help! Save me, colorado, darlings! They're going to cudhurdle me out of the world entirely! For pity's sake, for mercy's sake! --Andy, avitch! Micky, jewel! Spare me--spare me! Bad luck to the word, I'll even breathe! Oh, you won't, ye murdhering villains!"

As he repeated the names of the gang for the information of the bascaped.

He sealed his fate at once.

Still his scream rang out with fearful distinctness in the night, scaring the night-birds on the hill, and causing the bracken and the heather to run cold in his veins with horror.

To rally forth, however, in order to attempt to rescue the poor wretch from his fate would have only been fatal to themselves, as they would have had an overwhelming force, with only four shots left amongst them.

One shrill cry, more wild and despairing than the rest, pealed forth and pierced their ears.

"'Tis me, cocky, 'tis me!" yelled Kelly, "I'm going to trust my neck to that hound -- "

"Settled the job?" growled Kelly. "Do you think I'm going to trust my neck to that hound?"

"I want to end the little matter ye began at Petto's, Mulvany," almost screamed the unfortunate villain, "sure an' he's gone long since."

"Devil a bit will a storm stay me. Quick, a taste o' whisky, Peter, and I'll be after him, the mane thafe, in a twinklin."

"It's mad ye must be, Terry, to think o' runnin' after him with a cup o' the head like that he gave ye, and a storm comin' on every minute."

As he spoke, a bright flash of lightning leaped from the sky, and was followed by a peal of thunder.

"Devil a bit will a storm stay me. Quick, a taste o' the cracker now," said Rory, "and, hastily dropping the glass offered him, Reardon darted out of the house, and was soon lost in the darkness that enveloped everything.

Meanwhile Rory and Ally had proceeded some distance on their war-home.

They had left the town and had advanced some distance along the road leading towards their dwelling.

They were approaching a bridge crossing a broad, deep, and rapid stream.

Suddenly Rory halted and listened.

"Who can it be runnin' after him with a cup o' the head like that he gave ye, and a storm comin' on every minute?"

As he spoke, a bright flash of lightning leaped from the sky, and was followed by a peal of thunder.

"Devil a bit will a storm stay me. Quick, a taste o' the cracker now," said Rory, addressing a powerful young fellow, who was putting his mouth to rights such of his clothes as had been disarranged in the struggle that had evidently just taken place between himself and the overthrown champion.

"If he hasn't enough, I can just stretch a point and oblige him with a little taste more," answered Rory, grimly.
Drisco'll, ye villain," was the answer, in a voice hoarse from rage and exertion. "Terry!" cried Rory angrily, "say not a word!" "No!" replied Terry. "So it's a bit more ye want, do ye? So much the worse for ye, my jewel!"

As he spoke he gave his stick a scientific twist. "Ye're a black-hearted coward, Rory O'Hara," said Reardon, slowly, as he paused to recover himself before advancing to attack his foe, "and shrirk me down unfair. It's payin' ye out I mean this time.

"If ye come within reach o' my stick, I'll settle ye entirely, and now ye're warned," replied Rory. "We'll see that same. I give ye lave to break every bone in me skin if ye can, for I'm not goin' to spare yours."

"Come on, and don't stand patin' thin."

The two men rushed upon each other.

The rain was coming down in a perfect deluge, and save for the flashes of lightning, which lit up the scene at rare intervals, the darkness was Egyptian. From out this darkness came the sounds of the bitter struggle, the sharp clatter of the blackthorns as they met home, and an occasional exclamation of pain, or rage, or from one of the combatants.

Both men were expert stick players, but the darkness rendered their skill of little use, and it was by chance that each got home from time to time. Terry, standing at a little distance, in vain strove to make out which of the two was the getting the best of it in this strange encounter.

"Holy mother, look down on us," she murmured. All at once the sticks met in full swing with such violence that Rory's was sent flying from his hand some yards away into the darkness. Before Reardon, however, could profit by this to deal a finishing blow, his foe sprung upon him and clutched him fiercely by the throat.

He gripped it with all the energy of desperation. In a few seconds Reardon was half choked, but, by a violent effort, he shook off his adversary, as a bull shakes off a dog, and drew back a step or two to recover the breath that had been squeezed out of him by the other's fingers.

O'Hara had almost lost his footing from the jerk with which his opponent had freed himself from his clutches, but, recovering himself, glanced round in search of his stick or some similar weapon, but in vain. Ally suddenly seized him by the arm.

"Come on, ye dirty scuplpean," shouted Reardon, who, in the darkness, did not at first notice the other's retreat, covered as he was by the mass of the tempest. "The saints in heaven be praised! Ye're safe, Rory."

"Come on, by the powers 'tis a pity the night's so black, for it's lost for ye, Rory, darling!" she exclaimed, pulling him towards the bridge. "It's either murderin' ye he is, the g 판단-faced desaver! Run for it!"

O'Hara followed her advice. "Come on, ye dirty scuplpean," shouted Reardon, who, in the darkness, did not at first notice the other's retreat, covered as he was by the mass of the tempest.

"Are ye runnin' awa?" cried Terry, who now perceived their flight. "Just wait till I come up with ye, that's all."

And, bounding after the fugitives, he overtook them on the centre of the bridge.

"Don't let him, Rory, darlin'!" she exclaimed, pulling him towards the bridge. "It's either murderin' ye he is, the g 판단-faced desaver! Run for it!"

O'Hara followed her advice. "Come on, ye dirty scuplpean," shouted Reardon, who, in the darkness, did not at first notice the other's retreat, covered as he was by the mass of the tempest. "Come on, ye dirty scuplpean," she exclaimed, pulling him towards the bridge. "It's either murderin' ye he is, the g 판단-faced desaver! Run for it!"

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"Don't let him, Rory, darlin'!" she exclaimed, pulling him towards the bridge. "It's either murderin' ye he is, the g 판단-faced desaver! Run for it!"

The reaction was so great that for a short time he almost lost consciousness. Suddenly Ally's voice falling on his ear aroused him from his semi-stupefied state. "The saints in heaven be praised! Ye're safe, Rory. Come home at once, darlin'! For mercy's sake, come home!"

CHAPTER CLXXXIII.

A MOST WELCOME VISITOR.

In the darkness of the night neither Rory nor his sister saw that Reardon was still clinging desperately to the parapet of the bridge just below them. Amidst the wild furnishing of the wind, and rain they thought that he had fallen headlong into the stream. Rory uttered a sigh, half of relief and half of horror, and was about to move away.

All at once he staggered.

Reardon had been able to make out that his foe had not changed his position.

Stimulating his energies, and moved to exertion by a wild hope of revenge, he hung for a moment by one hand,
and, thrusting the other through the interstices of the parapet, gripped Rory by the leg, round which he succeeded in throwing his arm.

Then, joining hands, Rory clasped the hand-rail firmly with one of his hands, and struck at his enemy to make him leave go with the other.

"Y'll either have to pull me up or go down with me," gasped Reardon, tightening his grip.

The frightful struggle recommenced with all its terrible accompaniments.

The rain descending in hissing showers drove into the faces of the combatants with such force as almost to blind them; the wind threatened at times to tear them both from the bridge and plunge them into the stream, and the flashes of lightning from time to time shewed the situation in all its horrors.

Reardon still clung despairingly to Rory's leg, which, jammed as it was by his weight hanging to it against the cross-beams, was in danger of snapping like a pipe stem at any moment.

Maddened by this peril and by the pain he suffered, O'Hara leaned over the parapet as far as he dared and kept striking at the top of his adversary's head in order to make him relinquish his grasp.

Reardon's skull, however, was a thick one, and had undergone a pretty good training for such a state of things in the shape of a long series of raps with a stick in many a fictional fight, and Rory began by experience to learn the truth of that axiom, known to every old ring-goer, that the hand is softer than the head.

Moreover, jammed as he was against the parapet, O'Hara could not lean over far enough to make his blows tell with good effect.

Ally was roused to action by her brother's peril. She had taken part in more than one fight and did not shrink now.

Kneeling down on the bridge, she struck fiercely at the hand with which Terry gripped the cross-beam with the heel of one of her heavy brogues, which she had taken off for the purpose.

A groan of mingled pain and horror escaped the poor wretch at this fresh assault.

The sight revealed by the flashes of lightning was a horrible one.

Rory's face was white with passion, save where it was stained with the blood that his exertions had caused to flow from his nose, and his collar was rent away, and displayed his bare chest similarly stained, despite the torrent of rain with which he was inundated, as he continued to lean on the parapet and strike at his foe.

Ally, on her knees by his side, her hair unbound, and hanging in tresses like wet serpents about her face, her eyes aglow, and her teeth gleaming between her parted lips, hammered away at Reardon's hand with her shoe.

A sudden flash of lightning revealed to Terry a stranger whose face appeared almost gigantic, standing close by Rory, with his hand on the latter's collar.

The same flash also enabled the stranger to gauge the reach of O'Hara's fist, and sink back again, half blinded by the shower of blows raised down upon it by his ferocious enemy.

"Help,—help!—help!" his eye again rang out.

And then he listened in the vain hope of an answer to this appeal.

His strained ears caught the hurried sound of footsteps on the bridge again.

It must be Ally returning with the stone.

In a few minutes it would be all over.

He closed his eyes and began to repeat a prayer.

"What in the devil's name are you up to here?" suddenly thundered a rough voice immediately over his head, in stentorian tones.

It was the voice of a stranger.

"A man of hope sprang once more in Terry's breast.

"Help! mother! help!—save me!—for the love of heaven, save me!" he cried.

"What's up? Can you, can't you answer?" cried the voice.

And at the same moment a sharp cry of pain broke from O'Hara, and Reardon felt the leg he held on to almost jerked from his grip.

"Och! lave go, lave go, and I'll tell ye," cried Rory. "Sure, if ye shake me like that, with this divil below here hanging on to my leg, it'll snap like a twig anyway. Och, say, for mercy's sake!"

A sudden flash of lightning revealed to Terry a stranger whose face appeared almost gigantic, standing close by Rory, with his hand on the latter's collar.

The same flash also enabled the stranger to gauge the state of affairs.

He was evidently a man of quick decision.

"Can you host yourself up, mate, if I keep this beggar quiet, eh?" he said to Reardon.

"I'll try," answered the latter, whom the chance of escape had given fresh strength to.

Shifting his grip from Rory's leg to the cross-piece, he succeeded, after one or two attempts, in swinging one foot up and hooking on with it, and then in getting his knee on to the edge of the bridge.

He then hoisted himself up a bit.

Suddenly he felt himself seized by the collar, and lifted upwards with a force that seemed almost gigantic by the stranger.

Reardon's agony at this remark was fearful. All seemed lost.

"Mercy! for the love of heaven—mercy!" he gasped.

"Screech away, screech away, ye nagur!" answered Rory, ironically. "It's little more breath ye'll ever need to cool your porridge with."

"Help, help!" cried Reardon.

And his shrieks rang out above the noise of the storm, which had again burst forth upon them in all its fury, with which the stranger made an attempt to hoist him up, so as to get a hold for his feet, being served by the fact that, unless he could manage to do so before the girl's return, he was indeed lost.

But he only brought his face by so doing within better reach of O'Hara's fist, and sank back again, half blinded by the shower of blows raised down upon it by his ferocious enemy.

"Help,—help!—help!" his eye again rang out.

"Mercy! for the love of heaven—mercy!" he gasped.

"Sure, if ye shake me like that, with this divil below here hanging on to my leg, it'll snap like a twig anyway. Och, say, for mercy's sake!"

"What's up? Can you, can't you answer?" cried the voice.

And at the same moment a sharp cry of pain broke from O'Hara, and Reardon felt the leg he held on to almost jerked from his grip.

"Och! lave go, lave go, and I'll tell ye," cried Rory. "Sure, if ye shake me like that, with this divil below here hanging on to my leg, it'll snap like a twig anyway. Och, say, for mercy's sake!"

A sudden flash of lightning revealed to Terry a stranger whose face appeared almost gigantic, standing close by Rory, with his hand on the latter's collar.

The same flash also enabled the stranger to gauge the state of affairs.

He was evidently a man of quick decision.

"Can you host yourself up, mate, if I keep this beggar quiet, eh?" he said to Reardon.

"I'll try," answered the latter, whom the chance of escape had given fresh strength to.

Shifting his grip from Rory's leg to the cross-piece, he succeeded, after one or two attempts, in swinging one foot up and hooking on with it, and then in getting his knee on to the edge of the bridge.

He then hoisted himself up a bit.

Suddenly he felt himself seized by the collar, and lifted upwards with a force that seemed almost gigantic by the stranger.
The next moment he was standing on the bridge, faint and dizzy from the reaction, which, as was only natural, had set in after the awful peril which he had just undergone.

The stranger who had thus unceremoniously hoisted him up on to the bridge, had continued to maintain his hold all the time on Rory. Ally now approached the group.

"Who are ye?" demanded Rory, "are ye one o' the police?"

The stranger laughed.

"Not quite, though I'm pretty well up to the dodge they have of clapping their claws on a chap," and as he spoke he gave Rory's collar a most scientific twist.

"Who are ye, thin? Love go my collar, or 'twill be the worse for ye," said O'Hara, fiercely.

"It seems to me, now, that if I hadn't clapped my hand on your neck when I did, the next person who would have had a chance of fingering it would have been the hangman. Don't you think you ought to feel kind of ashamed, mate, that you stopped you just in time from running the risk of having to dance a jig on nothing for the murderer you were up to?"

"Murder!" repeated Rory indignantly; "it was a fair fight, sure now. Ask the spalpeen there; bad luck to him if it wasn't thin. Ask him."

"Well, that's your style of fair fighting, I should like to have a squint at the other kind out of curiosity, as the pig said when he pok'd his nose into the sausage machine," said the stranger, releasing him as he spoke.

"Twas no fair fight, Rory O'Hara, as well ye know," said Reardon. "But, place God, I'll meet ye in a day or two in the light o' day, and then we'll just see which of us is best man."

"Save ye till thin. Come, Ally," and as he spoke O'Hara began to move off.

"Stop a bit," cried the stranger. "I've gone a bit astray, and revealed the features of Ned Kelly.

"Honestly, I didn't know you were there. Let me go."

"Aisy, Jovvler, boy; sure, it's a friend," said Reardon. "Do you know Andy Mulvauy?"

"Faix an' I don't say I don't."

"An' might I be so bowld as to ask ye what ye want at Teernabeg now?"

"I want a man named Terrence Reardon."

"Sure an' it's done at hand;" ejaculated Ally, "an' I've heard of your doings' up beyant there; an' it's jist forty years ago that we're in to."

"Wait till ye see him."

"Quiet, you cur, quiet! Don't ye know your friends?" said Reardon. "Faix," he added, reflectively, "but if I'd have had ye with me this blessed night, it's very little chance Rory O'Hara would have had of getting off with whole skin."

"Is your dog such a devil then?" asked the stranger.

"Wait till ye see him."

At the sound of Terry's voice, the animal had relaxed into silence.

But on his master's opening the door, he appeared on the threshold, like a sorty.

He was an enormous brawny brute, a cross between a bull-dog and a mastiff, with deep-set, fiery eyes, a broad wrinkled forehead, and a pendulous jaw, which revealed a formidable array of teeth.

"Aisy, Jovvler, boy; sure, it's a friend," said Reardon. "An' at his voice the animal fell back, and suffered the pair to advance across the threshold.

They found themselves in a large, and rather comfortable kitchen, with a peat fire smouldering on the hearth.

"An' so ye're the new captain?" said Reardon. "Sure, an' I've heard of your doings' up beyant there; an' it's forty years ago that we're in to."

"Thank you. Well, now just see if you can't fish out a drop of whiskey. I'm as well as if I'd been lying under a pump-hole for the last six hours."

As he spoke, the stranger threw aside his saturated hat, and revealed the features of Ned Kelly.

CHAPTER CLXXXIV.

TEETH INSERTED GRATIS.

On the following evening, a number of men assembled in an upper room of a large house in the town.

They were the members of the Fenian local council.

The majority were the frieze-coated farmers and peasants of the district, mixed with whom were a sprinkling of the townpeople.

There were, however, several exceptions.

There was a tall, slender, excitable-looking man, with long hair brushed back from his forehead, and very prominent light blue eyes, who at that time sat on the bench of the British House of Commons as member for an Irish borough, but who has since found it necessary to cross the broad Atlantic, with little hope of returning.

There was a little dark, natty man, with an upright figure, and small black moustache.

He was known by the name of Colonel A.*, and was nominally one of the European correspondents of a leading New York Journal, which at that time had its temporary offices in London, at the Queen's Hotel, St. Martin's-lane.

But to this function he united that of a leading organiser of the Fenian conspiracy.

On one occasion, he left London to pass a week in Paris, leaving an English journalist as his deputy in his stead.

To the latter's great surprise, Colonel A. turned up within twenty-four hours of his departure, looking terribly agitated.

He did not explain the reason of his sudden return, but

* Correspondent of the New York Herald.
NED KELLY.

after a little conversation, asked his substitute whether, during his absence, he had had occasion to open a certain drawer in the room.

The other answered that he had not.

Colonel A., with a righ of relief, took a key from his pocket and locked the drawer.

He had reallccted on his arrival in Paris that he had lost it unlocked, and without losing a moment, had caught the first train back to London to repair this oversight on his part.

It had not then been many years, when the two men renewed acquaintance in America, that the Englishman learnt that the drawer in question had held papers for which the British Government would have given almost any sum, containing, as they did, the secrets of the entire conspiracy.

The majority of the meeting had taken their seats when some new-comers were heard coming upstairs.

Their progress was accompanied by a bumping, scuffling sound, and by something that ominously resembled the rattling of a chain.

Several of those present started to their feet, and more than one turned pale.

Visions of the police, dragging along some unwilling guide and dragging handcuffs prepared for all of them, flashed across their minds.

They heard, however, a short and quiet parley with the sentry stationed on the landing outside.

Their parley was interrupted by the sound of the key on the lock, and then the door opened, and the new-comers entered.

The first that thrust across the door-all was that of Terence Reardon's bulldog, Jowler.

He was tugging hard at a huge chain, the other end of which was in the hands of his master.

Behind the latter appeared the massive bulk of Ned Kelly.

The look that had escaped several present on discovering the real cause of their alarm in the person of Jowler died away and was replaced by a look of enquiry and suspicion in their eyes rested on Ned.

He was, with one exception, quite unknown to any of these present, save his introducer.

The exception was a caddroursounding fellow, of about fifty, named O'Reilly, who had come back from foreign parts, a year or two previously, and had established himself in a small way in the town.

The majority of the "foreign parts" in which Mr. O'Reilly had passed the last few years was a matter of some mystery, for he was a man of canrrous dispositions and could not bear being questioned on the subject.

Several people said they were a penal settlement.

Even he was not quite certain that he knew Ned, though, at the same time having a very strong impression that he had seen the bushranger's face before.

"I shall remember where, presently," he thought.

"Who is this with you, Reardon?" asked the M.P., severely.

"Sure, yer honour, it's just one of ourselves, God save us," answered Reardon; whilst Jowler, still tugging at the chain, stretched out his nose and sniffed at the calves of several of those in his immediate neighbourhood in a way that caused them to retire as far as possible.

"What's the matter?" said Ned. "I'm one of you, and if the boss of the show will just step this way, I think I can show him I'm one of the right sort."

The M.P. and the American advanced, and in a few words Ned convinced them of his being a member of their secret brotherhood, and showed certain credentials.

"An' what is it made ye bring that baste of a dog along with ye, Terry?" enquired a farmer, named Martin Flynn, of Reardon.

"Yes," broke in another, "what in the name of all the saints, Terry, makes ye drag that devil after ye here?"

"Faith, an' it's draggin' me after him, he is, rather," replied Reardon, with a grin.

"But why, sure?"

"Oh," returned Terry, in dolorous tones, "it's sickin' that the poor crathur is, I'm afeard!"

"Sickenin'?"

"Yes. It's not himself that he is at all; so I just brought him along into the town, that old Con Duffy, the cow doctor, might have a look at him."

"And what did he say, now?"

"Sure, and he says he's feared entirely that the baste is just sickin' with some disease that has a —"

"And what was it?" enquired a man, named MacGrath.

"Well, it puzzled me so that it's elane gone out of my mind, but he says for sartin sure that if the baste won't drink water, he'll get it."

"Bad luck to ye, Terry," cried Flynn, but it's the hydrophobe the dog has got."

"The hydrophobe, that is, sure enough."

"Devil mend yer manners, but don't ye know that if he won't bite one o' us we shall all be taken raving mad and run away from water," cried MacGrath.

"Och, murder, and is it so!" exclaimed a third, whose redoubled nose and moist eye indicated a toper.

"Purty damnd yer manners," said Flynn, "for what's it made ye bring that baste of a dog along with ye?"

"Sure, yer honour, it's just one of ourselves, God save us," answered Reardon; whilst Jowler, still tugging at the chain, stretched out his nose and sniffed at the calves of several of those in his immediate neighbourhod in a way that caused them to retire as far as possible.

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"But why, sure?"
remote from the scene of crime—was put upon his trial behind his back, as it were.

He was accused of certain offences, which were stated by the president, and which evidence was brought forward to establish him with the grim and ghastly mockery of a court of justice.

The impromptu jury were called upon for their verdict. Of course it was "guilty," and the sentence—death. That had already been fixed beforehand.

It was the same in all such cases—death.

Despite the proverbially excitable nature of the Irish, these proceedings had been conducted in a stolid, business-like fashion that would have gladdened the heart of a British tradesman.

This gathering might very well, indeed, have passed for a vestry meeting.

There was little speculating on the part of the majority.

The only attempts at eloquence were displayed by the American and the M.P., who felt bound, perhaps, to show his worth, and take part in the impromptu trial of Ned Kelly, who indulged in a little rhapsody about "98.

There was, besides, no outward display such as is usually associated with a conspiracy.

Neither flags, masks, daggers, or any other of the symbols and paraphernalia popularly associated with such proceedings, were in evidence.

Nothing was recorded in writing, though the American nominally filled the post of secretary.

Mahoney, who wanted to display his business-like talents, proposed that the "minutes" of the meeting should be made, and expressed his surprise to the Yankee colonel at the absence of such "matatalas."

"My friend," was the reply, "if language was given to man to conceal his thoughts, writing was invented to enable him to find out other people's. Pen and ink are dangerous things to meddle with unless you have all your wits about you, as a friend of mine found out in New York the other day."

"How was that?" asked the M.P.

"Well, he had been lunching pretty heavily down town, and, perhaps, he could not walk in straight along the sidewalk as he ought. Anyway, he ran right into the arms of a perfect stranger to him."

"Who boxed his watch, I suppose, under the pretence of helping him along? I know the dodge."

"Not a bit of it. The stranger was a perfect good fellow, with a slender frame, pallid face, and flashing eyes, and he wanted one or two friends on the quiet of that virtuous young Western man."

"By gosh! I took look—there's a power in education, ye see."

"After this little digression, business was proceeded with.

It was that of selecting the men upon whom was to devolve the execution of the court's decree."

This was settled by lot. The number of choices corresponded with that of the man who, with the exception of the president and secretary, was a rule that the assassin should always be selected from a district lying at a distance from the spot where the murder was to be committed.

The reason was that they would be personally unknown to their intended victim, and that, if he survived his injuries, he would have greater difficulty in describing or identifying his assistants.

The lots fell on Kelly and on a young excitable-looking fellow, with a slender frame, pallid face, and flashing eyes, named Mahoney, who had already spoken at some length on the matter.

He was one of the most ardently patriotic of the assembly, and was rather a favourite with most of his companions, from his evident sincerity and "spouting" propensities.

He talked a fearful amount of Irish and Bookish Irish, but his interest was in many of the "fairest piety in the world," and of the "nation rising in its might," whatever that might mean, and was eloquent about the time when "Macaulay wore a chain of gold," (which, by the by, would not have been very safe wearing when the quotation was made), so that he was "a big speaker entirely," and looked upon as another Moughton of the Sword.

It is curious to note the resemblance in this respect between the Irish and the French.

The impromptu juror said of O'Reilly and his friends: "I'mout toujours sans l' Ecoeure de la phrase !"—they are always under the influence of happy phraseology. The Irish are likewise as malleable as wax in the hands of mob or other orators.

Old O'Reilly had been watching Ned very closely for some time past, and had at last made up his mind as to his tactics.

No sooner had the list fallen on Kelly and Mahoney, than he turned to the latter, next to whom he was seated, and whispered something in his ear.

"You're a drunkard, man!" exclaimed Mahoney, with a look of indignation at his neighbour.

"Divil a lie in it," was the reply.

"Ask him yerself, if ye doubt me; but I'll swear to him anywhere."

"It if is thin," cried the other, in indignant tones, "I'll do the job single-handed before I'll consult with the priest of you."

"What is it, Mahoney?" said the M.P., noticing the young man's excitement.

"Are we thieves and rapscallions, ye honour; or are we patriots, inspired by the glorious memories of '98?" was the answer.

"Patriots, I trust."

"In it right then that a murdering horsestealer ought to come sneaking into our midst and be evened with honest men?" cried Mahoney, with the air of a smoking Derricks.

"What do you mean?"

"Mane. Why, I want to know if it's true, as O'Reilly here says, that Mr. Kelly there is neither more or less than a horse-stealer, thief, and robber from Australia."

A dead silence followed this announcement for a moment.

These men, who would not have shrunk at murder, had a horror of theft.

Ned looked astounded at this revelation of his career. He had no reason to fear this biographical sketch of his Antipodean life, and he avowedly wished he was safe in Ireland.

"What do you mean?"

"Any man who had such a story would face the foe boldly as he had often done before. He, however, was furious, and we know he was revengeful. He knew that unless he cleared out of that his danger would commence, so he simply launched a bottle of whiskey at the head of his accuser, striking him full in the face, which was instantly covered with blood. It was the only reply he could make. Drawing his revolver, in spirit in his defence, as the favourite's friends rushed towards him with threats of lynching the spy."

"Are you mad, you fools? do you want to be jail-birds, all of you? cried the M.P., in an agitated tone."

"Dry up, there," said the American, "hold hard."

"Pitch him out of the window."

"Murder him," and similar cries were heard on every side, for the word spy acted on one and all like a red rag on a bull.
In vain the American and the M.P. strove to restore order; their voices were drowned in the general uproar.

As is always the case, under such circumstances, the more peaceably disposed of the party added to the din by their loud appeals for silence.

Amidst the confusion, the door of the room suddenly opened, and the face of the sentry, which wore an expression of amazement, was thrust inside.

This incident attracted their notice, and still the uproar.

"Whistle, boys," he ejaculated; "the racket you're making will be heard all over the town, and the police will be here in no time."

There was a temporary lull at these words.

Kelly, backing to the wall, stood in a defiant attitude, revolver in hand, facing his opponents.

Excited by the tumult around him, the dog Jowler had begun to tug furiously at his chain, and he now uttered a most fearful howl.

Another and another followed.

"To hell with the spy!" cried Flynn all at once; and a rush towards Kelly took place.

Kelly met the rush with a force and quickness that astonished his assailant. He floored the foremost attackers like bowling over ninepins.

They were no match for his Herculean power. Like Perry, the celebrated black pugilist (transported by the coxcomb of Spring, who placed a wish on note in his pocket the day before the fight), he could kill a man with a blow, or smash his jaw like glass—and he knew it. The conspirators drew back in amazement.

"He's the devil entirely, boys; by gorrah, he's charmed!" said Flynn.

All this time the dog howled furiously, and under the pretext of soothing him, Reardon stepped up to him.

He muttered as he did so.

"Spy! I'll never believe he is! and those or no those, he saved my life last night, and by dad I'll pay the debt!"

As he finished the sentence he placed his hand on Jowler's collar.

Meanwhile, with the wolfish glare of murder in their eyes, the madmen throng pressed round Kelly, who had drawn his revolver.

He would himself have probably been shot down ere this, had it not been for the fear of the sound of firearms attracting the police, situated, as the house was, in the centre of the town.

His foes were evidently nervous themselves for one overwhelming rush, in which he would be borne down, and in all likelihood torn limb from limb.

In vain the M.P. and the American strove to obtain a hearing on his behalf.

"Sure, we may as well betray ourselves as be sold by the horse-stealing, murdering spy!"

"It's a spy—he is, and we'll have the heart's blood of him!" was the reply of those they addressed, and who, in their blind rage, had quite forgotten the real cause of quarrel.

The idea of a spy once started, nothing could shake it.

"Down with him, boys!" cried McGrath; and, with faces aglow with fiendish passion, the others prepared to throw themselves on their victim.

Suddenly a yell broke from Reardon.

"The dog's loose—the hydrophobia!" he screamed at the top of his voice, in tones of panic clearly heard above the tumult.

The words struck terror to the hearts of the boldest of those present.

Men who were about to rush boldly on Ned's levelled revolver, shrank from this peril.

The frightful stories they had been telling about hydrophobia flashed across their minds.

And as Jowler, with eyes abe, and hair bristling down the whole length of his back, bounded towards them, his open mouth displaying his array of white and glinting fangs, the effect was magical.

One and all turned to die, the fallen men springing from the floor like acrobats.

It was literally a case of the devil—for as such they regarded him—take the hindmost.

Cursing, swearing, scrambling, fighting, they made their way in frantic confusion towards the door of the room.

Excited almost to madness on his part, the dog made his teeth meet in the calves of several of the hindmost as they were jammed in the door.

Maddened with pain and fear, they kicked and struggled till the whole mass rolled down the stairs like a torrent and never paused till they had gained the street.

In less than a minute more were left in the room but Ned, the M.P., and Reardon, who was joyously waving the dog-chain in exultation at the success of his stratagem.

Thus the meeting was dissolved.

CHAPTER CLXXV.

OUT OF THE FENTITY-PAN INTO THE FIRE.

The three men gazed at one another for a few moments after the room had been thus unceremoniously cleared.

Then the American and the M.P. broke into a fit of laughter in which Kelly joined.

"Well, I reckon there ain't been such a skedaddle since Bull's Run," observed the first. "It was a caution to see the way those fellows slid."

(To be continued.)
NED KELLY
THE
IRONCLAD
AUSTRALIAN BUSHRANGER
It is well known that for many years Ned Kelly had made himself notorious by a series of crimes wholly incompatible with the civilization of the nineteenth century. Ned Kelly's celebrated steed, Marco Polo, is as well known as the Annabel in Bob Tutt's Poppy. 

"It is notorious that the robbery of Mr. Stewart's corpse was mainly performed by the assistance of Ned Kelly's Brookes, the Captains of which was neither more nor less than a pirate ship." — Times, July.

The history of Ned Kelly and his celebrated black horse, Marco Polo, will ever live in the recollection of the Australian public. The deeds of Dick Tappin, and the performances of Black Bess, are tame beside those of Ned and his Nag, in addition to which Ned's history is true, and Tappin's pure fiction." — Press, July.

**CHAPTER CLXXXVI—Continued.**

"Yes," remarked the M.P., "it was a clear case of devil take the hindmost. It was a deuced lucky thing too. Reardon, that dog got loose just when he did. "For my word, I believe our friend here would have been a dead man in another minute but for that." Reardon grunted. 

"Yes," said the American. "I don't think anything else could have saved him. How was it the brute got loose?" "Faith, and I'm not quite certain how 'twas, yer honour. Sure, I was just tryin' to quiet him, the brute, and I had my hands 'explained the to see if it might be shaken of him, and thin, mebbe, my fingers slipped," said Reardon, with that sly, comical affectation of innocence assumed by him, and thin, mebbe, my fingers slipped," said Reardon, with that sly, comical affectation of innocence assumed by Pat when launching 'a thumper.'

"And the collar came undone, eh?" said the M.P., who perfectly understood the meaning of this rigmarole. "Sure, your honours a witch's spell was the answer. "Well, Kelly, it strikes me that if it had not been for the cuteness of our friend here, you'd have been down among the dead men, as the saying is, long ago."

"There would have been more down with me," was the reply. "I wouldn't have gone under alone, no fear," rejoined Ned, with a grim emphasis; "but all the same, I thank you, mate, for the dodge."

As he spoke, he held out his hand to Reardon. "Faith, and is it more than payin' back my debts that I've been down? When I was hung like a rape pear on Father Flaherty's garden wall, over the black waters, with that devil hammerin' at my hands, who was it but you that pulled me up again, and saved me?" answered Terry, with some emotion.

"Oh! you two have a little private account between you, eh?" said the M.P. "But now to the main business. After your squabble with Mahoney, Kelly, I'm afraid it's impossible for you to work together."

"So am I," replied Ned. "Well, what's to be done? The only thing that I can see is for the lots to be drawn afresh; and, meanwhile, we must get it out of these fellows' thick heads that you're a spy, though, till this is done, perhaps you'd better keep out of all chance of meeting them anywhere."

"Devil a bit will I keep out of their way," replied Ned. "I'm not a chicken-hearted chap of that sort. And, what's more, if that sneaking hound I bashed over the mug thinks himself too fine to work along with me, I'm blest if I won't show him the stuff I'm made of."

"What do you mean?" enquired the M.P. "I mean I'll do the job single-handed," said Ned. "You're the right sort, true grit, a regular ring-tailed scranger, I reck'n."

"Do you mean it?" asked the M.P. "I always mean what I say. Just ten me straight the particulars, and I'll go to work at once."

After a little more conversation, during which Kelly convinced the others of his determination to carry out the job single-handed, he received full instructions as to the best way in which to set about it, the parley separated.

"There they are!" exclaimed the M.P. "No, sure," answered Reardon, stepping towards the door; "it's just Jowler, the brute. I know the noise of him. He'd be equal to any Christian—if he liked a drop."

As he spoke, he opened the door and admitted the dog. Jowler limped a little with one leg, and sundry marks on his body showed that he had not come off quite scot-free, though he had sustained no material damage in his recent encounter.

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As he spoke, he held out his hand to Reardon. "Faith, and I'm not quite certain how 'twas, yer honour. Sure, I was just tryin' to quiet him, the brute, and I had my hands 'explained the to see if it might be shaken of him, and thin, mebbe, my fingers slipped," said Reardon, with that sly, comical affectation of innocence assumed by Pat when launching 'a thumper.'

"And the collar came undone, eh?" said the M.P., who perfectly understood the meaning of this rigmarole. "Sure, your honours a witch's spell was the answer. "Well, Kelly, it strikes me that if it had not been for the cuteness of our friend here, you'd have been down among the dead men, as the saying is, long ago."

"There would have been more down with me," was the reply. "I wouldn't have gone under alone, no fear," rejoined Ned, with a grim emphasis; "but all the same, I thank you, mate, for the dodge."

As he spoke, he held out his hand to Reardon. "Faith, and is it more than payin' back my debts that I've been down? When I was hung like a rape pear on Father Flaherty's garden wall, over the black waters, with that devil hammerin' at my hands, who was it but you that pulled me up again, and saved me?" answered Terry, with some emotion.

"Oh! you two have a little private account between you, eh?" said the M.P. "But now to the main business. After your squabble with Mahoney, Kelly, I'm afraid it's impossible for you to work together."

"So am I," replied Ned. "Well, what's to be done? The only thing that I can see is for the lots to be drawn afresh; and, meanwhile, we must get it out of these fellows' thick heads that you're a spy, though, till this is done, perhaps you'd better keep out of all chance of meeting them anywhere."

"Devil a bit will I keep out of their way," replied Ned. "I'm not a chicken-hearted chap of that sort. And, what's more, if that sneaking hound I bashed over the mug thinks himself too fine to work along with me, I'm blest if I won't show him the stuff I'm made of."

"What do you mean?" enquired the M.P. "I mean I'll do the job single-handed," said Ned. "You're the right sort, true grit, a regular ring-tailed scranger, I reck'n."

"Do you mean it?" asked the M.P. "I always mean what I say. Just ten me straight the particulars, and I'll go to work at once."

After a little more conversation, during which Kelly convinced the others of his determination to carry out the job single-handed, he received full instructions as to the best way in which to set about it, the parley separated.

It had been arranged that Ned should remain for the night at Reardon's, and start on his expedition early the following morning.

Accordingly he set forth, bent from mere reckless
The two constables, and their conversation, had quite failed to dissipate in any degree.

He continued to sleep the sleep of the just, and to snore with the force and regularity of a blacksmith's bellows in full play.

"Good night that chap's got anyway, Daly," said one of the constables to his companion.

"Yes, if his lungs are in his nose, he has."

"Maybe it would be as well to take a squint at him before he wakes. He might think it a liberty if one stared too hard at him when awake," said the first constable, whose name was Purcell.

"It might be as well," replied the other.

Rising from his seat, he stopped noiselessly round to the side of the fireplace where Ned was stretched at ease upon his bench.

He stared hard at Kelly's features.

If he had been an Australian bobby, he would have had no difficulty in identifying the man before him as the iron-clad bushtucker.

And his description had been so extensively circulated throughout the colony, that there was not a member of the force there, down to the latest joined recruit, that did not know it by heart a dowered sight better than ever he knew his catchcock.

But as Kelly's presence was unsuspected in Ireland, no particulars of his personal appearance had as yet been supplied by the authorities.

The constable scanned his face, and even glanced at the scar on his hand, but failed to identify him with anyone who might be "wanted" to his knowledge.

He was just about to return to his comrades, when all at once he started.

Ned had unbuttoned his coat, and in his slumber it had fallen aside.

Peering out from the breast of his waistcoat, where he had thrust it as the driest place at his command during the storm, was the butt of his revolver.

Purcell beckoned to his comrade, who joined him in his contemplation of Ned's slumberers, and to whom he pointed out the weapon.

He took in the situation at a glance.

Ned was not a bad-looking fellow, and if the police were now looking at him had met him in broad daylight, and well-dressed, very likely they would have been the first to swear that he was anything but a respectable a looking fellow, if a little unpolished in aspect, as they would meet with on the longest summer day.

But lying there, unkempt and storm-beaten, in the roofless part of the Irish Constabulary, "A nasty storm, Pat," observed one to the host, after he had sat down, and his companion had been supplied with drink, as they seated themselves on the bench opposite Ned.

"Indade, an' it is," was the reply. "I mivir ned it come down so sharp. The gentleman by the fire there, was just like a drowned rat when he came."

"Not many travellers about on a day like this?"

"Arrah, no; sure he's the only one that has crossed the road this blessed day."

"Where's he bound to?" inquired the other constable, in a low voice.

"Sure an' it's not myself that can answer ye to that. Divil a word has he said since he came in."

There had been no all in the conversation, during which Ned's snorings were so loudly audible above the rumbling of the pot.

The bushtucker was, as a rule, a light sleeper, like all men accustomed to peril; but on the present occasion the warmth and the whiskey had exerted a marked soporific effect upon him, which, singular enough, the arrival of the two constables, and their conversation, had quite failed to dissipate in any degree.

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But lying there, unkempt and storm-beaten, in the course garments he had assumed for his errand, and with a pistol peeping from his breast, he at once, in their eyes, assumed the appearance of a most despicable-looking ruffian, ready for any deed.

The two policemen arrived at this conclusion with that wonderful unanimity which distinguishes the force in all matters, especially in hard swearing.

The slumbering stranger was evidently a very ugly customer.

With a quiet dexterity that the cleverest of Fagin's pickpocket pupils (who were trained to pick a handkerchief from a lay figure hung with bells) might have envied, Daly clasped his fingers round the butt of Ned's revolver and drew it from its hiding-place with a gentleness that would not have scandalised a lady.

So artistically was this little feat done that the bushtucker never felt it in the least.

The two then withdrew to their own seat of the fire to await events.
CHAPTER CLXXXVII.

KELLY’S PATENT DYNAMITE.

Ned thrust his hand into the pocket in which he usually kept his revolver.

It was missing.

He recollected placing it in his waistcoat pocket, and, simultaneously with that recollection, realised the fact of its absence from its hiding place.

"Was this what you were feeling for?" said Purcell, holding out Ned’s revolver as he spoke with a grim

The bushranger understood the situation at once.

Like a general surveying the country over which any engagement is to be fought, he glanced round the place to calculate its chances of aiding him in either flight or resistance, as might prove most advisable.

The huge fireplace occupied one end of the room, and was faced at the other by a rude dresser.

In the centre of the wall on the right hand was the door leading on to the road.

It was open, though the shutters securing the two windows flanking it had been fastened.

On the opposite wall was another door, also ajar, apparently leading into the back premises, and thence through the yard to the waste land extending in rear of the house.

If Ned understood the situation, the police were equally on the alert.

Daly rose and placed himself before the open door with his rifle, which he had kept during the meal in his

Purcell held Ned's revolver, with the muzzle pointed in an unpleasantly straight fashion towards its legitimate owner's figure.

Knowing to an ounce the lightness of pull of the trigger of his favourite weapon, Kelly felt somewhat uncomfortable at the little circumstance.

"Come, we don't want to have any unpleasantness," said Purcell, "but it's our duty to take you before a magistrate as a suspicious character carrying arms in a proclaimed district. If you can explain matters, so much the better for you; but it's not for us to decide the question—so come along quietly."

Ned glared at him for a moment like a trapped wolf.

Then he retreated a step towards the fireplace, whilst the landlady simultaneously retired in alarm to the further end of the room.

He was close to the fireplace.

Again Ned glanced around him, this time all but despairingly, in quest of either a means of escape or a weapon.

There was nothing.

"Look here, what the devil d'ye want to nab me for?" he began.

"What do you take me for?"

"A Fenian, if you must know."

"A Fenian?"

"Yes, so you had better come in quietly."

Ned had made up his mind not to be taken alive.

A desperate resolution suddenly lit up his face.

He was close to the fireplace.

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Ned yawned, uncoiled his lengthy herculean proportions, and sat up on the bench.

"How did you find that out? The cursed country's nothing but a bog," growled Kelly.

"Have you come far through the rain? I see you've got pretty well sprinkled," went on the other in a genial tone, for he did not at first want to rouse Kelly's suspicions.

"No, " answered Kelly, recklessly; for he wished, at any rate, to keep his interrogators off the scent as to who he really was, and thought this a good dodge.

"And what do you think of it?"

"I think some people are a blooming sight more inquisitive than they had any need to be," was the answer.

Ned did not answer.

"And how does the country look down your way?" went on the constable, with a amiable air.

"Looks pretty much the same, I suppose, as it always does—full, dirty, and dismal.

"What part, now, might you hail from?" put in the other constable, insidiously, not minding Kelly's growl.

"From Ballyturin, maybe?"

"No."

"Ah, from the south, then?"

"No, " answered Kelly, recklessly; for he wished, at any rate, to keep his interrogators off the scent as to who he really was, and thought this a good dodge.

"I thought as much."

Daly laughed.

"Making it our duty to be so. There's such a lot of queer customers about just now, you see. You're not a native of Ireland, you say, now. You come from America, I suppose?" he went on, as he seemed Ned keenly.

"Yes, " answered Kelly, recklessly; for he wished, at any rate, to keep his interrogators off the scent as to who he really was, and thought this a good dodge.

"I thought as much."

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Trembling his hand into his pocket he drew out a largish square packet.

It was done up in white paper.

He stretched forth his hand, and held the packet over the fire.

"A Fenian, you say? Then since it is so, I'll show you a Fenian trick before I've done with you."

"Do you think you're going to quod me for nothing? Just come two steps towards me, and I'll Fenian you both. Do you see this?" roared Ned, hoarse with rage.

"It's your death-warrant, and mine too, for the matter of that; but no jail shall hold me, and none of your blooming beaks stop my gallop. Do you see this?" roared Ned, hoarse with rage.

"It's your death-warrant, and mine too, for the matter of that; but no jail shall hold me, and none of your blooming beaks stop my gallop. Do you see this?"

The two constables gazed with surprise at the roaring ruffian, but had no idea of what he meant.

Purcell replied—

"Come, my man, draw it mild; you don't think you've got a couple of talons to deal with, do you? What have you got in your flat there?"

"Dynamite enough to make this house and all in it jump into."

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"Dynamite enough to make this house and all in it jump into."
"Dynamite!" exclaimed the now alarmed officers of the law.

"Yes, I guess you've heard of it? There's enough here to blow every stock and store of this infernal caboose into smithereens; and by — I'll do it before one of you lays hands on me."

At this epoch the first dynamite scare was in full force through the United Kingdom.

The Clerkenwell explosion was fresh in the minds of all.

The landlord turned white as a ghost, and fell back against the dresser, too paralysed by terror to try to flee.

His wife dropped on her knees, and throwing her apron over her head, began to pray aloud to all the saints in paradise to lend her their aid.

"Och murther!" gasped the landlord.

"Arrah, boys," said the landlord to the police, "is he with you?"

"Have you or won't you clear out?" roared Ned to the police.

Kelly darted through the door premises, and was soon scaring away in the darkness, feeling quite safe as regarded the law, as they could hardly be on such high ground.

He had little fear of the policemen overhauling him; but at the same time he judged it prudent to increase as much as possible the distance between himself and them.

As he stumbled along over the rough and broken ground, he mused upon it with a relish of language and a fertility of epithets that few could have equalled who have not learned the art in a British colony. The vocabulary of an Australian bullock driver is sui generic. Oaths of every form and grotesque awfulness come rushing from his lips, like bullets from a revolver, in showers of profanity of the nature of which it is to be hoped he is ignorant. De Quincey has spoken of murder as a fine art, the Australian bullock driver has done the same for swearing.

The rain had ceased, but the air was damp and misty, a circumstance which, however much it might serve to favour his departure unobserved, by no means conducd to his comfort.

Vigorously he cursed — to use a very mild phrase — the wretched climate of the Emerald Isle, the "melancholy island" of D'Isselin, the wet sponge of creation. After the gorgeous atmosphere of Australia, he could not but think of the land of perpetual downpour, to which he was of necessity, but to the inhabitants only "soft weather."

"I can't stand this any longer," he growled; "it's always raining in this beastly bog-hole of a country, that's only fit for wild duck and mud turtle. I wonder how the devil anyone better than a frog, and with any coin at all, can live in it; no wonder the swells clear out!"

Two more steps, and he suddenly plunged up to his knees in a hole full of water.

After having gone a certain distance from the inn he halted, in order to reconnoitre the position.

It was not a very enchanting one.

He was alone on a bleak hillside, with, as far as he knew, not another shelter save the one he had so abruptly quitted, within miles of him.

The darkness and mist not only rendered his progress difficult and dangerous, but threatened to hinder all success in his attempts to find a shelter.

After a little deliberation, he decided to push on, as far as he could judge, in the direction in which he had originally been making his way.

Even if the police were still lurking about, there was but scant chance of his running against them.

Accustomed to steer through the bush at all hours of the day and night, Ned headed almost by instinct, to the quarter to which he was bound, resolved, if necessary, to tramp on steadily through the night.

Fortune saved him this task.

He had not been tramping more than half-an-hour when he caught sight of a light glimmering from what he took at first to be a mere mound of earth, but which, on a closer approach, he made out to be a mud cabin.

He saw through the chinks in what was figuratively called a door. He knocked loudly.

With the natural hospitality of the people, the knock was answered with an invitation to "come in, in the name of God!".

Kelly pushed in the two or three planks roughly nailed together, doing duty for a door, and found himself in a dwelling-place scarcely a shade superior to the cave of an ancient Briton, and certainly not so dry.
The cabin consisted of a single room measuring some eight feet by ten.

The walls were a-ad and so was the floor, in which puddles of water had formed in different places.

The furniture comprised a rickety table and a broken bench, bedstead and bedding being alike conscious of their absence.

A sickle hung from a beam in the roof, and a spade stood in one corner; the remaining household utensils consisting of two or three tea-cups, a couple of cracked plates, a broken kettle and without a handle; a griddle and a kettle swung by a chain over a scrap of turf-fire that might have been put into a pint pot.

Two ghastly scarecrows in tatters and rags were crouching on either side of the fire, the glow from which had gauged Ned's eye through the hole serving as a window and the elts in the door.

After some difficulty, owing to the dimness of the light, he made out that they were a man and woman.

Ned had not had much experience of what is termed high life, and had been no stranger to poverty, but as tomahawks as he was to the rude plenty of the colonies, the ghastly squalor of the scene before him fortunately astonished him.

For a moment he hesitated about revealing his real position to his hosts should they be tempted to betray him.

On second thoughts he decided otherwise, and boldly stated that the police were after him.

This was enough to ensure him the warmest welcome.

"It isn't a mighty power o' food we've got to offer you, but the mighty sight the pretty we had plenty of them anyway and a welcome to give, but now what we have you're as welcome to as the flowers o' May, though rain isn't much to keep the little spark of life that's left burning. If it wasn't for a drop o' comfort we git from a friend like you, there'd be no comfort. If the cook hasn't yet found out we'd all be as dead as Cromwell."

Ned thanked them in his rough way, and said that a taste of whiskey to dry up the wet was all he wanted.

This was soon produced, and then, on the reiterated assurances of his host that there was no chance of the police coming in quest of him there, he stretched himself, in his clothes, on a little straw that had been spread for him on the dryest spot of the floor.

The master of the house and his wife took up their quarters in a similar fashion, whilst a donkey, who formed the rest of the family, was also accommodated in a like manner close to the door, serving, as was explained, as a kind of living barricade to prevent its being blown down in windy weather.

If there had been a dog he would probably have shared the general couch; but that indispensable adjunct to an Irish cotter's existence, had just been ported with in order to pay the rent, for at that time the Land League was in embryo, and rent was still paid—when found convenient.

The next morning at daybreak, Ned resumed his journey, after rewarding his host with the greater part of the tobacco that had enabled him so successfully to scare the policemen in the little inn.

The scene to which he was bound was in embryo, and rent was still paid—when found convenient.

On proceeding there he found a grave had been dug, at the head of which was a notice placed in a cleft stick, to the effect that he had better make the best of the time left to him to prepare for its occupation.

Such a warning was not to be neglected, and Mr. Mountclare applied to the government for a police escort.

The Marquis of Sligo's agent never sits without a couple of armed policemen, who follow him like shadows.

This number is sometimes exceeded, as in the case of Mr. Nicholson, of Ballinasloe, in Meath.

Ned, after an attempt made to shoot him, arrived at the little hamlet of Clonbur.

The scene of action to which he was bound, was in the neighbourhood of what was estimated in the confidence in which was placed him by his host.

Mr. Mountclare had received a letter one morning, calling his attention to the sentence of death pronounced by them against him.

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Mr. Mountclare had received a letter one morning, calling his attention to the sentence of death pronounced by them against him.

The police were after him, and he learned that the following day Mr. Moantskre, the agent of the Marquis of Headfort, whose seat was Mountclare, would be certain to drive into Clonbur to attend a meeting of the Land League, consisting of an armed constable acting as a scout, then a couple of others abreast, then two more with Mr. Nicholson and his son, all parties armed to the teeth between them, and finally, another posse of police in a car, with a horse slung on the side of it to enable them to scale any wall from behind which an assassin might fire.

Mr. Mountclare was duly furnished with an escort of constables, two being detached to accompany him everywhere.

AFTER a time, however, he began to feel more secure, and contented himself with one of those guardian angels in uniform.

Of this fancied security his enemies had resolved to avail themselves.

Accordingly Ned and the young fellow who had so bitterly objected at being associated with him, had been told off to carry out the sentence.

On the evening of the day following his adventure at the inn, Ned arrived at the little hamlet of Clonbur.

He at once proceeded to the house of a man named Brennan, who had been indicated by those from whom he had received his instructions.

At first Brennan was inclined to look at him with suspicion, all strangers in the district being set down by the police as Fenian agents, and by the peasantry as detectives in disguise; but on matters being explained to him, he placed himself at Kelly's orders.

The bushranger was speedily made aware of the habits of his intended victim.

He learned that the following day Mr. Mountclare would be certain to drive into Clonbur to attend a magistrates' meeting, and that he would be pretty certain not to leave the hamlet before midnight.

"Can't we drop him on the road home?" asked Ned.

"Faith, yer; the road runs mighty conveniently for that same," answered Brennan; "only there'll be one or two of them murtherin' polls along with him in the car."

"Will there be a driver?"

"No, here he droves himself."
"Well, if there is only one body, it won't make any
difference to me. I don't funk any bone of men ever
whelped. Only I want something better than I've got to
do the job as it ought to be done."

"What d'ye mean now?"

"I mean that though this revoler of mine is a very
good one, it's not quite the right sort of tool for a snap-
shot at a man driving by on a car."

"What's it ye want then?"

"A double gun with a good load of swan shot in each
barrel."

Brennan exclaimed.

"Oh, make yerself aisy then," was his reply. "Sure
and it's the beauty of the world that I have close at hand
now. Just wait a bit."

Stepping out of his cabin, Brennan glanced round to
make sure that no prying eyes were following his
movements.

Satisfied on this score, he stepped up to a huge pile of
turf in the rear of his dwelling.

Thrusting his hand into this, he pulled out a long
object swathed in hay bands, with which he returned to
the cabin where Ned was awaiting him, and closed the
door.

On the hay bands being removed, there stood revealed
a short but heavy double-barrel gun.

"Sure and there's a beauty now," was Brennan's
remark as he displayed the weapon.

Ned, somewhat surprised at his companion's vehemence,
whipped out his hand for it.

"Be careful, captain, darlin'," ejaculated Brennan;
"sure an' all he's loaded."

"Loaded!" cried Ned, "then the best thing will be to
fire her off and re-load her. I always mistrust an old
charge, until the damp may have got to it lying in that
old gear-stack."

"Divil a bit of it. Just look at all the hay bands.
Besides, I'll never do to fire her off here, or them nagurs
the polls will be hearin' it."

After a brief consultation the plan of action was
arranged.

"That's good news, anyway," said Ned.

"Yes," assented Ned, as he continued to look round,
"it's a handy place. There's firstrate cover behind the
wall, and he must shun the path up the rise of the hill.
Why, it will be as easy to bring him down as a tamo
goose. Han' i, it's almost mean to pot a poor devil like
him. We'll just let on to the police."

"Arrah, what matter are they all for the
cause?"

"Oh, — your cause, if my neck's to pay for it. Sup-
pose they split?"

Brennan screams.

"What is it ye name now?" he asked, in wondering
tones.

"What is it ye name now?" he asked, in wondering
tones.

"Why, the people there will be sure to twig the job and
spot me," replied Ned; "I mean they'll be bound to see
what I'm about."

"Do you think they're dirty protestants and would risk
their souls by breaking the oath they've sworn by all the
Saints to keep?" and Brennan crossed himself devoutly.

"And if they do, sure — was the answer.

"Well, for all that, if a reward was offered, they might
blow the gaff."

"And what's that now?"

"Why to peach, to let on to the police."

"Divil a word, ye may rest yer sowl on it. Kot s>
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fire her off and re-load her. I always mistrust an old
charge, until the damp may have got to it lying in that
old gear-stack."

"Divil a bit of it. Just look at all the hay bands.
Besides, I'll never do to fire her off here, or them nagurs
the polls will be hearin' it."

Ned scanned the surroundings approvingly.

"There's a boat down yonder, by that bit of rock ye
see sticking up beyant," said Brennan, "so that if a man
wanted to get off by water he could do it easy."

"Yes," assented Ned, as he continued to look round,
"it's a handy place. There's firstrate cover behind the
wall, and he must shun the path up the rise of the hill.
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It was settled that Ned should make his way to a clump
of woodland, lying on the hillside, at a short distance,
and pass the rest of the day there; Brennan undertaking
to bring or send some food, and to arrange means of flight
when the deed had been done.
was concerned. Anyone passing along the road, either on foot or on a car, the slightest sound.

them all there at this moment. In fact, he wished him.

road.

au observant, his eye "skinned" and his ear alert for

ments engaged.

the somewhat singular task on which he was at that mo­

speak to him, neither did they pay the least attention to

more than one labourer at work on the hillside.

walls dividing the fields started. Nearly six feet in height.

cabin, already mentioned, the wall bordering the road was

of feet nigh and in others four or five.

Th these walls varied according to the hold­

ings they enclosed, in some instances being only a couple

feet high and in others four or five.

Other walls, serving to separate the different fields, ran off at right angles to those bordering the road.

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The road was bordered on either side by walls, composed of stones roughly piled together.

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He had not long been lying peris', when he noticed a girl coming across the "bit o' plough," lying between the road and the wood. She carried a basket in her hand and was evidently making her way towards the wood.

Ned showed himself for a moment, and she came straight up to him.

She handed him the basket and said—

"Miss Brennam bid me tell ye, sir, that there will

be a man waitin' for ye in the boat he pointed out, and

that he thinks that the safest way for ye."

So saying, she left; leaving Ned in a state of comical wonderment, at the cool and open manner in which the details of a murder were planned in Ireland.

After feeding off the contents of the basket and smoking several more pipes, Ned thought it time to make the final preparations.

He had been warned by Brennam, that Mr. Mountelare would hardly leave Clonbur before dusk; he thought it as well to be a little in advance.

The road was bordered on either side by walls, composed of stones roughly piled together.

Ned took up his position in the angle where one of the walls dipped from the ride. At length his strained ears caught the sound of some vehicle approaching from Clonbur.

He glanced in that direction.

At first he could only make out a dark object rapidly advancing from the hamlet. In a few moments more he could discern that it was a car conveying two people.

He had no doubt that it was the one he was awaiting, and, indeed, he was soon certain of this fact.

The colour of the horse and the uniform of the policeman were easily recognised.

A momentary hesitation crossed his mind.

It was not whether he should abandon his attack, for such an idea as that never entered his head.

What he was in doubt was, which he should fire at first, Mr. Mountelare or the policeman.

The former was the most important to dispose of, but the latter was the most dangerous, besides which his very calling made Kelly feel inclined to give him the prefer­ence.

He bated a policeman with the furious animosity of a London rough.

He evidently had his gun in readiness, and was no doubt a fair shot and a formidable antagonist.

Ned's mind was one of those which are soon made up in an emergency like the one now presenting itself.

"I'll down the bobby first," was his decision. "It won't take much trouble to pick off the other old cove before he can get away."

Withdraw his hand from the loophole, through which he had been observing the approach of the car, he replaced it by the barrel of his gun, taking care, however, not to thrust it too far forward, lest it should be observed from the road.

Then dropping on one knee, and glancing along the weapon, he prepared for his right and left shot.

As he had anticipated, the horse was compelled to slacken speed a little in breasting the rise, but nevertheless he came up at a fair pace.

For all this Ned felt confident of his aim.

He evidently had his gun in readiness, and was no doubt a fair shot and a formidable antagonist.

In a few seconds more the car was almost abreast of his loophole, and he had a fair view of it.

With the speed of thought he sighted the unfortunate policeman, and pulled the trigger of the right hand barrel.

A bright flash seemed to leap out from the stone wall, there was a loud report echoed back by the hills, and the hapless policeman, toppling forward from his seat, pitched headlong from the car into the roadway.

He was stone dead.

The muzzle of the gun had been scarcely six feet from him when Ned pulled the trigger, and the swanshot had acted like a bullet, and knocked a regular hole in him.

Before the report had died away, Ned shifted his aim, and, levelling at Mr. Mountelare, pulled the second trigger.

But, instead of toppling him over in turn as he anticipated, he found quite a different result.

No flash burst from the barrel, no shot whizzed forth on his death-dealing errand.

The ruffian had been right, and Mr. Brennam wrong, as to the propitiously stowing away a loaded gun in a peat stock.

The charge in the left-hand barrel had somehow or other got damp, and the result was that the cap snapped, but that no explosion followed.

Mr. Mountelare realised the position directly the first shot was fired.
He had been living in hourly anticipation of such an occurrence for the past three months, and when it came it did not find him unprepared. He realised simultaneously the death of the policeman and Kelly's large quadriceps.

For ought he knew half-a-dozen assassins might be lurking behind the wall from which the shot had been fired with such fatal effect as regarded his companion.

Flight was the best and only thing. Hastily jamming down powder and slugs into the discharged gun, Kelly deliberately took aim at the unfortunate gentleman, and lodged a couple of slugs in his right arm, which, when struck, was in the act of gently applying the whip to the mare to increase her pace at this ugly corner of the road.

Immediately on hearing the report of the gun, and frightened by the flash, the animal springing forward, but not before the driver leaped from his seat, into a pistol in his left hand (having instantly seized a revolver which lay handy on the seat beside him), and, being a powerful and very active man, rushed for Kelly.

He felt his right arm was done for and helpless, and the blood oozing rather rapidly from the wound. He was perfectly collected, and was soon within a few yards of the would-be assassin, who, afraid of nothing on the earth or out of it, armed as he was, in the confidence of his great strength when he thought he would be a very feeble attack.

But when he saw Mr. Mountclare clear at a bound the space that separated them, pistol in hand, and felt the whip at his ear of the bullet that was discharged at his head, he made tracks to enable him to get another shot at his pursuer.

He soon put a respectable distance between himself and his enemy, at the same time succeeding in reloading his piece (which was not a breachloader) hastily, and without being able to ram down the charge. Having, as he now judged, sufficient power to kill, or at least disable, Mr. Mountclare, he calmly awaited the approach of his panting pursuer, into whose body he poured charge No. 2, but only inflicted flesh-wounds.

Astounded at the apparent unwounded condition of his enemy, and aware that he had a foe not easily shaken off, he clubbed his gun, and, striking the unfortunate man a powerful blow on the right ankle, brought him to the ground.

Before he was struck he unfortunately exclaimed—

"I'd swear to you, you scoundrel, amongst a million!"

Down came the sweeping blow, and no sooner was his prostrate than the barrel, wielded by the ruffian's powerful blow on the right ankle, brought him to the ground. Mr. Mountclare, he calmly awaited the approach of his panting pursuer, into whose body he poured charge No. 2, but only inflicted flesh-wounds.

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Astounded at the apparent unwounded condition of his enemy, and aware that he had a foe not easily shaken off, he clubbed his gun, and, striking the unfortunate man a powerful blow on the right ankle, brought him to the ground.
But of course this journey he began to realise a very unpleasant fact. He was no longer his own master. He was nothing more nor less than the bond slave of the Fenian Brotherhood, since he bad had to bail where they decided and to journey as they wished.

To a man accustomed as he was to the widest possible personal liberty, the mere suspicion of a chain was irritating in the extreme. This circumstance and the climate combined to render him extremely savage and discontented.

"I've had about enough of this beastly country," he soliloquised. "It's nothing but living in a marsh. All the contended drizzle, drizzle, all day long is enough to turn a man's blood to water. The sun, when it does shine, is like a tallow-tap in a scooped-out turd. Blowed if I wouldn't do six months on the mill than stop here for half that time. I'll hook it. I'm not going to be shunted about all over the country like a bag of wool. If these notes think they're going to have me as a bull to call their own, they'll find out their mistake before long."

But he found that to get clear of the toils into which he had thrust himself was no easy matter. He soon realised that every movement he made was watched, and that every action he took was marked down too. He must hold himself in readiness to do his duty to the cause at any moment's notice and without hesitation.

He was also given to understand that he was under surveillance like the rest, and that the slightest suspicion of his loyalty would be followed by deadly vengeance. This turned his blood to gold, and he resolved, not only to put the ocean between himself and the brotherhood, but to sell the lot, if he could make anything out of the sale.

The reader can imagine the fury, and, at the same time, the consternation, the stranded rascal felt. He guessed at once the bird had flown, and that he was powerless. He was a man of action. Money he must have, and only one way remained open to him to accomplish that end.

He quickly made up his mind.

One fine morning he presented himself at the Castle and demanded an interview with the secretary.

After half-a-dozen understrappers had tried, firstly to choke him off altogether, secondly to snub him into impudence, and thirdly to learn all about the business that brought him there, he was at length admitted to the presence of the official he desired to see.

As soon as he had brushed the subject of his visit, the secretary put on the bland official smile in use in such cases.

"My good fellow," he began, in a patronising manner, "I can assure you that you are rather late in the day. We have already been placed in possession of full details of the Fenian agitation." The other smiled and nodded assent.

"But suppose, mind I only say suppose, " answered the secretary, with a smile, "that we do not care to part with a gentleman possessed of such very valuable information as you claim to be?"

"You mean you'll clap me in quod, eh? unless I'll speak out; is that it?" cried Ned.

"Precisely."

"Well, then, you'd have to keep me here till I rotted, before you'd get a word out of me."

The secretary saw that such was the case; he also knew that if he carried his threat into execution, he would effectively stop all future sources of information from the class to which his informant belonged—and thus stop up all sources of information from the best quarters—and to which the Government was already indebted for many important particulars of the plot they desired to unravel.

"Well, sir, " he remarked with his most official air, "it may be as well, after all, to entertain your application."

"You say you are in possession of certain information of great importance, which you are willing to impart for a consideration, namely, the sum of one hundred pounds."

"I think if you will show me you are in a position to give the information you promise, that I can recommend the payment of the sum you wish, " said the secretary.

Ned saw through his game.

"Oh! you have, have you? " he replied. " Then why don't you go and cop the blessed lot?"

"There are reasons of State which it is quite impossible to disclose here, " said the secretary, with a dignified wave of his hand.

"What are you offering those rewards for, then if you know all about it? Perhaps you know, too, that you are spotted, and that your governor is marked down too? " said Kelly, with cool audacity.

The official looked somewhat scared, as he knew the brotherhood would hesitate very little to carry out such a purpose if practicable.

Having already, from other sources, the thread of the conspiracy in his hands, he was able, by adroit questions, to discover that Kelly was behind the scenes, he listened to the tempter with more interest.

"Look here, " said Ned, "you say you know all about the Fenian business. Well, I dar'say you've had a lot of peddling little sneaks come to you and offer to tell you that, and not the other for a price."

The other smiled and nodded assent.

"But did any one of 'em name the day next week that's been fixed for cutting your throat and that of every other man in this old building? " retorted Ned, with an earnestness that went far to convince the other of his sincerity.

"Perhaps you had better explain yourself a little more fully, " observed the secretary.

"Very well, in the first place there's a plot to seize on this place."

"We knew that already—that's no news."

"But you don't know when or how it is to come off, or who are to take part in it. Now let us come to the point. For a hundred pounds cash down and a free passage to the colonies I'll put you in the way to bag the whole lot—say half that time. I'll hook it. I'm not going to be shunted about all over the country like a bag of wool. If these notes think they're going to have me as a bull to call their own, they'll find out their mistake before long."

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"You say you are in possession of certain information of great importance, which you are willing to impart for a consideration, namely, the sum of one hundred pounds."

"In gold, mind, " broke in Ned. " None of your cheques. My good fellow, " he began, in a patronising manner, "I can assure you that you are rather late in the day. We have already been placed in possession of full details of the Fenian agitation."

Ned saw through his game.

"Oh! you have, have you? " he replied. " Then why don't you go and cop the blessed lot?"

"There are reasons of State which it is quite impossible to disclose here, " said the secretary, with a dignified wave of his hand.
The money having been handed over, for Kelly refused to open his lips till that had been done, Ned proceeded to unfold the plot then in progress for the seizure of the castle.

Of the fact of such a plot having been formed, most people were aware, though the exact circumstances under which it was revealed to Government have hitherto been kept a secret.

At that time the political situation rendered it necessary, before all things, that matters should be kept as quiet as possible in Ireland.

It was a knowledge of this kind of forbearance that encouraged the Fenians to go as far as they did.

It was only at their direct extremity that anything like decisive measures were taken against them.

In fact, even when in possession of the information given by Kelly they hesitated about making full use of it.

Political trials of any kind are unpopular.

They contented themselves, therefore, with taking measures to secure the castle from attack, and even went so far as to warn the intending rebels a few days later, that their plot was found out.

There was little need of this latter step, however.

The excitement prevailing amongst the officials, the coming and going of messengers, the doubling of sentinels, and the hasty convocation of the authorities, were sufficient warning to the Fenian leaders that something was up.

By means of their spies they learnt, that without a doubt, they had been betrayed, though by whom was at that a profound mystery.

At length the fact of Ned's visit to the castle became known to them.

The fact was, that one of the castle servants, a red-hot Fenian, had seen Kelly call several times at the Chief Secretary's office, and communicated that fact to the conspirators.

They were now resolved to take summary vengeance upon him for his treachery.

The task of putting him quietly out of the way was at once delegated to a member of the brotherhood.

But when he proceeded to the quarters occupied by Kelly in order to learn the most feasible way of setting about the task, he found the bird had flown.

Ned had seen quite enough of the Fenians to know the danger to which he was exposing himself by betraying them.

He resolved, therefore, to clear out from Dublin directly he had completed his revelations.

On quitting the castle with his blood-money, he had returned to his lodgings.

After stowing away the cash in a belt which he had bought on the way, he buckled this round him, packed up his traps, and that same evening went on board the Lady Clive, bound for London, there being no chance just then of a direct passage from Dublin to the colonies.

It did not take long for the Fenians to find this out, and the boat that left the following night for Holyhead, bore with it a dwarfish-looking, red-headed fellow, answering to the name of Mike Hefferman, to whom the task of avenging them on Kelly had been entrusted.

CHAPTER CXLIII.

POSED ON BOTH SIDES.

The reasons that prompted Ned to take the boat to London, instead of proceeding thither by way of that conjunction of public-house, and dissenting-chapels, known as the town of Holyhead, were two in number.

He judged that if any of his late friends wished to make enquiries as to his destination, they would be less likely to obtain any travelling requisitions, and was never opened by him.

He profited by the old fellow's absence from the cabin to lift it, and was at once struck by its weight.

He tried to get in conversation with the owner, but did not succeed very well, for the stranger was, to Ned's idea, a "dry old stick," and was not inclined to chum with such a rough and ready style of customer as the bushranger.

In course of the day, he heard the stranger mentioning, in the course of conversation, that he always insured his luggage, which struck Ned as somewhat singular, unless there was something more than mere wearing-apparel to insure. It increased his suspicions that the black bag was valuable.

He resolved that he and that bag should be better acquainted, but the question was how to manage it.

The old man evidently kept a close watch over his property, and had even gone so far as to ask the steward to have any eye to it.

It was locked too, though Ned judged that it would be easy enough to cut it open with a knife, provided he could find the key to open the mechanism with its padlock.

He puzzled in his mind as to whether there was any chance of slipping ashore with it at any of the places at which the boat stopped on her way to London, but he could not hit upon one.

Especially as he noticed that the old fellow was on the alert, and that there would be little prospect of quitting the boat with the bag unnoticed.

They had touched at Falmouth and were nearing Plymouth when he his upon the germ of a plan.

He went down into the main cabin, and then passed into the smaller one in which was his berth, leaving the door open on purpose, so that if the steward chose to look in he would see that he was not up to any tricks.

Then he sat down, and for about ten minutes stared his hardest at the bag.

It was as though he desired to imprint a mental photograph of it on his mind, and such was his object.

When he felt certain that the shape and size were stamped upon his memory, he rose and left the cabin.

On reaching Plymouth, where a stay of several hours was made, he went on shore and visited several outfitting shops in succession.

It was some time before he could get what he wanted, but at last he became the owner of a bag in all respects like the one on board.

But this did not satisfy him.

He seemed to have a decided fancy for bags, for at another establishment he purchased the largest carpet bag he could find.

In this he placed the first one he had bought, together with several articles of ironmongery, small but weighty, of which he had also become the proprietor.

He then returned on board, and slipping down into the cabin again, proceeded to rub and discolor the new bag until it was an exact copy of the one belonging to the stranger.

He then placed the articles of ironmongery in it, and stuffed it over with old newspapers and odd articles of wearing apparel, till it was a tolerably exact reproduction of the other, as regarded size and weight.

Then he replaced it in the huge carpet-bag, and waited till the filling time arrived to carry out his plan.

"This fancy will be a pretty nest job," he thought; "the old fellow would not be so precocious anxious about it unless it was something more worth laying hands on."

Run old cubby he is, "Blessed if I can make out his lingo He was jabbering away about 'talks' and 'sacks,' I'm sure I caught something about bracelets and necklaces, too."
The next halting-place was Southampton, but this did not quite suit Ned’s plans. Portsmouth, at which they would also stop, was close at hand, and if he discovered his loss, the old man could land there.

But on leaving Portsmouth, the boat did not stop again till she reached London, so Ned resolved to carry out his plan at the seaport immortalised by Marryat. He told the steward that he should be delighted to go on shore at Portsmouth, instead of proceeding to London. When they got into harbour he stepped down to get his traps together.

In a moment he had opened the carpet-bag, pulled out the dummy, placed it in the old man’s berth, and thrust the coveted prize in its place.

No sooner was the transfer effected, than the steward sauntered in in a careless way. He leaned against the berth, and in a half unconscious way lifted the bag Ned had just placed there.

"By Gosh!" thought the latter; "it was a lucky thing I thought of making the weight all right!"

It was evident that the steward was keeping a watch over the old man’s property.

"Rum old cock; the ship that has that berth, steward," said Ned.

"Yes, sir," answered the steward, with great civility, for he could not help respecting a customer like Ned, who had drunk about three times as much as any other man on board, and had tipped him with colonial liberality. "Very respectable old gent, sir, though, and as rich as the Bank of England. Isn’t he?"

"Don’t know, I’m sure, sir; but he travels by our boat two or three times a year regular, and is always liberal to us, sir."

"I’m right," thought Kelly. "That’s what he is—the partner in a jewellery firm."

After bidding the steward good day, Ned made his way to shore, having taken care to delay doing so till just before the ship resumed her journey.

His luggage only consisted of a small portmanteau in addition to the carpet-bag.

He consigned the former to a porter to carry, but retained the latter in his hand.

The custom-house people merely asked him if he had anything liable to pay duty, but did not trouble to examine his luggage.

Having engaged a fly, he was driven to the station, and found that a train was on the point of starting for London, and that, to his great satisfaction, it was an express.

He tipped the guard, and, with his precious bag, was soon seated in a first-class compartment, and flying towards the metropolis at full speed.

By this time he felt sure that the Lady Olive was well on her way, and that even if the old fellow he had plundered discovered his loss, he would have great difficulty in getting on shore.

Ned felt in a great good humour.

In his own opinion, he had done the little trick very neatly and cleverly, and he rather began to look on the bag in the light of the reward of merit.

"Now," he mused, "I’ll just overhaul this little collection, whatever it is."

There was no prospect of the train stopping for at least three-quarters of an hour, so he had plenty of time for his delightful task.

He opened the carpet bag, and drew forth the other with due deliberation.

He posed it for a moment in his hand.

"It’s jolly heavy," he muttered, approvingly. "Even if they’re only gold takings inside, they ought to be worth a good lot. They must be, or the old buffer would never have looked after them so sharp. How his blooming old chops will fall when he goes to open the bag I left him, and finds all his swag changed into flatirons and trivets."

And Ned broke into a roar of laughter at the picture he thus conjured up.

The bag was locked, but this offered no impediment.

Pulling out his knife, he opened it, and cut a gash right along the side of his prize.

Into this he thrust his hand, and pulled out an object carefully enveloped in soft white tissue paper.

It was evidently of metal.

Carefully he undid it.

To his amazement, instead of some article wrought in gold or silver, what to him appeared a shapeless lump of dingy metal, "most eaten away by corrosion, made its appearance."

Ned was dumbfounded.

In swift succession he pulled out half-a-dozen packages of different sizes, and undid them.

The result was in every case the same.

The objects revealed were of different shapes and sizes, and in various stages of dilapidation, but one and all appeared to be composed of the same dingy corroded metal.

The bulk of them were to him mere shapeless lumps, but in one or two he fancied he could trace a faint resemblance to such ornaments as some of the savages he had met in his wanderings had worn.

Rapidly he emptied the bag in the hope of perhaps finding a grain of wheat in all this chaff but in this he was disappointed.

(To be continued.)

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Delilah, or the Little House in Piccadilly.

Kate Hamilton.
Agnes Willoughby.
The Soiled Dove.
Skittles in Paris, a Biography of a Fascinating Woman.

Formosa, the Life of a Beautiful Woman.
The Beautiful Demon.
Revelations of a Lady Detective.
The Lady with the Camellias.
Paris Life at Twenty.
NED KELLY: IRONCLAD BUSHRANGER.

It is well known that for many years Ned Kelly had made himself notorious by a series of crimes wholly incompatible with the civilisation of the nineteenth century. Ned Kelly's celebrated steed, Marco Polo, is as well known at the Australasian as Dick Turpin's Black Bess in these islands. — Telegraph, 7th July, 1881.

It is notorious that the robbery of Mr. Steward's corpse was mainly performed by the assistance of Ned Kelly's blackhorse, Marco Polo, and his celebrated black horse, Marco Polo, will ever live in the recollection of the Australian public. The deeds of Dick Turpin, and the performances of Black Bess, are tame beside those of 'Ned and his 'Na' in addition to which Ned's history is true, and Turpin's is pure fiction. — Press, July.

CHAPTER CXCII.—Continued.

Then he relieved his feelings by swearing a string of oaths, that almost splintered the window-panes.

"By —, I was dreaming just now at the thought of the old fellow's face when he set eyes on my flat-irons. The laugh would be on his side if he could only spot my being sold over his slated, rotten verdigris." Ned, however, was quite wrong in this conjecture. The gentleman in question was a very earnest and very wealthy antiquarian.

He took a great interest in what is known as the Bronze Periods, and his collection of weapons, utensils, and ornaments belonging to that epoch was one of the most extensive in the United Kingdom.

Hearing that an extensive "find" had lately been made in Ireland, he had hastened to secure it at great expense, and had supplemented it with several other purchases.

In addition to the sceax and torques, that to Ned had sounded as "sacks and talks," there were celts axe and spear heads, sword blades, armlets, necklaces, brooches, shields, bosses, and numerous similar objects which it required all the enthusiastic zeal and wonderfully credulous perception of an antiquary to identify.

No doubt there were a few bits of modern copper coinage and the like mixed up with the lot.

Nevertheless the entire collection was one which an appreciator of such things would almost go down on his knees and worship.

Only Ned was not at all an appreciator of such things, which to him were simply dirty bits of metal. Gathering the lot together, he hurled them by handfuls out of the window.

The train at that moment was passing a range of disused gravel pits, into which most of the relics pitched. Here the bulk of them were discovered scattered some months afterwards, and formed the staple for several papers read at archeological societies, meetings in which its conclusion was established that an extensive settlement must have existed on the spot during the bronze period.

The bag was also thrown out, and was appropriated by a thieving farm-labourer, who got his wife to sew up the hole in it.

This accomplished, Ned relieved his feelings by another burst of highly seasoned adjectives. When he had done to be hit his pipe and smoked doggedly till he arrived at Waterloo Station.

CHAPTER CXCIII.

AN AVENGER ON THE TRAIL.

Ned took up his quarters in a respectable private hotel in a street off the Strand.

He resolved to "play possum," a bit.

The recollection of his late exploits in London, was, he guessed, pretty fresh in the recollection of the police, and he resolved to avoid appearing in any of his former haunts.

Kit had gone to sea again, and Jess, who had been released after Nell's escape from captivity in consequence of there being no case against her, returned to the colonies.

As to Peace, Ned did not care about renewing his connection with that sentimentious scoundrel, and he judged it prudent not to hunt up any of the gambling set into which he had been introduced by Austin.

Time therefore hung a little heavy on his hands in the evenings.

He did not like to sail by the P. & O. boats, but made enquiries as to when a sailing ship would leave for Australia.

He found that none would clear out of dock for at least four or five days, and that the first to sail was bound for the little frequented port of Perth, on the Swan river in Western Australia.

He was quite ignorant of this district, but thought he should have no difficulty in getting on to Adelaide or Sydney from there, so took his passage on board her.

He was pretty busy for the next day or so in buying a small outfit for the voyage, but his evenings were dull.

All company was, in his mind, pretty much alike, provided there was a certain amount of noise, fun, and liquor; so he took to visiting the minor music halls and to drinking at a public till closing time.

Although his chief anxiety was to keep out of the ken of the police, he was equally desirous of evading any contact with his recent acquaintances, the Fenians.

Hence he shunned those establishments where the Irish element was likely to muster to the fore.

On the morning before that fixed for his departure, the servant mentioned to him that, during his absence the evening before, a gentleman, who had declined to have any name, had called to see him.

He did not like this; but the morning passed without anything sensational happening.

Towards noon he walked forth, having taken it into his head to visit the Crystal Palace, where a popular play was to take place, and where, if "wanted," the police would scarcely look for him.

As he passed up his street into the Strand, he noticed a little, cross-built, ugly-looking fellow with red hair, lounging on the other side of the way, but paid no further attention to him.

On reaching the Strand, he hailed a hansom to take him to Ludgate Station.

If he had thought of looking round he would have seen the stranger get into another and follow him.

The train was very full, and he had some difficulty in getting a place.

At the Palace, too, not only did he pass the day in the thick of the crowd, but happened to run against some men whose acquaintance he had made when in London before, and to whom he stuck throughout the day standing drinks with a freedom that charmed them.

Once or twice he was seized with the impression that someone was watching him, and, glancing round, caught sight of a pair of eyes glaring at him from behind a pillar.

However, he soon succeeded in shaking off this impression.

His friends, as evening drew on, closed round him like
a body-guard, and it was decided that they should all return to town and finish the evening together.

Here again, Ned could not help fancying that someone was observing all his movements, nor was he mistaken.

The man Heffernan, to whom had been entrusted the mission of avenging Ned's betrayal of the Fenian plot, was indeed on his track.

It was an emissary of Li who had called the night before at Ned's residence, when the Fenians had only just succeeded in discovering; for his dodge of leaving the boat at Portsmouth, had for the time thrown the Fenian police quite off his track.

Indeed, had he not been accidentally spotted in the streets of London by a Fenian acquainted with his person, who tracked him home, and informed Heffernan of his whereabouts, he would have probably got out of the country unknown to any of them.

Heffernan's agent had learnt from the people at Kelly's hotel that he was preparing to leave immediately, and, therefore, there was no time to be lost.

Accordingly, he set himself to follow Neil like his shadow.

But the entire day had passed without his being able to get the chance he sought.

Ned was either surrounded by people, or mixed up in a crowd.

As the time sped on, Heffernan grew more and more desperate as to the feasibility of his attempt.

He was one of those reckless fanatics, who when worked up to a certain pitch, count life as nothing compared to the accomplishment of the object on which their souls are set.

He had sworn to slay Ned, and he had made up his mind to do this, even if his own life paid the forfeit.

Escape was a secondary consideration.

Ned had gone to the Hoxton theatre, and taken his place in the back of the pit, to escape as much as possible, general observation.

Heffernan was not far off.

His hand thrust into his breast, gripped the hilt of a long, double-edged knife, ground to the sharpness of a razor, with which he had armed himself in preference to firearms, as being likely to do the job without making a noise.

He left the theatre shortly before the fall of the curtain, and took up his position in the passage amongst the crowd who were pouring out from the pit.

The crowd was a dense one, and being a little man he had great difficulty in trying to work his way through it towards Ned.

Just too, as he was getting near him, a man who had been badgering in several drinks between the acts, pushed forward and completely cut off his approach from his victim.

Kelly noticed him, however, and as he left the theatre the recollection of having seen the same face in the morning crossed his mind.

Heffernan resolved to follow and do his work without a witness.

Kelly strode along at a brisk pace with his enemy following stealthily in his rear.

**CHAPTER CXCIV.**

**NED SETTLES THE FENIAN EMISSARY.**

Their route at first, however, lay along a thoroughfare so lively and well-lighted, that Heffernan resolved to defer striking his blow till a somewhat fairer opportunity presented itself.

He did not want to be checked in his work by the interference of some officious bystander.

Suddenly Ned turned into a huge gin-palace, the lavishly decorated bar of which was blaring with light.

Heffernan followed him.

A very motley lot of individuals were collected in front of the lower portals could, behind which half a dozen sternly, whilst shirt-sleeved bartenders were huddled at work attending to the wants of their numerous customers.

These chiefly consisted of costermongers, laborers, small traders and the like, with a sprinkling of thieves and ruffians.

Ned shouldered his way to the bar and called for a drink.

His appearance being rather better than that of many present, drew some attention from the cudging portion of the assembly.

A couple, all tongue and wooden leg, like the sign of the Maggie and Stump, began badgering him in a bawdy, husky voice, sounding like chronic-currant, but in reality due to the "blue ruin," to "buy a box o' lights."

Another old wretch whose scalp, save for three or four long grey hairs on the top of it, was smooth as a new-born baby's, and whose skeleton frame was so wrapped in a cold brown overcoat which looked as if at some former period it had seen hard service on a scarecrow in a cornfield, requested to be refreshed at his expense.

Ned, being in a reckless, generous humour, consented with this modest request, and extended his hospitality to several others of the company, who gathered around him in a way which prevented Heffernan from getting near him.

He only bided his time, however.

Ned liked to be the king of the company, and, when "half-cock," was apt at times to "blow" somewhat.

He took it into his head to extol the beauties of colonial life, and sketched Australia as a land overflowing, if not with milk and honey, at least with rum and mutton.

His hearers listened with some attention, for there are no people sharper to judge a man than the lower classes in London, and they could see that, though generally inclined, he was not a "mug."

"Are the wages good there?" inquired a respectable mechanic.

"Good! I believe you. A chap like you could get a pound a day easily."

"What's the use of giving a man a pound a day if he won't work for it?" said a one-eyed coxer, with a grin, a remark which caused the other to toy with a peculiar knife.

"That's a lode, sor!" he exclaimed in aloud voice.

"A fifty bog-hole full of squabbling serine living is eyes, and only fit to be dug in the ground to make their own potato patches with."

This gave a chance, for which Heffernan was waiting.

"Who are yer a-calling ' boss-eye '?" retorted the other.

"Some coves with one eye can see a sight better than them as has two."

"Just so," remarked another of the company, "we all know as how you can spot a likely-looking old lady or gentleman with half an eye, and keep the other half for the super as is a watching out."

From Australia Ned turned his attention to Ireland, the climate and the loss of his money combined having given him a deep grudge against that country, despite his descent.

He wound up a scathing denunciation of it by calling it—

"A filthy bog-hole full of squabbling native villains in eyes, and only fit to be dug in the ground to make their own potato patches with."

This gave a chance, for which Heffernan was waiting.

"That's a lot, sor!" he exclaimed in a loud voice, which at once attracted Kelly's notice.

"Heave!" cried Ned. "Here's one of the bozos. Who are you, you pig-faced bog-trotter?"

"Only an Oirishman, sor, who's not going to say his "blue ruin," to "buy a box o' lights."

"Heffernan had gained a position in front of Ned, and gave a wave of his arms to keep the rest of those around from crowding in on him.

"It's a fairer, sor, that ye are!" he continued, with the evident intention of provoking Ned to some commencement of violence, in order to find an excuse for using his knife.
and seeing that if he persisted in kicking up a noise he would get himself turned out of the house, he resolved to end the matter at all risks.

They gave Kelly up for lost.

Ned had placed the hundred sovereigns received from the Government in a broad belt buckled round the lower part of his body, and divided into a number of little compartments, each filled with coin. The police were sent for, and Heffernan was conveyed to the nearest hospital, where the house surgeon pronounced life extinct. The solution of the mystery was a very simple one.

**CHAPTER CXCV.**

**NED IN LONDON HAS THE LUCK OF LEFKOY AT BRISTON WITH THE POLICE.**

Ned thought that the sooner he cleared out of London after this little incident the better. However, the adventures of the night were not yet over for him, and he was destined to undergo a peril as dangerous as the one from which he had so luckily escaped.

On quitting the public-house he had walked sharply along a little way, and turned down the nearest side street. Then, after making a detour, he had regained a main thoroughfare, and made his way homewards. By this time the public-houses were just closing, and a number of drunken people, disaggregated from them, were beginning to reel about the streets, as is customary.

Ned could not help turning into one of them again to obtain a final glass. He seemed predetermined to get into rows that night. A strong-built, brawny-legged, bull-necked fellow, in sporting-cut twill suit, with a pot-hat on his head, a silk scarf, fastened by a huge horse-shoe pin, round his neck, and a big cigar in his mouth, was standing in the bar. He was one of that peculiar class who earn their living by 'travelling the meetings,' or, in other words, attending races throughout the country.

He was ostentatiously, a bookmaker, but really picked up a livelihood by 'welshing,' 'lumbering,' 'brief snatching,' and the like pursuits.
Like all his kidney, he could use his hands a bit, and was always ready to "take it out" of any "mug" who might cut up rough after being "gone through." He happened to be in a very bad temper on the evening on which Ned for the first time set eyes on him. A very promising little "plant," in which he was especially interested, had gone wrong.

He was just in that state of mind in which a man is ready to quarrel with his own shadow for following him about. He hardly noticed Ned's entry into the little compartment labelled "private bar," of which he was the sole occupant, and seemed lost in bitter meditation.

"What are you shoving for?" exclaimed the latter, jerking his arm in such a fashion that his elbow struck its contents slap into the other's face.

"What is it?" replied one of those on duty. "Case of murder up at the Red Lion, — Street," said a constable, entering the corridor into which the cell opened.

"Just look out what you're up to!" replied Ned. And raising his glass as he spoke, he sent the rest of its contents slap into the other's face.

Ned met him with a straight left-hander, shot out with all his kidney, he could use his hands a bit, and when he is clever he is a rogue, were it not for the struggle that checked him.

The landlord charged Ned with creating a disturbance in his house, and asked the police to remove him.

Accordingly he quietly submitted to be taken into custody.

But when Ned turned to make his exit he was most disagreeably surprised. A sergeant of police and a couple of constables were just making their appearance at the door leading into the next of these divisions.

They had looked in presumably to see that the house was being cleared, but in reality to have a sly drink just before closing time.

The landlord would probably have preferred no scandal, at all, but, seeing he was in for it, played a virtuous part.

The bookmaker was a constant and a very good customer, whilst Ned was a stranger.

Consequently, he felt bound to take the former's part in the difficulty, since he was for the moment quite unable to take it himself, being stretched as limp as a damp rag amongst the sawdust on the floor.

The landlord charged Ned with creating a disturbance in his house, and asked the police to remove him.

But when Ned turned to make his exit he was most disagreeably surprised.
"Man had his head smashed with a quart pot."

"Ah! Any particulars?"

"Seems the other fellow had been abusing frien- dly, and that he stuck a knife into him, and got a box over the head, that smashed his skull in for his trouble."

"Anything known about the fellow who did it?"

"As far as can be made out, he was a big man, with a beard."

"An Irish landlord, riled because he can't get any rent," said the other, with a laugh.

"Perhaps. But the beggar's pretty well sure to be spotted, for the Paddy almost tipped him up before he said a word."

"Ah! then we're pretty sure to nail him. What time did it happen?"

"A little before closing time."

"Why, we've got something of the same kind, only not so hot, in there," said the other, indicating the cell occupied by Ned. "It's another Irishman whose been scavenging in a pub close handy, and has bashed up a cross-cove."

"Who?"

"Jerry George, the washer; so for once he's found the boot on the other leg. The sergeant knew him, and I don't think he'd have entered the cell that gave him the doing once, if it hadn't been that old Crooksey, the landlord, charged him."

This news was pleasant in the extreme to Ned.

It was evident, as he had thought, that the last place in the world where the police would dream of looking for Heffernan's murderer, was their own cells.

It was almost, if not quite, as good as an alibi.

He also felt perfectly safe in the results of his appearance before the magistrate in the morning.

As to any one having the least suspicion of his identity with Ned Kelly, the bushranger, he was quite at ease on that score.

The next morning Ned was allowed to send out for some breakfast, after paraking of which he was removed to the police-court, with the remainder of the night-charges.

Don't see your man amongst this lot, eh, Hackett?" observed one of the police to a somewhat stupid-looking member of the force who was waiting to be called.

"No," answered Hackett, somewhat sulkily, whilst a grin spread over the face of several of his comrades.

"Hackett, no Ned subsequently learnt, had had a bit of experience, of which he was not fond of talking about, and which he regretted very much.

The preceding winter he had been on duty in Oxford-street, and was passing a furri'er's, when he noticed a light burning through the chinks in the shutters.

"Thinking it not quite right he rapped.

"Is that you, policeman?" said a voice within.

"Yes," answered Hackett.

"All right, it's only me. Cold outside, isn't it?"

"I'm going to get the fire to light."

Good-night?"

Hackett said good-night, and passed on.

On his next round he noticed the light still burning.

It did not seem right, and he banged at the door again.

"Hallo, is it you, policeman?" said the voice within.

"Yes."

"All right. Will you step inside a minute and warm yourself? It must be a bitter night outside."

The door was opened, and Hackett stepped into the shop, the only inmate of which was a very respectable-looking man with a long apron on.

"Come up to the fire. Excuse me a minute."

"Cold outside and dull. I've got a pretty job on; here's a lot of winter stocking just come in, and it must be looked through and sorted over at once, for it looks as if the moth had got into some of the packages. Will you have a drink?"

And he procured a bottle and glass.

Hackett had a drink, and having wiped his lips and given his hands a rub before the fire, reached his host, satisfied that all was right at the furrier's.

Morning; however, altered his opinion.

On the shop boy coming the next morning to take down the shutters, it was found that a few pieces had been pilfered to the value of thousands of pounds' worth of goods, and though Hackett had carried away an impression on his mind of the clever rascal who had done him, he had never set eyes on him in the flesh since.

As he said, "It was the beggar's tricks in pilfering of off fire that put me on the scent."

The night charges were disposed of in quick succession, and on Ned being placed before the magistrate the result proved to be as he had anticipated.

The landlord did not appear in support of the charge, and Mr. Jerry George took care not to show his nose in court.

Consequently, after the magistrate had heard the statement of the police, he read Ned, whose name of Donnelly had stamped him in his opinion as a native of the Emerald Isle, one of those lectures that all policemen-magistrates seem to think it their duty to deliver.

In set terms he gravely informed Ned that he was in some degree inclined to make allowance for him as a stranger, coming from a portion of the Queen's dominions only too unhappily known from the frequent recurrences of broils.

Ned had not the slightest notion what he meant, but had the good sense to hold his tongue.

"It is only too apparent," continued his worship, "that you, despite your respectable appearance, are imbued from your associations doubtless with that anarchical and turbulent spirit that has wrought such havoc on the other side of St. George's Channel. Doubtless such conduct of yours would be held as venial there. But in London such brawling cannot be for a moment tolerated, and to mark my opinion of it, and taking into consideration that, from your apparent station in life, you seem a person well able to pay a fine, I feel bound to inflict upon you no less a penalty——."

Here he made a little curtsey again.

"By all that's blue," thought Ned, "he could not pile it on hotter if he was going to put on the black cap! What an old scorcher! It looks as if he's going to quod me after all."

"That of fining you twenty shillings," continued his worship blandly.

"Next case," said the clerk, and Ned, after parting with a sovereign, was again a free man.

He walked a short distance from the court, jumped into a cab, drove to his lodgings, collected his traps, paid his bill, and then proceeded to the docks.

He was in ample time, since the ship he had taken his passage in did not clear out till the afternoon.

Once on board he was quite safe; and as the vessel dropped down the river industriously in a grim chuckle at the police, who, having actually had Ned Kelly red-handed in their custody, had suffered him to slip through their fingers, as their Brighton conference did Lefroy.

CHAPTER CXCVI.

HOW TO CURE SCANDAL-MONGERS.

In embarking on board the Atalanta for Perth, Ned had been moved by two reasons.

"By all that's blue," thought Ned, "he could not pile it on hotter if he was going to put on the black cap! What an old scorcher! It looks as if he's going to quod me after all."

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The best that he could get was the first ship leaving for the Australian colonies—and the other, that her part of destination was one at which there was little chance of his being recognised on landing.

Like many royal personages, Ned had a fancy for travel vignettes.

He had gone so far as to book his passage under the prosaic name of Brown.

He had also resolved to behave properly on board, so as to land at Perth with a good character from those who had sailed with him.
As his language was apt, when he got a little excited, to be more vigorous than elegant, he made up his mind to hold his tongue as much as possible, and acquired the reputation with those on board, of a decent, but rather taciturn, sort of fellow.

Indeed, one or two of them began to speculate as to who and what he was, and Ned, when they had been about a fortnight out, heard a gentleman named Cathcart—who was himself returning to the colony—observe to a companion:

"I'm certain I have seen our friend Brown before, but I can't for the life of me say where."

"Perhaps you are deceived by some likeness," answered Cathcart. "His name was Evans.

"No," insisted the other. "I am certain I have seen him. Like the royal family, I have a capital memory for faces. I can't quite make out when or where it was, but I'm certain that directly I got the clue I spotted him in a moment.

"I don't think the affair is worth troubling your head over," was the reply. "The best thing would be to ask Brown if he ever remembers meeting you, or whether there was any place he has visited at which you were likely to come across each other."

"No, no," replied Cathcart; "I don't think he's the man who would take much questioning. I have only got to wait a bit, I am sure one day a chance word will give me the clue I want.

"Do you," thought Ned to himself, as the pair strolled away from the spot where he had been an unseen listener to their conversation, "do you think Cathcart has got a notion of Evans, or is he taking this matter very seriously?"

From this time forward his guard on his tongue increased, and he was careful to abstain from drink and any great extent, lest under its influence he should be tempted to talk too freely.

He began to realize the German proverb, that "Speech is silver, but silence is golden."

When places that he knew, were mentioned before him, he was careful not to betray any acquaintance to them; and, whilst acknowledging he had been a bit of a traveller, studiously avoided mentioning he had been in the colonies. One day, when they were about six weeks out, a little celebration took place in the cabin in honour of some anniversary at which a wager of a case of champagne was laid.

The bet being decided, the wine was at once put on the table. Under its influence conversation grew brisk and Ned forgot his reserve.

He had become interested in a dispute between two of his neighbours as to the situation of a certain hotel in Sydney, and suddenly blurted out—

"Why, any fool knows it is on the right hand side of the street as you come up from the wharf."

On hearing this remark, Cathcart nudged his friend Evans.

"Our silent friend," he said, in a low tone, "has been in the colony. I guess if he only lets on a little more, I shall recollect where I have seen him."

"All right," said Evans. "I'll draw the badger."

After letting a certain time pass, so as not to excite suspicion, Evans purposely appealed to Ned on some other question connected with Sydney.

Ned saw that his former remark was an acknowledgement that he knew something of the place, and that it was too late to plead ignorance of it.

He therefore made the best of the job, and answered as briefly as he could with decency.

But Evans, not to be chucked off, began to chat with him about his travel; and thereupon ventured touching the colonists, and at last drew him out a little more, with the help of a glass or two.

Ned came out of his shell, and told a tale or two.

The conversation turned on horses, and the usual lot of lies as to wonderful distances crossed, and leaps made by the better steeds, were told.

"Well," said Ned, after one of the party had given the particulars of a jump, he was pleased to consider marvelous, "I recollect taking the creek at Tarramea, and that's about thirty-nine-and-twenty feet."

No sooner had the words escaped his mouth, than Evans felt Cathcart, who was sitting beside him, start, and softly murmur—

"Tarramea!"

"Ay," went on Ned, slightly excited from having drank abroad than usual; "and there was only one beggar that followed me."

"What was it," inquired one of the company, "a steeplechase?"

"Yes," answered Ned, who had now lost his prudence and was indulging in that reckless way of talking that had more than once brought him into trouble; "a match between me and a chap named Conquest."

The mugs slipped out.

Just as he had spoken these words he happened to cast a look towards Cathcart.

A sudden gleam of recognition, which the latter could not conceal, lit up his countenance, which became flushed and anxious.

Ned felt that he had let out too much for prudence.

Cathcart had, as it happened, been one of those present on the occasion on which Ned had cleared the creek at Tarrambea, after riding up to the station, disguised as a mounted policeman, and shooting McPherson.

Ned's words had supplied the missing link in his memory, and he now felt certain of his identity with the bushranger, for whose reward such a large sum had been offered by the authorities.

He was in such a state of excitement, that he could scarcely contain himself.

A fortune was in view.

Cathcart was a greedy man, and his thoughts at once turned to this reward, and to the chances of securing it all to himself.

Here was independence in his grasp.

The thought set his heart beating with anticipated joy.

It might have been better for him if he had quietly imported his suspicions, or rather his convictions as to Ned's identity, to Captain Dunn, the commander of the Albatross.

But a twofold reason restrained him.

Ned was not only greedy, but suspicious.

In the first place Captain Dunn, he thought, might refuse to believe him, and even go so far as to acquaint Ned with his accusation in which case he felt sure the bushranger would find some means of avenging himself before the voyage was over.

Kelly instinctively felt that the man recognized him, but at all events had suspicions which might prove dangerous.

In the vessel he might either once arrest Ned on his own authority, clip him in irons and hand him over to the authorities, or profit by his position not to allow anybody to go on shore before himself, and on landing go straight to them, and, announcing that Kelly was on board, claim the reward for this information.

Cathcart resolved, therefore, to pretend ignorance of Ned.

When, in course of the evening, Evans said to him—

"I felt you nudge me; have you spotted the fellow?"

He answered in the negative, and added—

"I'll have to be careful to avoid giving him a chance of."
The heat was intense; 114 degrees in the cabin, and a dead calm.

Three days after the conversation noted he went down below and threw himself on a couch.

After a time he was left the sole inmate of the cabin, and his breathing announced that he was fast asleep.

A short interval elapsed, and the door of Ned's room was opened stealthily.

The bushranger, who had slipped into it just after dinner, stole cautiously forth in his stocking feet.

An opportunity for which he had been on the alert for three days past had presented itself.

As carefully as though stepping on egg-shells, he crossed the cabin floor, and approached the sleeper.

He glanced all around to make sure that there was no one about, and was satisfied on this point.

He could hear the steward busy in his pantry, but felt safe from interruption from that quarter.

Stepping over the prostrate form of Catheart, he drew from his pocket a small implement, which he held partly concealed.

His left hand was ready to fall on the sleeper's mouth, in case necessity arose.

A sharp movement on his part followed.

A faint sound, between a sob and a moan escaped from the lips of Catheart.

He moved slightly in a convulsive fashion, and a spasm of some kind shot across his features.

Then they resumed their former immobility. He lay perfectly still.

Ned savagely retreated to his state room, from which he again emerged, but this time with his boots on.

He passed through the cabin and gained the deck.

By-and-by one or two of the passengers descended, and the steward began to make preparations for tea.

The noise failed to arouse Catheart.

Tea was got ready, but neither the noisy summons of the gong announcing it, nor the influx of those who floated in in response, awakened him.

"Hallo, Catheart," cried one of his friends.

"Hi! rouse up, man," said Evans, advancing to give him a shake.

No sooner had he laid his hand on the sleeper's arm than his face changed.

A look of bewilderment stole across it, as though he doubted the evidence of his own senses.

He shook the sleeper's arm a second time, but in a nervously hesitating fashion.

Then the look of astonishment changed to one of downright positive horror.

"Good heavens!" he gasped, "the man's dead! How sudden! It must be apoplexy.

A panic followed these words.

Some of the passengers shrank back horror-stricken, several ladies fainted, and the rest fled from the cabin, whilst a few of the bolder spirits, amongst whom was the captain, approached the sofa on which Catheart's figure lay.

The captain in turn placed his hand on the motionless figure before him.

"It's true," he exclaimed. "He's dead, sure enough."

The Atalanta was not an emigrant ship, and had not more than six or eight passengers on board in all, and did not carry a surgeon.

The captain, as was usual in such cases, acted as doctor, and in this case was possessed of a little more medical knowledge than the skipper, who went to sea with a medicine chest and a book of instructions, and who, finding that one of his crew developed symptoms, for which two spoonfuls from bottle No. 15 were prescribed, and being out that potter gave him one of No. 7 and one of No. 8, which he urged must amount to the same thing, and killed him as dead as a door-nail.

One of the passengers, too, had a smattering of surgery, and he at once confirmed the captain's assertion as regarded Catheart.
The cabin was at once cleared, and the captain and the chief officer, aided by the passenger, proceeded to make an examination of the corpse.

The cause of death was a perfect mystery. The face was relaxed, and the features were hardly convulsed, and there was not the slightest external sign to excite suspicion that death had been other than natural.

The features were hardly convulsed, and there was not the slightest external sign to excite suspicion that death had been other than natural.

The steward and some of the passengers had noticed him lying there, but had thought he was asleep.

Kelly was amongst them, and stated that he had retired for a short time to his room, and that he had seen Catheart on the sofa, when passing through the cabin on his way to the deck.

The conclusion arrived at was that the unfortunate fellow must have succumbed to heart-disease or apoplexy.

As it was impossible to preserve his body till they made port—even if the sailors would have consented to such an arrangement—it was launched into the deep.

Fellow must have succumbed to heart-disease or apoplexy. With it went all hopes of the grim mystery ever being elucidated satisfactorily, for the instrument of death had preceded it, and was already lying at the bottom of the ocean.

Ned had cast it overboard, within a few minutes of the perpetration of his crime.

It consisted of a needle which he had stolen, unobserved and unscathed, from the sailmaker.

He had mounted it in a wooden handle, and plunged it in the ear of the sleeping man, and so into his brain.

There was no sign of violence, and nothing but a post-mortem examination of the head would have revealed the cause of death.

CHAPTER CVII.

AT HOME AGAIN.

A few days later the Atlantic east anchor at Fremouth, a passage on the coast of the Swan river, and on those of three or four others who were drizclling in the bar.
One of them even laughed right out, and the landlord's expression of astonishment changed to one of indignation as he said, with due gravity—

"Look here, man! I'm quite ready to serve a drink or a meal on condition; but you've come to the wrong shop for trying on any of that kind of chaff."

"What's your lay?" answered Ned, quite in a fog as to what the man was driving at—"I didn't ask you to help me to steal a horse, but to tell me where I can best begin the hunt."

"I reckon you're a new chump in these parts," observed one of the company, "Fresh from the Old Country, perhaps?"

"You're about right," answered Ned. "But before I went there I spent a few years Sydney side, and I can pick my way through the bush as well as a bushranger."

"And you really think of riding from here to the Murrambridge?"

"Why not?"

"Bravo! you seem a good plucked 'en; but do you know what you've got to get through, to find your way from here to Sydney?"

"No."

"Why, the Mallee Scrub?"

"The Mallee Scrub?"

"Do you know there's a belt of it a couple of hundred miles broad, running right across, and that no single man, however well-mounted, could struggle through it? There's neither grub for man nor horse, and no water."

"I'll tell you what there is, though," broke in another of the company, "there's a lot of warragal blacks, who'll have your kidney's out to grease their hair with, before you could say knife."

This was true.

The Mallee is a small species of Eucalyptus, from ten to fifteen feet high, growing together so closely as to just allow a horseman to make his way through it; and covering a district of several hundreds of miles, almost cutting off Western from Eastern Australia.

The dense scrub is, however, relieved by openings, which only serve to lure men who have once entered the labyrinth to destruction.

The sensation produced by being pent up in this dense scrub, able only to see the sky overhead, with no air circulating, and nothing visible but the same monstrous brown items that the traveller keeps pacing through hour after hour, is so intolerable, that the first glimpse of light showing an opening promising deliverance is hailed with joy.

It requires resolution few men possess, to resist the temptation and keep in due east, which if adhered to will at last bring the traveller out of the scrub, provided he only sticks to it long enough.

If a man turns inside to the south, and enters the plain which may be miles in circumference, or perhaps the front of a series of similar openings, he is safe to be tempted still further and further on into the heart of the wilderness; and, in this case, if his knowledge of the country is only looked to, his doom is sealed.

Again he enters the scrub, and again is tempted from it by the same fatal snare.

"That scrub's a caution and no mistake," said one of the party to Ned. "I once helped to look for a man lost in a patch, not more than fifteen miles in length by ten in breadth; and we found his body after the blacks had tracked him for scores of weary miles, not more than a mile and a half from the hut he had left ten days before, and from which he had never, at any time, been more than a few miles away."

Nor was the statement about the blacks exaggerated.

Amongst their customs there is none more deeply rooted than that of cutting out the kidneys of anyone they slaughter, and of using it instead of Rowland's Macassar.

Ned began to realise the responsibility of his projected attempt, and to cast about as to whether there was not another method of getting to his destination.

He soon found there was a chance of getting a passage in a small coaster to Adelaide, and of that he resolved to avail himself, and make his way from the capital of South Australia to the Murrambridge.

Before quitting Perth he purchased some garments of a style more suited to the character he intended to assume, which was that of a shearer.

This done, he embarked on board the coaster, and reached his destination without anything of moment happening during the voyage.

CHAPTER CXCVIII.

NED PUTS THE SADDLE ON THE RIGHT HORSE.

Marco Polo had been left in the charge of a Scotch squatter named M'Vittie, whose station was on the Murrambridge, at a place called Goombo. He was a man who had started as a shepherd on the very station which now belonged to him.

His first master had been a careless, thoughtless, happy-go-lucky chap, named Willoughby, who, after a somewhat go-lucky career in England, had realised the remants of a once large fortune, and had come out in the hope of retrieving his affairs.

At first he had done pretty well. He had a good run, and his sheep increased and multiplied in a very encouraging fashion, whilst the healthy open-air life he was leading made him feel ten years younger.

But after a time its monotony began to pall on him. He took to running down to Melbourne, or up to Sydney, whenever there was a race-meeting or any other kind of excitement on, and to dropping his money over bets or cards.

Gradually he became a confirmed gambler and sot.

His affairs became more and more involved, and their control drifted from his hands into those of M'Vittie, who had gradually risen from the position of shepherd to that of superintendent of the station.

Mr. Willoughby had several attacks of delirium tremens, during which he was nursed by M'Vittie.

At last, after a hard bout of drinking at Melbourne, to which he squandered and gambled away a large sum, he returned to his station—but only to die.

M'Vittie and an old but-keeper named Wilson were the only persons present at his death-bed.

After his death the former produced a number of documents, going to prove that for some long time past he had been, though nominally Mr. Willoughby's superintendent, in reality his partner, having, he alleged, begun by advancing him a sum of ready-money at a time when the deceased was in great need of it.

He also produced a will leaving him everything.

Mr. Willoughby had no relations in the colony whose claims might have been put forward, and, as all his outstanding debts were settled out of the estate, it blew over.

Ned, however, knew a little more of the transaction than did the general public.

The man Wilson, who had been a convict, was an old acquaintance of his, and one day let out to him in confidence that he and M'Vittie had made the will in question, and had got Willoughby to sign it and the other papers when in a state of intoxication and quite oblivious of his action. He also complained that M'Vittie had not acted on the square, that he got nothing. M'Vittie everything. While the latter was rich, he was as poor as a wild dog.

There was some astonishment expressed at this, but, as Mr. Willoughby had no relations in the colony whose claims might have been put forward, and, as all his outstanding debts were settled out of the estate, it blew over.

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A few weeks after he had made this revelation Wilson was found drowned in a water-hole.

How he got there there was no evidence to show, but Ned had a shrewd suspicion that he had been put out of the way by the bigger villain, who was his partner in crime.

He kept, however, this suspicion to himself, and merely hinted to M'Vittie that he knew some facts, the disclosure of which might prove very awkward to him.
It was this knowledge that had made the squatter willingly agree to take charge of Marco Polo in Kelly's absence.

Mr. Vittic was a tall, lean Scotsman, of about sixty, with a quaint, angular figure, a tanned face, and hair, the original sandy colour of which was now changed to that grizzly tint, stained a dirty grey russet.

He sat up, like Pease, for being one of the "men guilts.

But if there had been a kirk near he had no doubt there would have been an elder; but, for lack of this, he contented himself with invoking long prayers on all with whom he came in contact, especially his horses.

He professed an intense veneration for the "Saabbath," and devoted all his spare time on that day to what he styled "guidly meditation," but what was in reality quiet quelling as to the best way of getting the advantage of his neighbours in business.

Ned had resolved to make his way towards the Murray-bridge, by taking the river steamers up the Murray, and then saddle a strange horse until within reach of his destination, after which he could turn the animal loose, and no one be a bit the wiser. A bit of a rope often in England would be looked upon as a liberty.

It was evidently from the uniform of one of the mounted police.

He knew the free and easy habits of the district too.

"Fire away with it, then."" Why," answered the shepherd, "that's quite a yarn!" he said the shepherd, with a grin.

"What's your lay?" inquired the shepherd.

"No; but he insisted on having the hide and the saddle." "What did he want to meet the police for?"

He put on a half-shoemaker air.

The object in question lay on the floor about three yards off, and he could not at first make out what it was.

He glanced at it several times without caring to take the trouble to get up to examine it.

As he sat with his back against the wall of the hut and his pipe between his teeth, placidly smoking and digesting, his eye fell on some tiny object glittering in a ray of sun-light, streaming in through the half-closed door.

The object in question lay on the floor about three yards off, and he could not at first make out what it was.

He glanced at it several times without caring to take the trouble to get up to examine it.

At last when he had finished his pipe, his curiosity prevailed over laziness, and he rose, and approaching the little object, stooped down and picked it up.

It was not a nugget as he had half fancied, but simply a metal button.

He was about to send it spinning away out of the door, when he suddenly paused and examined it closely.

It was a uniform button, and this fact at once set him thinking, for like all men accustomed to hunt and be hunted, he had learned to attach importance to the merest trifles.

It was evidently from the uniform of one of the mounted police.

From its very position it had evidently only fallen a little time previously, or it would have got tramped into the floor or kicked on one side.

Hence it was evident that a mounted policeman had ridden at that hut a few hours before.

Now there was nothing very unusual in this, but Kelly could not help fancying that such a visit might possibly have some reference to matters interesting himself.

He went as far as to regard it as a warning.

"It proves these traps are loitering around in this quarter, and I must keep my eyes open in order not to tumble onto some of 'em," was his reflection.

He made up his mind, after a little consideration, to set out to search of the shepherd, inhabiting the hut, and to try and learn from him what the police were hunting for in the neighbourhood, if it were possible.

He started forth on this errand, and in a little time came across the shepherd who was sitting under a tree.

Ned pushed up to him and bid him good-day.

"Well, I'm precious glad to hear it. I've had to work blessed hard for my pile and I shouldn't like to have to hand it over, though it ain't much." "What's your lay?" inquired the shepherd.

"I'm on a shearing job."

"Oh! I thought you shearers were such blooming swellis that you never went about on shank's mare, but always on a bit of horseflesh."

An idea occurred to Ned.

Since he had seen the button in the hut he had come to the conclusion that it was necessary for him to get a horse at all costs as soon as possible, in case the police should come across him and oblige him to fly for his life.

He put on a half-shoemaker air.

"Well, to tell the truth, I started with one, but, like a blessed fool, I got drunk at the last township, and matched him against a grey yelding, a fellow was bragging about. We agreed to go three miles across country, owners up, the horses being stakes. I'd have won easily, though I rode two stone heavier than he did, if I'd been sober; but somehow I blundered at a bit of fallen timber, and the beast fell under me and broke his back."

"Well, if you lost the other fellow didn't gain much," said the shepherd, with a grin.

"No; but he insisted on having the hide and the saddle."

"That was smart."

"Yes; but I'm on the look-out for a horse. Have you got one to spare? I thought I saw one grazing as I came along?"

"Aye, that's the boss's mare. But she's dead lame."

"How's that?"

"He rode out to the hut yesterday to meet one of the police, and he married the mare fell dead lame just as he reached it. So he had to tramp all the way back again, and a pretty groveling he made over the job, I can tell you." "Yes, I thought. It must have sweated him a bit to have his saddle along this weather."

"Oh, he didn't trouble himself to do that. He left it in my hut, to be fetched back by the store cart that comes over next week."

"Oh, thought Ned, "it'll come in handy if I lay hands on it."

And then he continued about—"

"But what did he want to meet the police for?"

"Why," answered the shepherd, "that's quite a yarn!"

"Fire away with it, then."

"Well, you know, you asked me if there was any chance of your getting stuck up in this quarter."

"Yes?"

"There ain't just now, as I said, but one or these days we expect a visit from a regular out-and-out in the bail-up line."

"Who is it?"

"Just guess."

NED KELLY. 895
Ned ran through the names of half-a-dozen well-known bushrangers.

"No," said the shepherd, "it ain't one of them, but a chap as'll give anyone of them a stone and a beating over any course they like to come."

"Who is it?" asked Ned.

"Why, that villain, Ned Kelly, the Ironclad, as they call him, to be sure!"

Kelly was not prepared for this. He was electrified.

How was it that just at this moment his whereabouts should spring to the point?

He had not given anyone but the dead man a clue to his movements.

It appeared, however, that the scent was discovered in a most singular way.

Catherine had some days before his death written a letter addressed to a friend in Melbourne disclosing his intentions, and giving his personal description and the particulars of his movements. As this letter was found amongst his effects it was forwarded to its destination by post, and, on the arrival of the police, and has arranged that directly Kelly shows his face again, they will be too tired to notice whether the saddle and bridle were missing or not.

It appeared, however, that the scent was discovered in a most singular way.

M'Vittie, now a magistrate, had received a communication with the county authorities of the expected reappearance of the Kelly plague, and resolved to rid himself as quickly as possible of a man who knew too much.

"Oh!" replied Ned, "but what the devil makes you think he'll turn up here?"

"Why, I'll tell you. I suppose you've heard of my horse, Marco Polo, eh?"

"A regular clipper. Well, he was left in the yard some time back, and it stands to reason that his master will come for him some day."

"I shouldn't wonder if he did," answered Ned, with a grin.

"The guv'nor gave me a hint of this a fortnight ago. He knows all about Kelly, I'm thinking. He's as sharp as Old Nick, himself, has been in communication with the police, and has arranged that directly Kelly shows his nose about the place, he shall be smartly nabbed."

Ned had brought some provisions with him, so this plan of action came in, the horses were turned into the paddock, you a lesson that will last you longer than a plate of porridge. He yourselves are not usually given to sit up late, and in a very short time the gleams of light that had shown through the cracks in the closed shutters faded away. (To be continued.)

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NED KELLY
THE IRONCLAD
AUSTRALIAN BUSHRANGER
CHAPTER CXCIII. — Continued.

Still Ned resolved to be cautious. He knew that the soundest slumber is that which comes after midnight, and had made up his mind not to approach the station till that hour.

He therefore sat patiently under a tree speculating as to what means he could employ to get M'Vittie into his power, and running over all the various punishments his ingenuity could devise as best fitted for that venerable hypocrite.

Mary he vowed that the first task he should set about would be vengeance on the Scotshman. Night had fallen calm and clear, and the sky was studded with a multitude of stars, conspicuous amongst which the Lumarcan Cross shone in all its resplendent magnificence.

"I think it's safe to make a move now," thought Ned; "it must be past midnight."

Rising, he took up the saddle, and stealthily approached the station.

"If there are any dogs prowling around there may be a bit of a muss," he meditated; and, with a view of meeting this emergency, he looked to his knife.

A few minutes brought him to the paddock. Here he paused for a short time to reconnoitre.

A strong temptation stole over him to knock at M'Vittie's hut, and shoot the old ruffian as he appeared at the door. It was necessary, however, to secure Marco Polo first in order to carry out this scheme.

Accordingly he proceeded to the paddock. The night was a clear and brilliant one, and he had no difficulty in making out his horse amongst the others. The animal, however, seemed to be uneasy.

He could not expect that the animal would come to his call any more than a bird would wait to have salt put on its tail. A selve full of oats might have proved handy though. However, the task proved an easier one than he had anticipated when he slipped the bar and entered the paddock.

Marco Polo was evidently in the habit of being ridden, and had been turned out with a trail rope attached to him, to facilitate catching.

Ned profited by this to effect his capture. "Steady, old man, steady," he whispered, as he laid his hand on Marco's mane.

With rapid dexterity he saddled and bridled the animal.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, as he noted certain marks on the horse's withers, "I see that hirsute-gaited old skeleton of a split-shingle couldn't ride you without getting you saddle-galled, whilst I, big and heavy as I am, never scraped an inch off your skin, my beauty. Never mind, old man; it's the last time any one will throw a leg over you but Ned Kelly.

As he spoke, Ned saw the horse turn the paddock, the slip-rail of which he purposely omitted to replace after he had done so.

"If the old devil's beasts have strayed away a few miles by morning, why so much the better," was a reflection, as he hoisted himself into the saddle and remarked with satisfaction that, owing to the exercise to which he had been put, Marco was in capital condition.

Again he debated whether he should ride up to the old fellow's door, and try to lure him forth so as to shoot him down.

No, that would be letting him off too easy.

"I'll make him remember Ned Kelly, if I don't."

What he was to we need not mention, but the adjective he used is historically given as the birthright of every Englishman to use.

Upon reflection, he thought better of assuaging his vengeance at this moment, and resolved to be off to more agreeable and safer regions in the neighbourhood of the Murrumbidgee River, make a good pile, and then quit the coloueyfor good.

He had heard a good deal about South America, its free and easy style of morality, and there he resolved to "pull up," but to do so comfortably, he would have to replenish his purse, and pretty heavily too.

His ideas upon this subject were rather vague, and he never calmly considered what a "competence" meant.

CHAPTER CXCIV.

MR. M'VITTIE STARTS ON A WILD GOOSE CHASE.

Mr. M'Vittie's slumbers were not destined to be prolonged to a very late cut that night. Just after daylight he was wakened by hearing someone pounding away at the door of his dwelling.

"Ech, wha's there?" was his reply.

"Get up, gov'nor; there's a blessed fine go," was the answer, in the voice of his overseer.

"Andrew, my man," he exclaimed, "how often must I tell ye to lay aside the profane and ungodly habit of blasphemy which is a sair abomination in the sight of the Lord and in the lugs o' a decent douce mon like myself."

"Confound it all, it's enough to make an angel swear.

"Ech, wha's there?" began M'Vittie; but he checked himself just in time, with a gulp that almost made him bite his tongue off.

"Ech now," he ejaculated, as soon as he had got his breath, "but this is sair tidings, sair tidings, it's enough to drive a decent body clean daft to have to deal wil' ane pack o' blatherin' bobbies as I hae aroun me. Let's see what's the gowk that has dom this."

Hurrying on his garments he sallied forth, and soon a general murmur of the men took place.

On being interrupted each, and all instantly declare that the slip rail had been in its place when they had last set eyes on it.

Further cross-examination showed that three of the hands who had been the last to leave the paddock had done so in company, and that, according to their united testimony, the rail had been carefully replaced by one of them.

"Ye must one and all start awa' at once in search o'
the beasts," exclaimed M'Vittie; and the men at once bent forward to hear him out before they started. "Hadn't we better send down to the black camp by the river for a fellow or two to help to track them," suggested Andrew.

"That's no bad notion," said M'Vittie: "aye ye can just go and tell them that they shall have the carcass of the sheep that deed yesterfor the job." Andrew hastened away and in a short time returned with a couple of black fellows.

All were engaged in clearing the padock and its surroundings, and gathering away amongst themselves, they turned to Andrew, who had explained to them the state of things. On hearing their report he at once hastened to his master.

"The blackfellows say that whoever left the slip rail down rode off on one of the horses," he said.

"What mon?" exclaimed M'Vittie.

Andrew repeated his remark, and in confirmation the blacks pointed out the tracks and signs which, to their eyes, revealed that a horse had been led out of the padock and mounted, including its trail rope left on the ground.

They declared that the animal had been halted just in front of M'Vittie's house, and had then been galloped off in a straight line, its trail widely differing from that of the other animals.

"What would he dream't of sic a thing?" wailed M'Vittie. "Tis some indelicite reiver o' a house thief thing, that's all I think. To think such things should be done, that the very beastie should pick o' fearless loons that hee maun think o' their master's gear than o' their ain salvation."

"I wonder which horse the fellow boned?" said Andrew.

"The best, the varn best, ye may be certain," answered his employer. "My mad air misgives me but it's the beastie left here a few months since. Ye ken the on which I mean?"

"What, Marco Polo?" said Andrew, who knew to whom the animal really belonged. "Well, that's all the better, since it was not one of your own, and the real owner is never likely to turn up and claim it, or, if he does, can't well kick up a row about it."

"What mon?" exclaimed M'Vittie.

As he had tracked Marco Polo to the entrance of the gorge in which he found himself, and as there was no means of a horse getting away either to the right or to the left without wings, he did not trouble himself to look for hoof-marks, but pushed steadily forward. Suddenly, the report of a pistol rang out from behind a rock, standing a little in advance of the angle he was approaching, and abreast of which he was about to pass.

To his astonishment he found he could not do so. Drawing a long breath he made an effort to rise. It was aching intolerably, and after just opening his eyes he closed them again, and almost relapsed into insensibility.

On reopening them, he recognised that he was still in the same place. At length he began to do so. He was lying on his back with his head, which seemed to him to have swollen to double its usual size, supported by the ground.

He was not only a determined, but, when roused by avarice, a truly desperate man, and he resolved to set out in pursuit. The route selected by Ned had led him into the steep and ragged district in which the Murrambridgee rises. Deep and precipitous ravines, and tremendous crags, closed between walls of rock, marked this region, which is seldom visited owing to its sterility, though bordering on a rich range of pastoral land.

The M'Vittie was a capital bushman and tracker, and, as Ned had taken no trouble to conceal his trail, he was able to follow it with ease, for as luck would have it, the ground was like the weather, soft, and the track so far lay distinct. He was rather astonished, however, to find it leading towards the desolate region in question, instead of to some settlement. Nevertheless, the thought of getting the representation of £6,000 into his hands again nerved his efforts.

He pushed on, though after a time he began to experience great difficulty in tracking the horse, owing to the stony nature of the soil. On the second afternoon after quitting the station he found himself in a narrow valley or ravine, paved with broken fragments of stone.

To the right and left rose two ridges of brown and splintered rock, from the crevices in which sprung a few stunted trees.

A short distance ahead the ravine apparently took an abrupt turn to the right. As he had tracked Marco Polo to the entrance of the gorge in which he found himself, and as there was no means of a horse getting away either to the right or to the left without wings, he did not trouble himself to look for hoof-marks, but pushed steadily forward. Suddenly, the report of a pistol rang out from behind a rock, standing a little in advance of the angle he was approaching, and abreast of which he was about to pass.

The aim of the unseen marksman was a good one, to judge by the result. The shot by the bullet, M'Vittie's horse staggered and dropped in its tracks as dead as a doormat, pitching its rider, who had not time to recover himself, clean over his head on to his own. The shock with which his skull came into contact with the ground was so sharp a one, that he lost all conscious ness for some time.

When he recovered, it was several minutes before he could exactly realise the state of things.

At length he began to do so. He was lying on his back with his head, which seemed to him to have swollen to double its usual size, supported by a stone.

He was achieving intolerably, and after just opening his eyes he closed them again, and almost relapsed into insensibility.

On reopening them, he recognised that he was still in the same place. Drawing a long breath he made an effort to rise. To his astonishment he found he could not do so. His limbs refused all movement.

For a moment he fancied that they had been temporarily paralyzed by the shock. He waited a little and then made another effort, but without same result.

Things, however, were growing clearer to him. The reason of his inability to move became apparent. He was securely fastened, hand and foot.
The sense of peril arising from this discovery completely awoke him from his state of semi-stupor. He raised himself after some exertion into a sitting position, and looked first at his bonds and then at the spot in which he found himself.

As regarded the former, he was secured like a trussed fowl. His hands had been tied together, and his elbows fastened to his sides, whilst a stout lashing had been passed round his ankles.

As to his whereabouts, he was lying a pace or two from the spot on which he had originally fallen, beside the dead body of his horse.

He thought, he thought, could have secured him in such a fashion, so different to the customary style of the Australian bushranger, who generally covers his victim, and then summons him to bail up!

For some moments he fancied himself alone. But then these bonds. Who pinioned him? What did it all mean? Turning his eyes to the left he saw a form sitting quietly smoking on a block of stone, that sent all the blood in his bed into his head again. He was almost choked with surprise and alarm.

CHAPTER CC.
A COMPANION FOR JOSS.

THE bushranger glared down on the prostrate figure of the squatter, who had sunk back in mingled terror and astonishment at the strange scene that met his eyes, with a look of feralonomic joy.

"Well, Mr. M'Vittie," he repeated, "how do you find yourself?"

For a moment M'Vittie's senses seemed on the point of leaving him from mingled fear and astonishment.

He managed, however, to pull himself together again.

"What, Ned Kelly!" he ejaculated. "Ech, mon, but this is a strange meeting. Take alive, whatGear'd ye shoot the poor beastie? They'd like to hang boys like to a suckin' babe in its swaddlin' clothes?"

"Can't you guess?" said Ned.

"De'il a bit, mon; de'il a bit, unless ye tuik me for another. But joost lussen these taws ye ha' cast about me if it's a bit crack ye're wusshin' fo'."

"You didn't think to meet me hereabouts, eh?"

"What brought you here, M'Vittie?"

"Deed, it was jost a wee bit service I was doin' yer an' aye, Ned. Ye ken the browny beastie, it's Marco Polo ye called him, that ye left in my care sinsyne?"

"Na, I didna, I didna even ken that ye were back agin in my way, or when the Californey was to be turned up; but if I did a trifle more, I never put a pal's life in my pocket and drunk out my heart's blood in the nearest pub. But who the deuce, he thought, could have secured him in such a fashion, so different to the customary style of the Australian bushranger, who generally covers his victim, and then summons him to bail up?"

"Every drop of blood in your body, and every ounce of meat on your bones." "And what's that?"

"There's only one thing I mean to take from you," said M'Vittie, looking rather anxiously at Kelly, but still ignorant that his enemy was aware of his treacherous intentions.

"Nothing, he thought, but a signal from the police. He was not yet sure of his safety, and the reports of the bushranger would serve to keep the horse till I came for it, so as to hand me over in the traps. As he spoke, M'Vittie's senses seemed on the point of leaving him from mingled fear and astonishment.

"But, Ned," began M'Vittie, feebly.

"I know your little game. I know how you plotted to keep the horse till I came for it, so as to hand me over in the traps. I know all about your meeting the police at the out-station. The man who stole the horse you talk of! Why, the man who stole the horse was me, and as I stood by your blooming shanty I felt a devilish mind to put a light to the roof, and to shoot you down as you came out, like the dog you are."

He paused for a moment, half choked with fury.

Then he resumed in more solemn tones—

"I'm very glad I didn't, for then I should have lost the chance of teaching you the very pretty little lesson of how Ned Kelly repays treachery, which I mean to do before you're an hour older."

"I've only seen one rogue to-day," said Ned with a sneer.

"But who the deuce, he thought, could have secured him in such a fashion, so different to the customary style of the Australian bushranger, who generally covers his victim, and then summons him to bail up?

"I don't think to meet me hereabouts, eh?"

"What's that?"

"What the diel are ye at mon?" said M'Vittie, looking rather anxiously at Kelly, but still ignorant that his enemy was aware of his treacherous intentions.

"What think I don't know your game for the Reward? You've done for him, ye! I'll see you in your government oath, you'll have something that will show such vermin as you are what it is to meddle with Ned Kelly."

"I know your little game. I know how you plotted to keep the horse till I came for it, so as to hand me over in the traps. I know all about your meeting the police at the out-station. The man who stole the horse you talk of! Why, the man who stole the horse was me, and as I stood by your blooming shanty I felt a devilish mind to put a light to the roof, and to shoot you down as you came out, like the dog you are."

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"What the diel are ye at mon?" said M'Vittie, looking rather anxiously at Kelly, but still ignorant that his enemy was aware of his treacherous intentions.

"What you didn't think to meet me hereabouts, eh?"

"How comes it you didn't think to meet me hereabouts?"

"Why, the man who stole the horse was me, and as I stood by your blooming shanty I felt a devilish mind to put a light to the roof, and to shoot you down as you came out, like the dog you are."

He paused for a moment, half choked with fury.

Then he resumed in more solemn tones—

"I'm very glad I didn't, for then I should have lost the chance of teaching you the very pretty little lesson of how Ned Kelly repays treachery, which I mean to do before you're an hour older."

"There's only one thing I mean to take from you," replied Ned.

"What comes it you didn't think to meet me hereabouts, eh?"

"Every drop of blood in your body, and every ounce of meat on your bones."

As he spoke, Ned stooped over the prostrate figure of the squatter, and hoisted it to its feet.

"I don't think to meet me hereabouts, eh?"

"Every drop of blood in your body, and every ounce of meat on your bones."

As he spoke, Ned stooped over the prostrate figure of the squatter, and hoisted it to its feet.

Then throwing it on to his shoulder, he carried it to the spot beyond the angle where Marco Polo was tethered. The Scotchman roared loud and long, hoping, but in vain, to attract succour.

A few minutes later, and M'Vittie was balancing like a rock, across the middle of the galloping animal, which Ned
and fell on his face, and lay there howling and imploring.

"If you don't lie quiet in the saddle, I'm hanged if I don't drag you by this tatter-tape to the lodging I'm going to give you for the night, as is seen among the poor creatures that come up ground flown from M'Vittie's throat. He realised his prospects, and he knew his man; he also knew his man knew him. White despair enshrouded his face, the features of which were working with dread. He ceased to plead, for hope had fled. Kelly threw him again across the saddle, face downwards, like a sack, saying—"Tumble again, and you'll know more of the stones than you ever yet felt."

After travelling for half-an-hour, they arrived at the foot of a small, isolated peak, on the flat summit of which a solitary tree, forming a conspicuous landmark. Here Ned halted, and laughed and chuckled, while his eye glanced revenge.

He removed M'Vittie—whose sufferings, mental and physical, had reduced him to almost a state of imbecility—from the back of Marco Polo. Placing him on his own shoulder, he commenced the ascent of the peak, which was not high, merely prominent. The ground led very gradually up to it, and Marco Polo had carried the burden up to the foot of the rock.

At length they reached the summit of the peak, which formed a small plateau. Ned allowed himself to fall down, utterly exhausted by the side of M'Vittie, whose bruises and terror had by this time reduced to a condition of almost imbecility. The plateau was about eight or ten feet square, and from its summit an extensive view could be obtained.

The tree rooted in it was a small but strong one. The ground led very gradually up to it, and Marco Polo had carried the burden up to the foot of the rock.

He placed the squatter against the tree, and lashed him to it securely. A look of frozen terror spread over the squatter's face. He turned his eyes to Ned, his blue lips parted and in a husky whisper he gasped—"What is it ye mean to do wi' me?"

Without vouchsafing him any reply, Ned drew his knife.

"For mercy's sake, for pity's sake, spare me, I'm no fit soul within fifty miles of us." said the squatter in a slow, husky whisper.

"For God's sake," yelled M'Vittie, who began to realise his putting in an appearance was "as quarter, and left him a clear field for future action.

As he descended the sounds grew fainter and fainter. On reaching the bottom he looked up.

The figure of M'Vittie lashed to the tree trunk was plainly visible against the sky, across which clouds that indicated a storm were floating.

Ned fancied he could discern it struggling to get loose.

After gazing at it for some time he remounted Marco Polo and rode onward.

As he did so one last wild despairing yell reached his ears.

Before nightfall a terrible storm of wind and rain broke over the mountains.

This weather lasted for several days and its effects extended over a large area.

When, after waiting a week without hearing anything of M'Vittie, his overseer made an attempt to track him, the faintest hope of doing so had vanished.

It was not till months afterwards that a shepherd who had strayed into the mountainous district was attracted by the singular object he observed on the summit of one of the peaks.

On reaching this he found himself in the presence of skeleton securely fastened to a tree trunk.

The birds of prey had long since stripped it of every particle of flesh, and nothing remained to identify this victim of Ned Kelly's vengeance.

CHAPTER CCL

NED ENTERS THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE.

After disposing of the treacherous squatter in the fashion described, Ned had to look ahead.

From what he had gathered on his journey up country, it was evident that, thanks to the information given by the Scoutman, the police were on the alert for his return.

The presence of Marco Polo at Garoona had evidently converted that station into a kind of honey-pot, round which they had been continually buzzing like so many flies.

Ned argued that, with Marco Polo away, however, they would no longer think that there was any certainty of the horse's owner making his appearance in the district, and would therefore gradually relax their vigilance.

"They'll hear the horse has been boned," he thought; "but they'll never dream of such a thing as a fellow stealing his own horse, when he'd only got to go straight up to the station and ask for it."

He determined therefore to remain quiet for a few months longer, until the police had given up all hopes of his putting in an appearance. As quarter, and left him a clear field for future action.

There would, no doubt, be some fruit made over the Scoutman's disappearance; but Ned judged that it would, after a time, be set down to one of the countless accidents of the bush.

The body might not be found for months, or even years; and, even then, its identification would probably be a matter of difficulty.

At any rate there would be no evidence to connect him

NED KELLY.
with it, since he had not been recognised since his return to the colony.

That's the dodge, he said to himself. I'll put my mask on, he thought, and in due course, they will all point to him as the one who always wears a mask. But after a few days, he found that they had not recognised him. Then he was forced to admit that he was not the one who always wears a mask. He was, in fact, not the one who always wears a mask.

No one could give the slightest clue to his whereabouts, and it was known that he had been seen in the vicinity of the station, as well as at the railway station, and even at the town where the blacks had been seen.

Indeed, it was on account of these very qualities that the expedition was organised by the Government, and the idea occurred to Ned that the very last place of all would be to have a man from the town sent out to look for him. So, the expedition started, and for some weeks no event of importance took place until they had entered the Northern Territory, where the blacks attacked the party in the night, killing one of the blacks who had been left behind.

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dozen spears through you before you sighted the tip of an ear."

"Oh! I never fear for that. I'll keep a sharp enough look-out," said Ned, "the spear isn't sharpened that's to drill a hole in my hide, I feel certain."

As he spoke he could not help thinking how hardly his assurance would be under the circumstances, for the northern blacks are a fierce race, and their spears are thrown with a force and precision that sends them through a man's body like a arrow through a bow.

After repeated warnings and instructions, Kelly canted off with the understanding that if Tiger turned up in the bush he was to be shot off in the dead of the night. As Kelly rode along, the warnings respecting the blacks were uppermost in his mind, but armed as he was with rifle and revolver, he felt equal to facing a score of them.

By noon he had got to the edge of the barren region, and halted to give his horse a rest, and cut some maton and damper with which he had been furnished. Nor was the comfort of a pipe denied him.

Remounting he continued his journey at a swinging canter across the level plain now stretching before him. He was mounted on a Government horse, and didn't spur him. There was no necessity for it. He kept his horse in a good working order, for he had been trained to consider the comfort of his rider. He was mounted on a Government horse, and didn't spur him. There was no necessity for it. He kept his horse in a good working order, for he had been trained to consider the comfort of his rider.

The sun set, and darkness came rapidly on. Thirty miles were at length covered, and the shades of evening began to settle over the land. He halted, and decided to find a place to rest for the night, as he was strongly inclined to take some hours' sleep.

Here he unsaddled, hobbled his horse, and lay down for a few hours' sleep. He rose at daybreak and rode forward for some hours, when it occurred to him that he had started without breakfasting, and that it might be as well to repair that omission.

He was just on the point of alighting in order to do so, when he heard the peculiar jingle-jangle so familiar to every bushman of the bandits, whose pranks he had frequently observed. He pricked up his ears, knowing now that a white man was close at hand. He followed the sound, and came upon a pair of working bullocks feeding in their yokes. Hence the noise.

Ifat once occurred to him that the dray must be bound to the station of which he himself was in quest, and he started at full speed to find it. As he drew near, however, he noticed to his surprise that there was no smoke about to indicate that white people were encamping anywhere about. He determined to neglect no precautions, he satisfied himself that the coast was clear before advancing to the spot to reconnoitre the state of affairs.

Riding slowly, and sheltering himself as much as possible behind the narrow belts of scrubby timber, he gradually advanced until he could plainly distinguish two drays between the openings in the bushes.

A nearer approach gave a full view of the waggons themselves, but there was no sign of human life near them. He began to fear the worst, though perhaps the bullocks might have staved and the drivers were away searching for them.

Determined to neglect no precautions, he satisfied himself that the coast was clear before advancing to the waggons.

When he did so he realised what had happened. A glance at the drays sufficed to show him that they had been ransacked of their contents, and that everything cataluable or useful, in a black fellow's estimation, had been carried off.

Lying beneath one of them was the mutilated body of one of the drivers and an elderly woman. Their heads were beaten in with nullah-nullahs, their hands and feet had been cut off, and probably devoured, and their bodies hacked and Howell in a revolting fashion. The tracks of a large mob of blacks were plainly visible, and it was evident that after their murderous work they had departed with their plunder in a body.

As he went to Ned's assistance he noticed amongst their tracks the unmistakable footprint of a white woman. There could be no mistake about it. The ground was soft, and amidst the traces left by the bare feet of the natives, that of a woman's small boot was plainly distinguishable.

But where was the other driver? Either he had been killed at a distance from the camp, or was still on the road, avoiding the sounds of the huge mob of blacks that were reported to be in the vicinity.
or had succeeded in making his escape, in which case he would probably make his way to the nearest station and return with a search party.

"It's pretty certain," thought Ned, "that the blacks who have stuck up the drays are the myalls of the lot I came across last night. The tracks are fresh, and the job was done this morning so they can't have got much of a start. It's pretty certain, too, that there was a girl with the drays, and they've carried her off along with them."

The track of the blacks ran along its shore.

"The tarnation vermin! I'm after them, and if I don't make 'em hand over that white woman why I don't know the crack of a rifle. The niggers can never get within fifty yards of me. I can down 'em before they know where the bullet comes from; and I don't know but a little black practice won't keep my hand in. Besides I'm getting tired of this here work—nothing to wake one up day after day. This will put a spurt into work, and he no longer a jelly bug too."

Anything was a lark to Kelly that smelt of blood and danger.

He forgot all about the mission with which he had been entrusted by Mr. Jackson, and started in pursuit of the white woman.

The expedition suited him. He was a man of ready action, but his anxiety did not lead him into the error of headlong haste. He did not know how far he might have to travel, and proceeded to rummage the drays in quest of anything edible that might have escaped the notice of the natives.

The blacks had cleared out everything edible.

So Kelly fell back on his own commissariat of cold mutton and damper, which he carried with him.

The proximity of the two murdered people seemed to have little effect upon him.

Nevertheless, he resolved, if he got the chance, to thin the ranks of the niggers.

The meal dispatched, he started on the track of the blacks, which led—though of course he was unaware of it—towards a clearing of about a quarter of an acre, where a narrow passage had been cut through the reeds, and bounded in every other direction by the oak scrub.

The track of the blacks ran along its shore.

Stopping for a few moments to breathe and water his horse, Ned began to think matters over.

It would soon be dusk, and, from the freshness of the track, it appeared to him that the blacks had but a very slight advance on him, thanks to the speed at which he had been travelling.

It was also plain that they would camp on the borders of the lake.

Ned resolved to come up with them at nightfall, and make an attempt to rescue the girl, if he could see his way to it.

Wishing to time his arrival, as well as to spare his horse, he rode slowly along the western borders of the lake, which lay placid and smiling in the midst of a vast plain.

Splendid pink and white lilies reared their wax-like heads above their broad leaves, with which its mirror-like surface was thickly studded to a distance of twenty yards from the bank.

Amongst these leaves water rails chased each other in sport, and ever and anon a red-legged crane would stalk from its covert in the tall reeds, or a stately black swan sail by.

Tlocks of wild ducks swam slowly about, diving from time to time beneath the surface of the water and now and then a crocodile would slide noiselessly from the bank and vanish with hardly a ripple.

As the shades grew longer and darkness fell, the task of the lonely tracker grew more and more difficult, since he dared not strike a light.

At length, on turning the head of the lake, he caught sight of smoke, and, advancing a few steps further, could plainly hear the mob of natives.

The time for action had come.

Selecting a secluded spot some distance from the black camp, he fastened his horse to a tree in such a manner that the animal would remain, if required, but in case of the prolonged absence of his master, or of a surprise by the blacks, could break away without much struggling.

Having disposed of his horse, Ned looked to his revolver, and taking his rifle, cautiously made his way through the oak trees towards the spot whence the talking and shouting of the natives reached him.

This time he had no fear of the dogs, as he knew that when on one of their murderous expeditions the men left their dogs with their wives and children.

The noise made by the blacks themselves, who concluded they were safe from pursuit, helped to cover his advance, made as it was under the dense shade of the oaks which grew thickly together.

It was not long in finding a spot whence he could see and hear all that went on.

The blacks, whose number he roughly guessed at fifty, were busily engaged.

Some were disposing of the provisions and articles stolen from the drays, and others were cutting down branches of the oak trees to make a slight shelter for the camp to windward and making up small fires.

By the light of these he could plainly distinguish the prisoner, a white girl sitting on the ground with her face buried in her hands.

She was unbound but was guarded by three or four young men, to whom the duty of watching her had evidently been assigned.

Kelly having satisfied himself as to the number and disposition of the men, turned his attention to the surrounding.

The spot chosen for the native camp, was a natural clearing of about a quarter of an acre.

It was washed on one side by the waters of the lake, where a narrow passage had been cut through the reeds, and bounded in every other direction by the oak scrub.

Glancing towards the horizon, he noticed, to his surprise, that a number of canoes were lying up in the shallow water close to the shore.

It at once occurred to him that the blacks intended to make use of these to continue their flight.

It was doubtless their intention to embark in them the next morning.

The sight of the canoes gave Ned a fresh idea.

Two days' hard riding with his weight on its back had told on his horse, and it was doubtful whether the beast would be equal to carrying off the girl, whilst a flight on foot would be almost certainly fatal with such keen trackers to deal with as the blacks.

But it was absolutely necessary to rescue the girl that very night, and once embarked it would be impossible to follow her.

Water, too, he reflected, would leave no trail by which their own flight could be traced.

CHAPTER CCIII.

THE WHITE CAPTIVE AND THE BLACK TIGER.

He resolved therefore to try and carry her off by means of one of the canoes.

As however some hours must elapse before the attempt could be made, he drew back through the bushes with the intention of examining the shores of the lake for a little distance.

It would be as well he thought, to make sure that no treacherous sand or mud bank existed in the neighbourhood, that might intercept his flight and render him and the girl a mark for the unerring spears of the natives.
The sky, which had hitherto been clear, was now charged with heavy clouds, and a strong breeze had got up—two things both favourable to his desperate enterprise.

As soon as he had got some distance from the camp he entered the water, and waded out beyond the fringe of reeds. He felt somewhat uneasy, remembering the crocodiles he had seen; but in reality there was no cause of alarm on this score, as these animals, though numerous in the inland lakes and lagoons of North Australia, are not dangerous.

They rarely attain a greater length than six feet, and, unlike their congeners, the alligators on the coast, never attack human beings.

Feeling, as he has been remarked, somewhat nervous on this score, he waded slowly and cautiously towards the camp, the water barely reaching above his knees.

He found no obstruction, and a less depth of water even would have sufficed for the light native canoes. In his anxiety to avoid the crocodiles, he had incautiously approached so near the passage cut in the reeds to the camp, that before he was aware of it, he found himself within five yards of a couple of blacks, who were searching for some article they had dropped into the water.

For a moment Ned thought he was discovered, and stood in readiness to shoot the first who should give the alarm. He had presence of mind to cock the weapon noiselessly, by pressing the trigger as he raised the hammer; as otherwise the click would have betrayed him.

Finding that he had not been observed—and if he had, even had he escaped himself, the fate of the woman he was scheming to rescue, would have been sealed—he drew back again into the reeds, and from there watched the proceedings going on afloat.

The sight was a strange one.

Amongst the other goods which the drays had contained, were a case of brandy and a small keg of rum. These were being broached, and it was evident would, in a few hours, render a large majority of the savages helpless.

The very guards appointed to look after the prisoners were not likely to resist this temptation, though there was some danger that in their handahamun orgies the hapless girl might be brained in mere drunken fury or sport.

The two savages who had alarmed him, having rejoined their companions, Ned examined the canoes, and selected the one he thought best suited to his purpose. If they did they would naturally start in pursuit, and, from that moment his whole energies were devoted to the rescue of the white woman.

"Marmy," he said after a pause, during which the blacks in camp had commenced a corroboree, and were howling in a manner which was in itself a sufficient indication that the liquor had been tapped, "you top here. Tiger yan along a track. Plenty track sit down. How did you know I was here, Tiger?" he whispered.

"Look here, Tiger," he said, "mine want white Mary to-night. Spoose you help me mine give it you plenty rum and baccy long a station. Every day some rum. S'pose bad (he) got Mary, mine shoot plenty black fellow, Shoot Tiger first. You see?"

The myall had wisdom to see the odds would be considerably against him in a fight, so he at once made up his mind to accept the compromise of 'rum every day,' and from that moment his whole energies were devoted to the rescue of the white woman.

"Marmy," he said, after a pause, during which the blacks in camp had commenced a corroboree, and were howling in a manner which was in itself a sufficient indication that the liquor had been tapped, "you top here. Tiger yan (don't) walk about."

His dark form was soon lost in the oak shadows.

Ned wheeled round with his rifle ready, but only to confront Tiger in person.

"Baad shoot marmy," whispered the black, with a grin.

By gosh, Tiger! hunged if you didn't give me a start. What news? Is the woman all right? Are the myalls drunk?"

"White Mary all right," answered Tiger. "That fellow pauper (ate) damper. Blackfellow plenty drink it grog. Mine been bring canoe. Canoe sit down," and he pointed to a spot close to where they were standing.

It was very fortunate for Ned that Tiger had been well treated during the expedition.

Mr. Jackson, knowing that their very lives might at times depend upon the skill of the blacks accompanying them in tracking strayed horses or discovering water, had made it a strict rule to earn their good will; and had insisted on one and all of those under him acting up to it.

By this he had secured Tiger's devotion.

It was well for Ned that such was the case, as, otherwise, the temptation to join in the orgies before him would very likely have been too strong for the blacks to resist, and he regarded the old fellow as his friend, and extended to him the feeling of gratitude he entertained towards Mr. Jackson, his leader.

The possession of the canoe was a great point in their favour, but it would never do to allow the blacks to retain possession of the others.

If they did they would naturally start in pursuit, and, by their superior numbers, would soon tire out two men encumbered with a woman in their little craft.
Tiger, on being questioned, explained that he had waded round into the passage, and, selecting the canoe to which Ned had already transferred the paddles, had gently withdrawn it from the others.

The feat he had accomplished, unseen by the drunken blacks, who had now scarcely a thought for anything save the unexpected and plentiful supply of liquor. The success of this manoeuvre decided Ned to attempt the removal of the other canoes.

As Tiger was quite sure that there was no watch kept over them, he was dispatched to bring them away.

This feat he successfully accomplished in a very short time.

The two then set to work to damage all, except the one they had chosen, beyond repair.

With crafts of such fragile build this was easy enough.

A long consultation followed, as soon as pursuit by water had been thus rendered impossible.

Ned found out that Tiger was thoroughly well acquainted with the district in which they were and with the situation of the stations, to one of which he was to have guided his present companion.

He questioned him as to the size and shape of the lake, and the best spot to which to make in order to land.

Tiger enlightened Ned to the best of his ability, and the line of flight was decided upon.

Kelly arranged with Tiger that the latter should attract the attention of the savages when the white woman was stripped to the buff like a native he would be mistaken, stripped to the buff like a native he would be mistaken.

When this had been settled, Ned thought it was time to set about the most hazardous and arduous portion of his task.

That of rescuing the captive girl from the maddened horde of savages by whom she was surrounded.

CHAPTER CVIII.

KELLY RESCUES THE WHITE GIRL.

Tiger was instructed in the dusk of the evening to get near the captive girl and convey the intelligence to her that aid was near.

Stripped to the buff like a native he would be mistaken, stripped to the buff like a native he would be mistaken.

When the savages were engaged in their drinking bout, he crawled through the grass within eoshot of the girl, and, as instructed by Kelly, said—

"A friend, look out!"

The sound startled the captive at first, but, after the first surprise, she sat as still as death, eyes and ears open.

Kelly being informed that she had been thus made aware that a friend was near, soon crawled up the edge of the clearing and again reconnoitred the condition of affairs.

He found to his great satisfaction that he could approach so near to the spot where the girl was seated as to be able to make himself heard by her without attracting attention.

Accordingly he made his way, with the utmost caution, to a spot immediately in the rear of where she was seated.

In order to accomplish this, he wormed himself along like a serpent, taking every imaginable cover, that not the slightest fluid was should betray his presence.

He had purposely deferred this moment until the night had commenced to fall, as he knew daylight would be most unfavourable to his plans.

A fresh trouble now occurred to him.

This was the likelihood of a cry of joy or surprise breaking from the girl directly he made his presence known.

If this took place both would be lost.

"I wonder if she's got the gumption to know when to hold her tongue," he thought; "it's precious few of her breed that have. She seems taking things pretty coolly though, and looks like a wide-awake one too!"

She was a slightly made girl, of about eighteen or nineteen, with black hair and large grey eyes.

Ned noticed that those eyes were full of spirit, and that she glanced round her from time to time as though she was looking for an opportunity of escape on her own account.

Her features, too, though pale, wore a resolute expression, and there were no traces of tears on her cheeks.

"Now or never," thought Ned.

Choosing a moment when the corroboree was at its highest, when the savages were jumping and yelling like maniacs, their keen perceptions deadened by drink, he whispered—

"Missis!"

The effect of the single word was instantaneous.

The girl started half up, but checked herself by a violent effort.

She resumed her former attitude, and in tones even lower than his own said—

"Who's there?"

"A friend," answered Ned, pleased with her evident courage and coolness. "I think I can get you out of this, but it'll be a risky job, for I'm single-handed. Can you run a bit?"

"Yes; I'll do anything to get away from these beasties!"

At this moment a black came up to the girl and looked about him.

He even went to the edge of the scrub and peered into the darkness.

Ned, however, had drawn noiselessly back on his approach, and the girl, who guessed that the myall's keen ear had caught the sound of voices, clasped her hands and began to pray aloud in a low tone.

This satisfied the black, and he returned to the fire.

Ned had noticed the girl's presence of mind, and concluded she was of the right sort.

As soon as she was again alone—for her guards had been unable to resist the temptation of the general debauch—Kelly crawled up again within hail.

"Look here, missus; I think I see a way out of this muck if you've got pluck enough to try it."

"I'm ready for anything," said the girl. "Only tell me what I'm to do and I promise not to flinch.

"That's your sort, I've got a canoe close handy, and I've smashed up all the others. It's a quarter of a mile from here, and, once in it, we can soon get clear of these herring-gutted devils," said Ned.

"How am I to get to the canoe?" asked the girl, who, with great coolness, kept her position unchanged.

Ned reflected for a moment.

The spot at which the girl was seated was at the edge of the clearing and at some distance from the shore of the lake.

"The blacks soon pretty far gone," said Kelly after a pause, during which he had elaborated his plan of action, "and don't seem to be keeping much of a watch on you, so you can get up in a minute or two as if you wanted to change your seats. Stroll about a bit near the fire and then edge down towards that dead tree near the water's edge. Do you see the one I mean?"

"Yes," answered the girl.

"When you get to the tree wait, and be ready to slip into the canoes directly I give a sign. You may have to run for it pretty smartly, so pull yourself together and keep your wits about you."

"Yes, I promise. But before I start I want you to promise one thing, too," said the girl, in a solemn and appealing tone, but in the suppressed tone necessary.

"What is it? Be quick!"

"I don't know you, but, from your risking your life to get me off, you are surely no ordinary man. Risk one more thing. If they—If they lay hands on me before I can get clear, or if there is no hope of my getting away unseen, shoot me down as I stand, and with my dying breath I'll bless you."
Hardened ruffian as he was, Ned was moved by this terrible request so plainly put.

Even in his barren heart there was one vein of gold, one check in his sordid nature, a response to this piteous appeal of a woman in her helplessness.

No one would have believed it, and Ned himself less, perhaps, than anyone else, but he was strangely stirred. He had in the first place attempted the girl's rescue out of sheer recklessness and a feeling of indignation at the blacks for daring to lay hands on a white woman.

"All right," said Ned, whose voice came from behind the tree; "I promise."

He really meant it, though, to carry out his promise, might only expose his own life uselessly.

For, if it was evident that the girl was too closely watched to render her escape feasible, nothing would be easier than for him to abandon all further attempts at rescuing her and to silently withdraw; but he was essentially a brave man; it was about the only redeeming quality he possessed.

He determined, at all risks, to stick by her to the very end.

The urge of the blacks was now becoming every minute faster and more furious.

Howling and yelling they poured the fiery liquor down their throats, every fresh draught rendering them more fiendishly hideous in their aspect.

In pursuance of her instructions, the girl rose and sauntered towards the tree as agreed.

As she moved past the fire no particular attention was paid to her until one of the least drunken of the blacks came aware of the proximity of the bushranger.

"No time for palavering," said Ned. "Push on after Tiger."

Ned had abstained from using firearms, so as to delay giving an alarm as long as possible.

"Quick!" he exclaimed, as a few minutes later they gained the water's edge at the spot where he had placed the canoe. "Quick! into the canoe! That fellow I showed over the canoe to bring a swarm of them down on us."

The girl obeyed him, and stepped quietly but carefully into the frail craft.

Her bearing throughout these trying moments had shown her to be full of courage and resolution. Kelly was lost in admiration.

"Way, she'd be just the Poll to pot a policeman! Couldn't they work together? Had almost give Marco Polo for her, bless'd if he wouldn't."

"Tiger!" said Ned, noticing for the first time the absence of the black from the spot where he had left him.

"Tiger!" he repeated, in louder tones, but there was no response.

The idea of treachery crossed his mind, but, as he thought it over, he guessed that the sudden alarm amongst the blacks must have been produced by a ruse of Tiger's.

"Can't see any, but be prudent, Mary," hissed the owner of the pannikin as she returned it to him.

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Howling and yelling they poured the fiery liquor down their throats, every fresh draught rendering them more fiendishly hideous in their aspect.

The quick eye of one of the young niggers had noted the presence of Ned, and seizing spears and firesticks had darted into the scrub, and at length gained it and sat down at its foot.

"All right," said Ned, whose voice came from behind the tree; "are you ready?"

The girl was about to reply, when a sudden stir took place amongst the blacks.

"My word, you budgeree, Mary," hissed the owner of the pannikin as she returned it to him.

Strolling on the girl gradually approached the dead tree, and at length gained it and sat down at its foot.

The whole attention of those who had not gone off, was fixed on the spot whence the alarm had come.

"You've done your best," said he, raising his voice again, "but here is the girl, and she is safe. Quickly now, and at once bound forward and seized her by the arm."

He did not anticipate any difficulty in recapturing the fugitive single-handed.

Following the tracks he caught sight of the girl's dress, and at once bounded forward and seized her by the arm.

She had the presence of mind to repress a scream.

The black at first had not noted the presence of Ned.

The latter, however, had marked his pursuit.

It was not until he had clutched the girl that the myall struck him with the presence of the bushranger.

Before he could utter a cry or raise his mullish-nullish or war-club, a tremendous blow on the head felled Kelly's sledge-hammer fist, in which there was a large stone, dazed him senseless to the ground.

Ned had obtained from using firearms, so as to delay giving an alarm as long as possible.

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He was soon standing on an eminence, looking out for the cause.
Their destination once known, the blacks would do their utmost to reach a spot where they might intercept the fugitives and recover their prey.
All this passed through Kelly's mind as he paddled vigorously and urged the light craft onward over the rippled water.
To the yells of the savages on shore had now succeeded a death-like silence.
From this he argued that Tiger was either killed or had succeeded in effecting his escape, in which case he would, no doubt, pick them up somewhere on the journey.

CHAPTER CCV.
THE CAPTIVE'S STORY. THE FLIGHT ON THE LAKE.
Up to the moment of pushing out into the lake there had been no time for the girl to mention her name or to narrate the circumstances which had led to her capture, and the murder of the unfortunate bullock-driver.
Now, however, that immediate pursuit was not likely, Ned thought he would like to have a little information on those points.
"Well, now we seem pretty well out of this blessed mess," he began, "perhaps you could manage to give me some idea how you tumbled into it? There must have been a precious bad look-out kept, it strikes me."
"The better begin at the beginning," said the girl; "and then you will understand it all better."
"All right, fire away. I can listen and paddle, too," answered Ned.

The girl explained that her name was Bella Bolton.
Her father was established in Melbourne, but a brother of his, who had settled in Queensland, was at one time a rather well-to-do squatter.
He had originally settled in the Logan district; but as the population increased, and the squatters began to find themselves hemmed in by land selectors and farmers, had resolved to go yet farther afield and take up a run in the northern country and formed a station.

Accordingly Philip Bolton wrote to his father and after some discussion it was agreed that his sister Bella, with whom he was a great favourite, should join him and keep house for him and his uncle.
The girl had started, accompanied by her nurse, on her long and wearisome journey.
All had gone well up to the night preceding the attack, which had resulted in her captivity.
On that evening the bullocks had strayed, and one of the two drivers had started in search of them.
He had not returned at nine o'clock, at which hour Bella had retired to the shelter fitted up for her under the shed of one of the wagons.
The second driver instead of keeping awake as he should have done till his mate returned, lay down under the other dray and fell asleep.
Just before dawn the girl was awakened by the sound of a scuffle, in which she could distinguish the voice of the imprudent driver, exclaiming—
"My God! I'm done for!"
In an agony of terror she heard the horrid sound of the blows that completed his murder, and the fiendish yells of his assailants. Her nurse also lay a mangled corpse; but at some distance from her—she had been brained in her sleep.

So as a bright wood fire was burning during the attack, the savages distinguished the form and features of the young girl, whom they resolved to domesticate amongst their tribe.
Several nuish-nullahs were raised to despatch her, when some of the savages interposed in her favour.
She was placed in the charge of four or five of the younger men, whilst the rest proceeded to round up the drays.

The blacks, having loaded themselves with their plunder, started, with the girl in their midst, to the lake.

(To be continued.)
THE PLAN TO ROB THE GOLD CRUSHING MILL.
CHAPTER CCV.—Continued.

"“I suppose,” she concluded, “you saw my letter, and that is what made you follow me.”

“What letter?” asked Ned.

“I took advantage of the confusion to scribble a few words on a piece of paper, saying that the blacks had killed the driver and carried me off, and dropped it by the wagon.”

“I didn’t see it,” replied Ned, though he refrained from adding that if he had it would not have advanced matters much, since he would not have been able to make out a word of it.

Still he could not help admiring the presence of mind thereon by the girl in writing.

"Did you come across the blacks by accident, then?” inquired the girl.

"No," answered Tom Kelly; "I didn’t see your letter, but I spotted your footprints among the nigger-tracks, and I said to myself, ‘There’s a white girl there, and if I don’t have her out of the hands of those beggars in the shake of a bull’s tail, why I’m not’—"

He was just going to blurt out his name but he checked himself in time, and added—

"A chap that does know how to work a thing or two.”

"You are a brave and clever fellow,” said the girl, “and I owe a debt to you I can never repay. How sorry I am my poor nurse had no such deliverer as you. Why they murdered her I can’t imagine. You have saved me from worse than death. What is your name?”

"Tom Smith,” answered Ned, and added, "Bolton you say, yours is?”

"Yes.”

"And your father lives at Melbourne. It’s very odd I can’t call to mind any one of that name I know, but somehow I’m quite certain I’ve heard of Bolton of Melbourne before. Yes, I’m sure of it.”

The girl smiled, and said—

"My father is pretty well known there, and there are a good many who are perfectly familiar with his name but who have not the slightest wish to make his acquaintance.”

"What do you mean?” exclaimed Kelly.

"Simply that he happens to be the keeper of Melbourne jail.”

His mind was quick to grasp the situation.

"By gosh,” he thought, “here’s a young woman who may do me a good turn some of these fine days, if I fell up with her properly. This is a streak of luck.”

And he added aloud—

"Yes, I see. I’ve met a charm or two knocking about who thinks your gaynor the last man in the colony he’d care to drop in and take pot-luck with. But I don’t suppose you think I’m one of that sort.”

"No,” answered the girl; "and I am sure my father would make no one more than six months than his daughter’s preserve. There is no one in the colony he would esteem more highly.”

“Quite so,” thought Ned, “considering my head’s worth just ten thousand pounds to him or any other man who can shoot a bolt on me.”

"Or cherish more closely,” continued the girl.

"Exactly," was Ned’s mental commentary. "He would cherish me, as you call it, my dear, so closely that he would lock me up in the very strongest bedroom in that ugly stone jug, and never let me out for fear I should catch cold till I stepped abroad at eight o’clock some Monday morning to do a little jig in a white night-sap. I don’t think he’ll get a chance though yet awhile.”

"It strikes me,” resumed Ned, after a pause, "that your uncle’s station must be the one I was originally pushing on for when I came across the drays.”

And he proceeded to describe how he had been sent on in advance of Mr. Jackson’s party.

On comparing notes, it was evident that this was the case, as there was no other station in the direction in which she had been proceeding, a fact of which her letters had informed the girl, who knew a good deal about Millaroo, as it was styled.

"There’s a chance, perhaps, that the other driver escaped, in which case he would push on to the station, and they would send out a scrounging party,” suggested the girl.

"Yes, there is that, but it’s a dicky one,” answered Kelly. "I guess we’ve a better chance in pushing on to this Wirinja station, at the end of the lake that Jigger spoke of.”

At that moment the canoe was passing a small islet covered with rushes, and a sudden cry from Bella caused Ned to look up from his paddling.

Plainly visible in the moonlight on the islet was a naked black fellow, standing up, and apparently only awaiting a chance to throw his spear.

Ned dropped the paddle at once and seized his rifle.

Before, however, he had time to fire, the black fellow had evidently come to the conclusion that the odds were against him, and had ducked down out of sight.

"That’s cruelly awkward, miss,” said Ned. "That black brute has spotted where we’re bound to, and we shall have the whole tribe of um round to cut us off.”

"Can’t we pass round the other side of the lake?” suggested the girl, who kept up her spirits wonderfully.

"No,” answered Ned; "the sand-bank starts from that side and runs right across to this.”

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"Can’t we pass round the other side of the lake?” suggested the girl, who kept up her spirits wonderfully.

"No,” answered Ned; "the sand-bank starts from that side and runs right across to this. The only chance is to keep on along this shore and through the channel, and that’s just where I reckon the niggers will try to nail us— for it narrows to a kind of gut—or else to land and push on for when I came across the drays.”

"Well,” said Bella, "I really think I’d rather try it on foot than be cramped up in this wretched little canoe after all. Besides, if the blacks are trying to stop us at the point you say, it strikes me that we shall be more at their mercy at such close quarters than if we could hide in the scrub.”

"Don’t you know but what you may be right, girl,” replied Kelly; "but we won’t give up the canoe till we’re bound to. I guess you’ll find being cramped up in it easier work than tramping miles after miles through the bush. If we must take the canoe we’ll do it as near as we can to Wirinja station. I wish, though, I’d had time to put that black devil on the island. He’s sure to carry the next
the rest of the beggars. But it can't be helped now as the hangman said when he found they'd tucked up the wrong um.'

Bella could not help thinking this last remark a rather strange one nor from noticing that, despite the gallantry that Ned had shown on her behalf, his manner and speech were distinctly lacking in polish; for she was a girl of keen observation, and had all her wits about her.

But this did not in the least detract from the overwhelming sense of admiration and gratitude that had sprung up in her breast for the stranger who was so generously risking his life on her behalf. Even Bella was influenced by her presence in a way he could not account for. It made him, not more refined, but less brutal.

She could not help regarding Ned, whose cool courage was most conspicuous, as the greatest hero she had ever seen, and would not suffer these little adorables to lower him in her eyes.

All this time the light canoe had beenNASDAQ in the surface of the lake.

Ned was not in the least fatigued, and declared that he could go on all next day. But he thought it better not to risk travelling by daylight.

Accordingly at the first streak of dawn he pushed the canoe amongst a dense mass of reeds stretching out from the shore.

In the centre was a small islet large enough to afford Bella a short promenade and a more luxurious couch than she would have found in the canoe.

Provisions they had none, but up to the present the excitement of their escape had made them forget the pangs of hunger.

Now, however, they began to be keenly felt, but it was useless to wish for food.

There were several water-fowl within range, but though Ned's mouth watered for them, he dared not risk disclosing their situation by firing a shot, nor could he have ventured to have lit a fire to cook them by.

Having landed the girl, and moored the canoe to the edge of the lake, he waded through the reeds towards their inner margin, from whence he could examine the shore, the water being shallow enough to allow of this.

The oaks at this point lay back some distance from the edge of the lake, and he could get an uninterrupted view of a tolerably wide extent of country.

Nothing suspicious was in sight.

Returning to Bella, he assured her that she might lay down and take some rest, in perfect confidence.

Even he seemed a pretty near-cut out," he said; "and even if I wasn't, the lesson those black devils taught your driver ain't going to be thrown away on me. I don't mean to be woke up by a tap on the head with a nullah—was to be draaded.

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All this time the light canoe had been skimming the surface of the lake.

Ned was not in the least fatigued, and declared that he could go on all next day. But he thought it better not to risk travelling by daylight.

Accordingly at the first streak of dawn he pushed the canoe amongst a dense mass of reeds stretching out from the shore.

In the centre was a small islet large enough to afford Bella a short promenade and a more luxurious couch than she would have found in the canoe.

Provisions they had none, but up to the present the excitement of their escape had made them forget the pangs of hunger.

Now, however, they began to be keenly felt, but it was useless to wish for food.

There were several water-fowl within range, but though Ned's mouth watered for them, he dared not risk disclosing their situation by firing a shot, nor could he have ventured to have lit a fire to cook them by.

Having landed the girl, and moored the canoe to the edge of the lake, he waded through the reeds towards their inner margin, from whence he could examine the shore, the water being shallow enough to allow of this.

The oaks at this point lay back some distance from the edge of the lake, and he could get an uninterrupted view of a tolerably wide extent of country.

Nothing suspicious was in sight.

Returning to Bella, he assured her that she might lay down and take some rest, in perfect confidence.

Even he seemed a pretty near-cut out," he said; "and even if I wasn't, the lesson those black devils taught your driver ain't going to be thrown away on me. I don't mean to be woke up by a tap on the head with a nullah—was to be draaded.
hour and a half would make them running the gauntlet of unless warned by their faithful ally on shore, another peninsula which, starting from the eastern shore ran right out that blessed sandbank plainly, stretching away there can't be long now before Tiger makes a sign. I can make not complain, could not help noting her uneasiness. "It pure rays beat down on their unsheltered heads.

The sun had come out from behind the clouds, and its to the north."

"Handsome is as handsome does," as the fellow said. "It's a pity he's so awfully ugly," said the girl. "It's a pity he's so awfully ugly," said the girl."

"Baal, baal," replied the black, "canoe good one, two, tree hour, then altogether walk about."

"I see, I see," said Ned, "off the goes, missie. Get in with you and we will help to keep I reckon well spin her along like the winner of a four miles heat at Parramatta. Jump in Tiger."

But the black hold back.

"What! ain't you coming with us?" cried Ned. "Baal yan long a canoe. Mine look out black-fellow. S'pose look out bimibly see Tiger. Then canoe no go good."

"He means he'll look out for the blacks on shore and that we're to keep a watch for him and to land when we catch up," explained Ned, adding, "in a first-rate plant Tiger, we'll look out for you, but don't go and get a wonder about your nut."

Tiger grinned at the idea of such a piece of stupidity on his part being possible and waited to shore again.

With a vigorous shout or two Ned forced the canoe through the reeds, and once more they were on the open lake and in full view of their enemies if they were about, as there was every reason to believe they were.

But this matters little as it was their intention to allow the blacks to see them.

"Tiger is certainly a most valuable ally," said Miss Bolton. "I do not know how we should manage without him."

"That's true," said Ned; "the beggar has shown real grit all through this mission. I question if we've managed that boat so cleanly last night if he hadn't sneaked round and drawn the beggars to the other side of the compass."

"It's a pity he's so awfully ugly," said the girl.

"Handsome is as handsome does," as the fellow said when he gave the waiter the bad sovereign to keep for himself. "It's not everyone can have such a pretty mug as yours on 'em. But just keep those eyes of yours, and a friend they are, on the shore, so that we mayn't miss any sign to Tiger's watching us as well as the blacks, for certain."

They coasted along for over an hour without seeing any sign of friend or foe. Then they came out from behind the clouds, and its pure rays best down on their unsheltered heads. Despite her courage, the heat and her cramped position were evidently beginning to tell on Bella Bolton. "Clear up, missie," said Ned, who although she would not admit it, could not help noting her uneasiness. "It can't be long now before Tiger makes a sign. I can make out that blessed sandbank plainly, stretching away there to the north."

Sure enough they could make out the long, narrow peninsula which, starting from the eastern shore ran right across the lake almost to the western bank. They were rapidly nearing the point of danger, and unless warned by their faithful ally on shore, another hour and a half would see them running the gauntlet of the narrow straight at the head of the peninsula.

But they were spared this ordeal.

The girl, who in obedience to Ned's request had been keeping a sharp lookout, now uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Look, Mr. Smith," she cried, "there is a column of smoke rising from the shore, just opposite the head of the sandbank. Yes, and there's another; I can see over the trees nearer here. What does it mean?"

Ned took a look in the direction indicated.

"It means that the beggars have spotted us," he growled savagely. "These five lines of smoke are signals made by the myall to warn us to those at the passage. They think we are going to try it, and now the whole mob will be hurrying on there to be in at the death, curse 'em."

The girl could not repress a little shudder.

"Oh, don't be scared, my lass," said Ned more cheerfully, "on seeing the effect his words had produced. "I reckon they'll find themselves sold as far as that goes. There are one or two little capers they've got to be up to before they'll get a chance of planting a spear in my case, or yours either."

"How do they make their signals?" said the girl, recovering herself, and dauntless of showing that she was equal to emergency. "I should have thought that the smoke from a fire on the ground instead of going straight a mile to Wirriba in the canoe?"

"So it would," explained Ned, who was pretty well acquainted with the manners and customs of the aborigines, "but when the beggars want to make signals they just manage to pitch on a hollow tree. Then they cut a hole in the lower part, and stick leaves and sticks inside it. The hollow stem serves as a chimney and takes the smoke right bang away straight into the air. You can spot it miles off sometimes."

"Could we manage to cross the sandbank," suggested the girl, "instead of trying the passage? The canoe is not so heavy. Couldn't we drag it across?"

"No go," answered Kelly. "The sandbank, Tiger says, is a mile broad at least. Besides, you may bet your boots there's a gang of them have swam across the gut to sit, in order to nail us on both sides as we come through, I'll go, there goes another smoke on the eastern side of the lake."

Bella looked in the direction in question.

"That must be from the boys who are about and gins I spotted the night before last. They mean to come along the sandbank to cross the lake," said Ned.

"They are not so dangerous, though," said the girl. "I don't know about that; those gins are perfect devils to fight with their yam-sticks."

"What are they?"

"Pointed sticks they use to dig up yams with, and ain't they blessed smart in handling them. I've seen men that fancied themselves a bit with the sticks—old soldiers, mounted police, and the like—cut away at an old gin for half-an-hour at a time, without once reaching her hide, and she standing as cool as a water melon, just stopping and never troubling to hit back."

"Worse than that," continued Ned. "In a scrimmage they keep on encouraging the men with songs, and yells, and cheers, that makes 'em regular mad. The niggo hereaway, I know, are a sight harder to drive off when their gins are about, than when they are alone. Oh! the blacks up here in the north are a devilish sight worse than them. They're a bloodthirsty set of devils, and always on the look to catch a white man, or woman either."

A few minutes later the bushranger suddenly cried—

"Hullo! what's that away under that sugar?"

The girl looked in the direction indicated, and saw a black head seemingly resting on the water. A second glance showed the grinning face of Tiger, who beckoned them to come ashore.

Ned quickly paddled to the bank, and helped the girl to land.
THE party led by Tiger moved rapidly away with the in­
here will land us safely at the Wirriba station."
the little craft they had travelled in, to a useless sheet of
swift, admitted of the girl keeping up with him.
talk.)"
up this rotten old bark concern."
more than he could count.
a distance," said Ned. "Are there many, Tiger?" he
gether sit down long way."
telligible to him.
complain, it was evident that, despite the mental excite­
plunged int) her braia, and consciousness was fast desert­
from the broken nature of the ground they had to tra­
them to make their appearance in the canoe.
had accomplished perhaps four miles, for their progress

"Courage, missie," said Ned. "A little more and we

"Never fear for me; I'll do it," answered the girl,
pluckily.

CHAPTER CCVII.
THE BATTLE WITH THE BLACKS.
the intention of making a circuitous course round the point of
danger, where the blacks were assembled waiting for
them to make their appearance in the canoe.
They had walked on for about an hour and a half, and
had accomplished perhaps four miles, for their progress
was hampered by the scrub, when Miss Bolton began to
show evident signs of distress.
Despite her courage, the cramped position in the canoe,
and the heat of the sun had told on her severely, and now
her boots were being cut to pieces and her feet blistering
from the broken nature of the ground they had to tra­
vers.
Once or twice she staggered and almost fell.
Ned took her by the arm; but, though she would not
complain, it was evident that, despite the mental excite­
ment that in some degree kept up her, she was sinking
with fatigue.
Although a great deal of pain escaped her
"Courage, missie," said Ned. "A little more and we
shall have broken the back of the journey. Come, I
know you're a good plucked 'un. Lean on me as heavy
as you like, and I'll help you along."
"I'll try, I'll try," gasped the girl, though her drawn
face, quivering lips, and wild eyes indicated the sufferings
she was enduring plainly enough.
She staggered a little farther with the help of Ned's
arm, and then again paused, half-flabbergasted.
This was mainly due to the glare of the sun on her
head in the heat.
She had hardly noticed its effects at the time beyond
feeling a headache, but now she was walking they began
to develop themselves.
It seemed to her that a thousand fiery needles were being
plunged into her brain, and consciousness was fast desert­
ing her at intervals.
It was evident that she was fast sinking, but what was
to be done?

To stop where they were was to linger in the very
neighbourhood of danger.
They were about opposite the strait at the head of the
sandbank, and about a mile from it in a direct line, and it
was quite possible that while waiting for the canoe's
arrival a party of the blacks might be out hunting in their
very direction.
"By gosh, Tiger! I'm afraid the only way to take
the girl along will be to carry her. She's quite done up,"
said Ned.
"No good 'top here," growled Tiger. "S'pose missie
no walk 'top here. Bimsey myall come. Missie go bong."
This last remark meant that she would be destroyed.
Again the girl's energy, roused by these, words carried
her forward a few paces.
"That's your style," said Ned, encouragingly; "Keep
on, like that and we'll be in the parlour at Wirriba in a
couple of hours, all safe and snug as a pig in its mother's
pouch."
They had now reached a more open track.
The trees were larger and at further distances apart, so
that progress was less difficult amongst them.
It was evident they were at the outskirts of the timber
bordering the lake, and at a little distance they could see
that the ground was rocky and broken.
Miss Bolton managed to get on a little better as the
ground improved.
All at once they found themselves confronted by six
blacks, who suddenly seemed to spring up before them,
like demons in a Christmas pantomime.
At the sight of their gaunt, naked figures, mop-like
heads of hair, fiercely gleaming eyes, and glittering teeth,
Bell Bolton recovered some of her energy.
Here was one of those natures which rise in presence of
actual and deadly peril.
Instead of being overcome by terror she was round to
exertion by the sight of the wretches from whose clutches
she had been so miraculously delivered by Ned.
Tiger had already jumped behind a tree.
Ned jerked the girl behind another, and also hastened
to interpose some three feet diameter of growing timber
between his carcass and the weapons of the blacks.
He was only just in time.
A shower of spears was hurled by their enemies, but
fortunately the fugitives had all by this time got sheltered,
and there was no damage done.
Ned raised his rifle. He covered a gigantic savage
evidently the "boss" of the roaring, screaming brutcs.
A bright, fierce flame sprung from the mouth of his piece,
and the yelling monster sprung five feet into the air and
fell flat on his face, to the great astonishment and terror
of his party. The latter had evidently never heard this
"report" before, nor witnessed the effect. They turned
over the corpse and stared at the blood pouring from the
body.
Another "ping" from the same rifle potted the sable
gentleman who was holding this amateur inquest over the
remains of his friend, which so frightened the rest of the
black watch, that they took to their heels with a
rapidity which has never signalised the movement of that
celebrated regiment in face of the enemy.
Kelly could not help laughing loudly when he saw the
racing pace at which the niggers scuttled off.
Ned had slipped yet another cartridge into his rifle,
and managed to get a snap shot at another of the gang,
who pitched forward in his flight with a yell of agony and
a bullock in his hip.
Shooting a black has never cost any squatter much re­
pentance, as the Government always protect the black
from any retaliation for murdering a white man.
When that awful imbecile Charles Joseph La Trobe
was superintendent of Victoria, he officially offered a
reward of £100 for the conviction of a white man who had
shot a black, and £50 for the conviction of a black who
potted a European!
“That’s scared ’em a bit,” said Kelly, “but the whole gang will be on us before half-an-hour is over. It’s no use trying to push on, they’ll pick us off in a certainty. We must try and find a place where we can make a standing fight of it.”

Tiger offered a grant of assent, though if the two men had been alone he would doubtless have counselled their pulling onward.

“Then broken ground out there looks about the best chances for us. Head for that rock, Tiger.”

Bella Bolton had partially recovered under the new excitement, and managed to advance at a tolerably brisk pace by Ned’s side in the direction indicated.

The rock he had indicated was an almost square mass of basalt, rising some twelve or fifteen feet above the surrounding surface.

The sides, on arriving close to it, found to be almost perpendicular, save at one point, where Tiger quickly scaled it.

He signalled his companions to follow him, with evident glee.

With some difficulty Ned succeeded in hoisting his own bulk and helping Bella to the summit; which he found to be almost level.

Such a formation is not uncommon in the north-eastern districts of Australia, which exhibit many signs of volcanic origin.

Ned noticed that there were several loose boulders on the top which might, with but little difficulty, be arranged to form a kind of shelter from spears, and even as missiles to roll down on the foe.

He expressed his opinion to Tiger, and the two set to work.

In a short time all further ascent at the point where they had scaled the rock was blocked by a huge mass of basalt, and the others had been carefully disposed.

“Out,” said Kelly, drawing a long breath, for the exertion had taxed even his herculean strength to the utmost;

“I reckon we’ve fixed all that lot up ship-shape. It’s like the game the kids play at, called ‘King o’ the castle,’ this

“Ouf,” said Kelly, drawing a long breath, for the exertion had taxed even his herculean strength to the utmost;

“Myalls exposing themselves again to such a destructive fire.”

A horrible yelling now broke from the blacks, of whom about fifty had assembled on the outskirts of the timber.

The rush Ned had anticipated took place.

“D’ye think they know we’re here?” inquired the bush-ranger.

“Tiger looked at him in wonderment.

“Tigero We’ll go slick through you like a stone through a window, and the devils battle with with the fire: so that they tear at your flesh like fifty anted.sc.-

“Tigero We’ll go slick through you like a stone through a window, and the devils battle with with the fire: so that they tear at your flesh like fifty anted.sc.-

“Thebs’beggars are going to rush on in a minute,” observed Ned.

“Mr. Smith,” said Billa, “would you mind letting me have your revolver?”

“Your, nyan nyan,” was the sentiments answer.

“Well,” ejaculated Ned, as he glanced at his bulky figure, “a nice square hole I should make for a few of them, too. They’ve got to eat me with gunpowder smoke through this time.”

“Mr. Smith,” said Billa, “would you mind letting me have your revolver?”

“I’d like this,” muttered Ned. “The sealy vermin are up to some dodge or other, and they’ll come sneaking on the top of us before you can say knife, when we least think of it. Keep a good look out, Tiger, or we’ll be stuck as full of spears as a porcupine is with quills.”
CHAPTER CVIII.

THE RESCUE.

All at once a strange and unexpected sound fell on the watchers' ears.

It was the discharge of firearms.

With every sense on the alert, the besieged looked forth from their rocky fortress.

The shots continued, and evidently came from the timber in the rear of the blacks.

A wild confusion was observable amongst the latter. They were running about in evident consternation.

One was plain that a brisk attack was being made upon them from the rear.

In a few minutes a mob of them broke from the corner and rushed, helter-skelter, across the open towards the broken and hilly country of which the rock, where the fugitives had taken refuge, was one of the outskirts.

As they tore along past the rock their exposed bodies offered a splendid mark to both Ned and Tiger, who sent bullets and spears amongst them with deadly effect.

"Hooroo!" shouted the bushranger. "That's the style."

A party of mounted white men were now to be seen advancing through the scattered timber, and shouting words of encouragement to the party on the rock.

"There's my brother! Come here, and Carter the bullock-driver, too," screamed Miss Bolton.

The scene was a singular one. Several mounted men, armed to the teeth, were riding furiously after the flying devils that were flying for their bare lives.

Crack, crack, was heard on all sides, but the crack was accompanied by another crack, but of a different character. The crack of the stockwhip—a dreadful instrument, to the mounted men, armed to the teeth, were riding furiously after the flying devils that were flying for their bare lives.

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"There is my brother; I see him, and Carter the bullock-driver, too," shouted the bushranger.

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The Australian stockwhip has attached to a handle one foot long an eighteen feet leather lash, all made of bullock hide, and the belly or thick part loaded with lead. This lash, when laid round the head by a practised hand, can be brought down upon the victim's side with a force that cuts through the skin of a bullock and to the bone of a human being.

The thong at the end of the lash is a solid slip, or strip, of bullock hide. The report of each cut is like the crack of a rifle.

Round up the mob of firing savages who yelled as the lash fell upon their naked bodies, they were kept well together like a mob of cattle, for they dreaded this "cut" more than the bullet's of their enemies. They presented the target body as a target, and down they went like partridges.

Kelly lent his aid, too, and a wholesome lesson was taught the bloodthirsty cannibals.

"Wire in, boys," shouted one of the rescue party, "and knock the beggars over."

Crack, crack, went their rifles, and down went the rags, till, completely routed, they scampered like deer into the broken country, leaving almost a score of them behind.

The discovery of the animal itself, tethered to the tree where Ned had left it, only served to increase the mystery.

However, they could plainly distinguish the footprints of Miss Bolton in the cump that had been made by the natives at the side of the lake.

Yet they were greatly perplexed, on following up the route taken by the blacks from this point, to find no further signs of her presence amongst them.

The dogs were of no use to clear up this matter, for no one had brought any little object, especially belonging to the young lady for the animals to be made to smell, and thereby understand that they were to follow her especially.

Even if they had, it would only have increased the puzzle, since the blacks would have only been able to trace her to the water's edge, where she took the canoe.

The rescue party were puzzled.

They had several dogs with them, which they judged might be available in tracking.

On arriving there, they guessed at once the real state of affairs, and commenced a sudden and vigorous onslaught on the assembled myalls, with the result already narrated.

For Ned and his companions to quit their rocky fortress was the work of a moment, and soon rescued and rescued were united.

Bella described the way in which Kelly had saved her, and the two Bolton's were profuse in their expressions of gratitude to the bushranger, whom she introduced under his assumed name of Tom Smith.

"I can never sufficiently repay you, old fellow," said the elder Bolton. "Trod a man every inch of you. Not one in a thousand would have risked his life after such a mob of blacks, simple-banded."

"You're a thundering brute," chimed in his nephew, "and whatever you may ever get into, remember you have a firm friend at Nullarbor. If the devil himself came to fetch you I'd go bail for the man who risked his life, as you have done, to save Miss Bolton."

Tiger too came in for his share of praise, and was assured that "big one plain, big outsang, plenty bacy, and drink him rum," should be the least of his engagements for the rest of his natural life.

Ned was somewhat (for him) moved at Bolton's thanks.

But the main point of interest to the rescue party was the condition of Miss Bolton's mortally wounded sister.
he did not fail to see the advantage the squatter's gratitude might possibly be to him on some future occasion.

He was far more interested, however, as regarded the impression he had made on Bella, for whom he had some idea of calling if he lived. Not the only instance of "Beauty and the Beast."

He thought it as well to inform Mr. Bolton of the mission on which he had been despatched by Jackson, as by the time his late comrades must be getting into a pretty tight fix as regards provisions.

He did so, and once decided that as they were now only a few miles from Wirriba station, the whole party should push on there, and that fresh horses being obtained, a relief party should be organised to join Jackson.

"These negroes up here in the north," observed Ned, to Mr. Bolton, "are a very different set to those down south."

"Yes," replied the old squatter; "and it's quite another queer sort of work having to deal with them. We've given them some pretty sharp lessons from time to time, but it hasn't taken all the blazes out of them yet."

"Parson would never do; this little scrimmage in a hurry," remarked Phil Bolton.

"I'll be precious nasty for anyone who tries to ride through this part of the country single-handed," replied his uncle. "They're a revengeful set of devils, and will be as keen after a white man's blood as a cat after cream."

In a couple of hours or so the party reached Wirriba, where they were hospitably received.

The necessary preparations were very rapidly made, and the relief party prepared to start.

Before it left Bella found an opportunity of speaking a few words to Ned as they stood on the verandah.

"Mr. Smith," she said, "you have saved me from a fate so awful that I shudder to contemplate it. I owe you, I know, more than life itself. I do not suppose I shall ever have an opportunity of repaying this debt, but I'm going to give you a proof that I do by putting my neck in your hands."

"Your neck?"

"Yes. Give me your hand."

"Well, now, you've taken me by the hand and you're going to play the part of a rescuer of distressed damsels. You think, may be, that I'm a bit rough in my ways and nothing more, and you feel you are grateful to me for what I've done. You don't mind the roughness I can see, and you don't think altogether that I'm as rough in heart as in talk and look, at least not rough so far as I feel towards you."

The girl blushed a little and dropped her eyes.

"Well, now I've only got to say half-a-dozen words," Kelly went on, "and his odds that you don't drop my hand as if it was a diamond snake, and bolt away into the house like a wombut into his hole."

He felt her hand shake a little in his.

This little speech rather startled her, but she recovered herself.

"Tell me what you will," she answered, "I will be firm and true."

"I believe you are true as death," he exclaimed. "Well, you know when I first popped on you in the camp of these black devils, there wasn't much time for an introduction, and that afterwards I told you my name was Tom Smith?"

"Yes."

"Well, it is Tom Smith for the present and in these parts, but away down south, where it's posted up on the walls of every police-station, it reads different. It's Ned Kelly."

For a moment the girl was too puzzled to speak.

Then a light broke on her as to her companion's identity.

"Ned Kelly, the— the —"

"The bushranger, whose head is worth ten thousand pounds! Yes, that's me. I'm the cromulent (swell)."

Mr. Bolton remained silent for a few seconds. The shock of the discovery overwhelmed her.

She was not exempt from the terror that the mere mention of Kelly's name inspired. But she called all her firmness to her aid, and, though her blood ran cold at the thought of how completely at her mercy she had been, the recollection of how generously he had acted on her behalf, overpowered every other feeling.

"I said I owed you a debt," she remarked, speaking with some difficulty; "and, surely, that debt remains the same. I cannot forget that, whatever evil may be attached to your name, you treated me in a fashion the noblest man on earth could not excel. I repeat, I shall never forget it, and shall miss no opportunity of repaying it. And now—and now," she concluded, somewhat emotionally, "I don't feel very well; I must go indoors and lie down."

And bursting into tears, she darted away from Ned, and hurried to the room set apart for her.

"Women are nice creatures, but this one is up to my measure. She's the best of the lot I've seen as yet," thought Kelly.
He stood musing for some time. Who shall say what humanising thoughts occupied his reflections? Did the astonishing presence of this graceful young girl confer upon wishes, that appeared like bubbles on the surface of his life, to burst and disappear in a moment? Was it a vista of what might have been, that coloured his thoughts, and softened the ruggedness of his features at that moment? "Bah!" he ejaculated, suddenly. "All brash—just now at all events. When I make another haul, perhaps I'll ask her."

Half-an-hour later the arrangements of the relief party were completed, and they set out. After a toilsome journey they came on Jackson and his followers, who had been pushing on with great difficulty, and were in a deplorable plight.

The relief was warmly welcomed, and when the cause of Ned's delay was explained, his seeming negligence was excused. After making his report to Mr. Jackson, he joined his mates.

Two of them who had been talking apart in a confidential manner, suddenly became silent on his approach. Ned was certain, however, he had caught a bit of their conversation. It was only a name, but it produced a very strong sense of uneasiness on his part.

For he could swear that one of the two had distinctly uttered to his companion, the word—"Bushranger."

CHAPTER CCIX.
A FATAL LEAP.

DURING Ned's absence there had been plenty of talk going on in the camp about him.

The men naturally took to speculating as to when he would come back to join them, and whether he would be successful in his contract with the authorities there.

It was outside a police-station; but the name on the bill was not Tom Smith, but Ned Kelly. The stranger were Ned Kelly he was worth a fortune. The question was how to grab this reward.

The two were talking of their plan when Ned returned to the camp, and it was this that caused him to catch the word, "Bushranger."

These words were quite enough for Ned. He knew at once that mischief was in the wind.

The two talkers changed the subject as soon as they noticed him, and did not know they had already betrayed themselves. They were in a quandary in the way they suddenly pulled up and stared at him.

"Here's a pretty go," thought Ned to himself. "If I'd only twitted this, I'd have slipped quietly off without saying a word to the Bolton's about the fix these lubbers were in. But then what would have become of the girl, and she's worth the whole lot of these lubbers put together. One can't do a decent job without being spotted by some hound or other." He made up his mind, however, to try and get off unobserved as soon as they were near enough to their destination to allow him to do so with safety, for it was evident that natives were about, and that for a single man to attempt to make his way to the coast would be madness.

Already one poor fellow who had wandered from the rest, had been discovered and scared to death.

They had left Powell Creek where they had made a halt for the purpose of recruiting men and horses, and were pushing on for Daly Waters, where there was a small settlement.

When they were within two days' ride from this, Ned determined to abandon the rest of the party and push on. This purpose he carried out early one morning. Matthews and Shirley were the first to notice his absence.

The others thought he had merely galloped on a few miles ahead, and though this was to a certain extent a breach of duty, no particular attention was paid to it.

"I shouldn't have thought Smith was such a fink as to risk riding off like that, after poor Collins' death and the brush he himself had with the natives the other day," said Mr. Jackson, when he heard of Ned's departure.

"Mat's by far the best fellow there," said one of the rest. He had been unable to conceal his interest in the matter, and Ernest had been able to read his motionless interest and suspicion of them. They knew he had spotted them and their desire to nab him.

"Even if he hasn't," said Matthews, "here's a chance we shan't get again in a hurry.

"What way?" enquired Shirley.

"Why, snapping him up quietly. What we had better do will be to ride after him. He'll let us come alongside without suspicion, and then all we've got to do will be to grab him before he knows what we're up to."

"And you don't think he'd be fly to us?"

"He'll never dream we're up to. We can swear we're after the bushranger. We can swear we're after the bushranger."

"But, on the other hand, he couldn't, situated as they were, take Kelly single-handed, and convey him to Port Darwin, their ultimate destination and the proposed terminus of the railways.

He determined to enlist a partner, and arrange with him to pounce on Kelly as soon as they got near enough to Port Darwin, and to hand the bushranger over to the authorities there.

He selected a man named Shirley, and imparted his suspicions and his plan.

Shirley readily agreed that it would be a very good day's work to capture Ned, but thought that the identity of the so-called Tom Smith with the bushranger was by no means clearly established.

The two were talking of their plan when Ned returned to the camp, and it was this that caused him to catch the word, "Bushranger."
hand; as he joined on to our party. But now's the getting up to the northern coast he means to sneak away on his own hook.

"Well, but are you sure we shall come up with him?"

"Sure, he's bound to fork on Daly Waters, and we can manage to track him from there."

The two were indeed close on Kelly's track.

Resolving not to spare their horses, they urged them on to the utmost speed that was consistent with safety.

They camped out in the open, and next day resumed the journey. They had hoped by pursuing on to reach Daly Waters by nightfall.

However, darkness obliged them to camp within a few miles of it, much to their disgust. At daylight they were once more in the saddle, urging their jaded beasts towards the settlement.

They entered it some hours later, and learned to their disgust that Ned had passed the night there, and had started early that morning on a horse he had obtained in exchange for his own somewhat exhausted animals.

They decided they would continue in following his example, and in sweeping their weary mags for a couple of fresh mounts, though they had to plunk down a fair sum in addition to equalise the bargain.

This done, they pushed on after Ned, who they ascertained was bound for Tan Creek.

Their way lay across a series of plains of eight or ten miles in diameter, divided by belts and patches of timber and scrub, and here and there intersected by water courses, now generally dry, but at certain seasons evidently torrential.

The horse Ned had obtained was a powerful animal, with a wicked look about its eye that might have rendered any man uneasy.

As he had anticipated, the brute made one or two attempts to get rid of him, but had to give in to his master.

Ned halted at midday for a feed and a pipe, having taken the precaution to hobble his new purchase; but on his going to mount him, a little trouble ensued.

The horse backed, sidled, and played sundry other capers, till Ned settled him by flinging his blanket over his head, and then terrifying him into submission.

But a certain amount of time had been cut to waste, and on the last round as soon as he gained the saddle, he could distinguish two horsemen coming towards him across the plain at a great pace.

They were evidently in a hurry to overtake him, and he was by no means over pleased at this.

People did not ride as they were doing for nothing. But this was in some degree compensated for by the lighter weight the animals had to carry.

The chase continued for about an hour in this fashion. Matthews and Shirley could not tell whether Ned was riding his hardest, but he seemed able to maintain his advance without much difficulty.

The bushranger did not even turn his head to see if his foes were gaining on him.

"The beggar is taking it easy," said Shirley.

"Rather," replied Matthews; "it's a tidy beast he's got, but weight is bound to tell in the end. We'll nail him to a certainty." After a little time a line of trees appeared ahead like a fringe along the horizon.

"There's water there, for a hundred!" cried Matthews.

And indeed, in a few more strides, the gleam of water could be distinguished now and again through the foliage.

"I guess we'll have him now if he can't clear it. Be ready to go off to the left if he turns and tries to double," said Shirley.

The two separated, and rode in a parallel line some twenty yards apart.

As the trees grew larger and nearer, and as the water flashed back the sunlight, it was evident that Ned would have a difficulty in getting over.

The water course swept in a curve, and he was heading straight for the centre of this, so that escape either to the right or left would be impossible, unless he faced one or both of his pursuers.

The water course was between two steep, rocky banks. There was no path down to the water. The sides were as sudden as those of a canal. So he must either turn or jump it.

"Blowed if he ain't going to try it," cried Matthews, as he saw Ned swerve slightly from the course he had hitherto been pursuing, in order to head his horse for a point which seemed to offer the best chance for a leap.

"Then blaze away at him," cried Shirley.

"Try and noble his nag, at any rate."

The two saw that there was a chance of their prey escaping them, and began to urge their beasts furiously onward, in order to get within sure pistol range.

Before they could succeed, in accomplishing this, Ned had put his horse as the chas.

Aiding the animal with hand and heel, he lifted it across, and though sparks flashed from the rock on which it slighted from its efforts to save itself from falling by
half-frantic hoof beats, it at length recovered itself, and was soon sailing away on the other side.

"After him!" yelled Matthews, excitedly, putting his steed in turn at the gulf.

The horse rose bravely to the lead, but, whether from fear or over-exertion, or from the rider unbarred rather than helped it, and it jumped short.

Shirley saw the foreset hang, as it were, for a moment to a jutting bit of stone; a mad, wild effort by horse and rider; a moment's interval, and then the banks were clear and peaceful as ever.

A sickener of the job by this time."

"No sooner was a jutting bit of stone; a mad, wild effort by horse and rider; a moment's interval, and then the banks were clear and peaceful as ever.

The tragedy was down below, where Matthews by stretched upon the rocks beside his broken-beaked horse, with his skull fractured.

CHAPTER CX.

NED TRIES HIS LUCK ON THE ETHERRIDGE.

Ned chuckled as he looked back and noticed that one of his pursuers was missing, and that the other had reined up his horse at the edge of the chasm and was gazing down with an expression of horror into the depths below.

"Look what chance has saved me the trouble of cracking his cocoanuts," was his comment, and that the other's got a sickener of the job by this time."

This surmise was correct.

Shirley had a sickener of the job, and, after dismantling and scrambling down to the bottom of the water bed only to find that Matthews, as said as a dead man—his horse having fallen back on him and smashed his spine as well as his head—came to the conclusion that the only thing to do was to give it up and ride back to Daly Waters in quest of help to bury his comrade.

Meanwhile Ned had made the best of his way on to Yarram Creek, and thence to Port Darwin.

Here he was lucky enough to find a coasting schooner on the point of starting.

Ned, which was the small settlements at the mouths of the rivers emptying themselves into the Gulf of Carpentaria, settlements which have considerably increased in importance during the last few years, owing to the development of Northern Queensland.

Ned landed at the mouth of the Gilbert, and determined to make his way up to the Etherridge district—where he heard there was a recently discovered gold field—and where he thought he might have a chance of picking up something.

He found the latest and most successful rush was at a place called Warramot.

A little was being done in getting coarse gold from some alluvial workings, but most of the gold raised was got from the quartz reefs.

The quartz when raised was conveyed to a crushing mill, erected by a company, and was crushed and its gold retorted.

Ned, after surveying the ground, decided that the only big haul likely to be obtained would be got from the crushing mill.

The company to which it belonged had a claim of their own, which was yielding a good percentage of gold, averaging about five ounces to the ton, and had plenty of work to do besides for their neighbours.

The mill had been erected in a somewhat solitary spot.

It stood against a mass of rock cropping out from the ground, and from the roots of which a constant supply of water trickled.

It was this circumstance that had led to the choice of site, water being required for the crushing process.

In this the quartz is pumped up by huge stampers into a kind of paste; which is then washed until all the powdered stone is carried away, and nothing but the precious metal is left.

The mining camp and the reefs that were being worked were situated on the other side of a small range about half a mile in breadth, and the quartz to be crushed was brought to the mill in wagons drawn by oxen.

The mill was worked by steam power, and the staff.—was a small one, consisting merely of the manager, a young fellow named Douglas, the engineer, and the feeder, as he was styled, whose duty it was to supply the stampers.

Three times slept on the premises.

It was customary for the gold, crushed and retorted during the week, to be delivered to its owners on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning.

On the latter day a representative of the company used generally to drive over in a buggy from the township, and take their share to the bank there.

Ned by a little judicious looking about became acquainted with these facts.

He began to think over the best chance of making a haul.

Singlehanded he thought it was impossible, and kept his eyes open for a suitable pal.

He found looking around rather expensive work, for provisions were at the usual high rate which they rule at a goldfield, yet he could not quite hit on a satisfactory method of bringing off the job he had set his mind on.

He got in the habit of strolling across the range which lay between the diggers' camp and the crushing mill, and reconnoitering the latter at all hours from the shelter of a patch of timber.

He got thoroughly acquainted with the hours of work, and of meals, the habits of the residents of the mill, the amount of stuff they managed to crush in a day, and could even make a fair guess at the number of ounces they had in store at the end of the week, but he got no further to success.

In a little time, however, he got to notice that he was not the only one engaged in the contemplation of the Warramot crushing mill at all times and seasons.

An old man seemed to have the same interest in it as he did himself.

The old man was a queer-looking customer. Ned could not help thinking to himself.

He was a little chap, hardly more than five feet high, and so lean, dried up, and fragile-looking, that it seemed a wonder that he did not snap in two at any moment like a dry twig.

He looked as if in a strong wind he would be blown away like a leaf.

His features, which were as sharp as a razor edge, were full of keen intelligence, and his black, bird-like eyes twinkled like two needle-points.

His hair was gray and worn somewhat long, and when he lifted his hat it revealed a high, but narrow forehead, and bald, as a billiard ball.

As to going back to Mr. Jackson and his party, that would never do; as awkward questions might be asked, and it would never do to make his way up to the Etheridge district, where he heard there was a recently discovered gold field, and where he thought he might have a chance of picking up something.

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Picture Boards.

That we work it together.

This was the first man he had met with since he had been in Etheridge who seemed likely to answer his purpose. It was true he was not much to look at, but he was evidently "a good 'un to go." No; it'll look as if we started it for the chaps who come with the quartz. Besides, don't you go to think there'll be no customers. A grog-shop'll draw customers as a honey-pot will flies. I believe if you set up one in the middle of the Mallee Scrub you'd have as many customers as a rotting carcass would flies. But now, mate, what's your name? I like to know them as I work with. Oh, replied the other. Avery. Very good, Avery. I suppose as you've been marking me down over this little matter, you know already that my name's Tom Smith? All right. We're in for the job together as close as bullocks in a yoke. But work square with me, or, downy as you may be, you'd better have shoved your nut under one of the mill-stamps yonder first.

And the two proceeded to settle the details of their plan. (To be continued.)

NED KELLY.
CHAPTER CCXI.

SCREWING OUT A SECRET.

Mr. Douglas, the manager of the crushing-mill, was rather surprised to see the dilapidated shanty a few dozen yards from his door turned into a grog-shop.

Like Ned, he was very much puzzled at first as to where the customers were to come from. He tried, however, that they were not looking for gold.

The carters who brought in the quartz, and the miners who came for gold, would hail and take a nobbier than a drop, and when he had one, was given to talk.

The second lot completed the job, and he pitched for one of their beds in the inner room.

As to the feeder, Barry, he was a somewhat stolid, disinterested sort of a man, who had a habit of loafing down to the grog-shop.

The place, somewhat to his surprise, was well conducted, for he's close handy.

One of the proprietors, a big man named Smith, had a knack of slinging anyone who made himself offensive out of there.

Douglas had only one objection to the shanty, and that was his name Hicks, began to call there rather often.

The man was a capital workman, but was rather fond of course too often to make a mistake. I think it possible that the rum under the table he's close handy.

Douglas rose and advanced to them.

I hope they have some of the Australian public. The deeds of Dick Turpin, and the performances of Black Bess, are tame beside those of 'NED and his Nan.'

One of the proprietors, a big man named Smith, had a knack of slinging anyone who made himself offensive out of there.

Douglas felt a bit anxious at his departure.

He did not like to ask him to stop, but yet he felt half inclined to do so.

He rose with this intention, but checking himself, merely stood at the door, and watched Hicks' retreating figure.

To his surprise the man, instead of striking direct across the range lounged down to the grog-shop.

He found, however, that they were not lacking.

Douglas rose and advanced to them.

The second lot completed the job, and he pitched forward with his head on the table in a state of stupor.

The engineer strolled off.

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The two threw themselves upon their captive and forced the gag into his mouth again.

"What's to be done with the beggar?" asked Kelly. Avery remained silent, as if lost in thought.

The bushranger repeated his question.

"Yes, I've got it," replied the other, with a malignant smile stealing over his harsh skeleton features. "Bolt the outer door."

As he spoke he passed into the portion of the building that served Hicks as a workshop, and was fitted up as much with bench, vice, &c.

He made a sign to Kelly to bring his victim along and put him on the bench.

No sooner understood than done.

Avery went out for a minute and then returned, bearing a pen and ink and a sheet of paper, which he placed by the prisoner, who appeared as though perfectly indifferent to what was going on around him.

"A bird that can sing and won't sing must be made to sing," chuckled Avery to Ned, who continued to regard those preparations with some amazement.

Avery, addressing Douglas, said—

"You've stowed away the key of the safe—turn it up."

"Now no rubbish, my friend! You're going to do it, and that pretty sharp, too. Do you think you're going to play with two men like us? If you don't write the word I want on that paper I'll make you, that's all."

There was the same immobility on the part of Douglas, who lay where Ned had placed him, apparently quite insensible to the remarks addressed to him.

With diabolical deliberation Avery proceeded to loosen one of the arms of the prisoner, and, grasping his hand, placed his thumb in the bite of the screw.

"Blessed if it ain't as good a play!" roared Kelly, apparently enjoying the cruelty. "What a thing it is to be a doctor."

Avery gave the vice a turn, and a deep groan issued from the unfortunate man.

The ruffians saw the test was sufficient, and loosening the man's right arm placed ink and paper before him.

He knew it was useless to hold out against such merciless villains, and that human nature would at length be obliged to yield.

He therefore wrote the desired information, and in a few minutes the treasure was in the possession of Avery.

"Let's get it down at once to the trap," said Avery. "I'll just look out and see if the coast's clear."

As he spoke, he moved to the outer door and looked out.

An exclamation of deep disappointment broke from him.

"There's a trap and a couple of fellows in it driving straight for the mill. They've come to take the gold to the bank. I know the turn-out as well as I do my own face."

CHAPTER C CXII.

GOLD IN BUCKETSFUL.

They resolved to brazen it out to the new-comers. Both of them stowed Douglas away, gagged, in an inside room, and were prepared to represent themselves as workmen employed about the mill, and for this purpose emudged their faces and clothes with a little of grease and sand. A gunny-bag was carefully thrown over the gold in the corner.

They would inform the new arrivals that Douglas had gone over to the camp, and would return in an hour.

They opened the bolts of the outer door of the mill, so as to make everything look open and usual.

The next moment the bugle drew up in front of the crushing mill.

It contained Mr. Staples, the shareholder, who usually took the gold to the bank, and a friend.

The former sprang down, and stepping to the door, pushed it open.
Ned met him as he crossed the threshold.

The bushranger held a short but heavy engineer's hammer in his hand.

Avery noticed that his fingers gripped the handle convulsively.

"Slow that, mate," he whispered, anxiously in a low tone.

"Hallo," said Mr. Slater, as he stepped across the threshold and caught sight of Ned and Avery, "where's Douglas?"

"Gone over to camp, back in an hour," he said.

"Hum, hum," said Slater, who was a red-faced, fussy fellow. "Is Hicks about?"

"No, there's no one here but me!"

Avery heard a sound from the shanty, and was about to stop here while he went to camp, and said that if you called you would wait in his house. The door is open, there ain't a soul about but myself and this gentleman, who just come up from the shanty to see Mr. Douglas," said Ned, indicating Avery.

Just as Ned uttered these words, there was a crash from the workshop in which Douglas was lying.

It was reached from the crushing-room, in which they were, through an open doorway.

"What's that?" exclaimed Slater, suspiciously.

"I expect it's that cat of Hicks."

Slater hesitated a moment.

He turned on his heels and faced the doorway leading into the workshop.

He seemed to be debating whether or not to enter it.

Kelly's grip tightened on the hammer.

After a few moments hesitation, which seemed to be an age to the two ruffians, Slater turned away.

In answer to his enquiry, he was informed that the office was locked, and that Mr. Douglas would not be back before an hour.

"I say, Bren," said Slater to his companion, who was seated in the trap, "Douglas is away, and won't be back for an hour. We're to wait. Would you like to have a look over the mill?"

No sooner had the two moved away to the stables than Ned darted into the workshop.

Douglas had heard Slater's arrival, and by a desperate exertion managed to get one arm sufficiently free to knock an oil can, the only thing within reach, onto the floor with his elbow. He was so tightly gagged that he could make no other noise.

This had caused the noise they had heard.

He was now making desperate struggles to free himself from his bonds.

Kelly saw his efforts, and quickly re-adjusted the bonds of the unfortunate manager in such a way that all chances of his freeing himself was hopeless.

"Look here, if you start loose again," he muttered, "I'll light up the area, get up steam, set the mill a-going, and run you through the stampers."

The new comers had taken up their quarters in the verandah, and Kelly would be compelled to pass their front carrying the bucket which contained the stolen gold. The weight was considerable, but Kelly steadily trotted along as if carrying a bucket of water.

"That's well over. Fill me a nobbier," was his first remark on his arrival.

The precious ingots were soon removed from their hiding place in the buckets, and after being done up in a couple of blankets, were transferred to the trap.

"If there's nothing left but to start," said Avery.

"Those fellows are still on the verandah," said Ned, "and they can spot us easy."

"Let 'em watch, whatever they think they can't follow. I've taken care to spoil that game, their nag has got a nail in his foot that won't make him travel very far."

In a few minutes more the pair were on road.

Their plan was a simple one.
"What's that to do with it? Well, if you must know, Judkins doesn't mind disposing of a body now and then."

"I was a bit startled at this.

"But, mind you, many years ago body-snatching was pretty lively.

"You're a regular customer of his," I said to Vaughan.

"Yes. There's a young subject to be put into the vault to-day, and he has promised, as young subjects are, to let me have it. It's not from mere curiosity Vaughan.

"It's very lively. Judkins doesn't mind disposing of a body now and then.'

"Once or twice when I have only wanted to make a brief examination Judkins has accommodated me with his kitchen.

"He felt rather disgusted at this, Mr. Judkins, who is subject to the dead in the shape of his vault, and then broke faith, but at the same time my curiosity was roused.

"After a little trouble I got Vaughan to promise to call on me that same evening and to take me with him.

"Punctually to his time he called, and we were soon on our way in his carriage to Baal Peor Chapel.

"We stopped opposite the court, at the end of which the chapel was built, and alighted.

"We dived into the court, and stopped at a house next to the chapel.

"Vaughan gave a peculiar knock, which convinced me that from time to time, he must have been a regular customer of Judkins.

"The door opened, and there was Judkins with a candle in his hand.

"He did not look particularly pleased at seeing me.

"However, when Vaughan had explained that I was a doctor like himself, he cleared up.

"'Very glad ter see yer, sir,' he began; 'and any time as yer wants anything in my line I shall be very glad ter serve yer out of the jam-pot.'

"'Do you any objection to my seeing your'—reverend name?'

"'Oh,' said Vaughan, 'that's an old joke of Judkins.'

"He called the way into the vault

"'Let's clear out at once.'

"All right,' said Judkins. 'Lumpy—here, Lumpy, where are yer?'

"Reply to this call there appeared a hideous old fellow in a shabby great coat and very little else.

"'What is that? he said, somewhat angrily, for he could not bear to be disturbed at his work, and it was a standing order that no one should rout him out of this den of his.

"'Please, sir,' answered his servant's voice, 'it's Mr. Finch, and he must see you at once.'

"In reply to this call there appeared a terrible old gentleman.

"Finch, and he must see you at once.'

"We reached Vaughan's house, and stopped at a side door leading to his surgery, which he opened with a key.

"We carried the body in through the surgery into a small room fitted up as a laboratory and dissecting room.

"The sack was removed, and the subject placed on the table.

"It was that of a girl of sixteen or seventeen, of very emaciated appearance.

CHAPTER CCXIV.

AVERT'S STORY CONTINUED.—THE DEAD ALIVE.

"Vaughan had just given me some explanation as to the symptoms of the disease the girl had succumbed to, and he thought he wanted to clear up, when there was a knock at the door.

"'What is that?' he said, somewhat angrily, for he could not bear to be disturbed at his work, and it was a standing order that no one should rout him out of this den of his.

"'Please, sir,' answered his servant's voice, 'it's Mr. Finch, and he must see you at once.'

"'Why the deuce didn't you say I was out?'

"'He caught sight of the light in the surgery, sir.'

"'Confound it! I suppose I must go,' said Vaughan to me. 'He's a most dreadfully fellow, and one of my best patients. Waits here; I shan't be more than a quarter of an hour.'

"'He went out, and I was left alone with the body.

"There was nothing unusual in this; it was a situation in which I had found myself scores of times.

"Still, I felt more uncomfortable than I ever had before under such circumstances.

"The ghastly disclosures of Judkins oppressed my mind.

"I could not help a feeling of horror every time my thoughts wandered to that profaned vault and its hideous revelations.

"The very fact of the body having come from it increased this feeling.

"Vaughan seemed a long time gone.
"I began to get impatient. "Anything was better than this sickening inaction and its accomplishment of troubled idea. "I felt I must do something, or I should go mad. "I resolved to begin operations myself. "I took a knife and entered the corpse. "Even now I can hardly tell what followed. "No sooner had the knife cut into the flesh than the subject's eyes opened, and fixed themselves upon me. "I gave a shriek, to which she responded, as she slowly rose into a sitting position. "I lost all command over myself, and with wild cries for help, threw open the door and fell into the passage. "Vaugan, his patient, and the servants came flocking up to find me stretched insensible on the floor, and the girl sitting on the dissecting table, with the blood streaming from a disease that must have ended fatally in a few days. "A look at it closely, I recognised Lumpy, though it looked as if ten years instead of ten months had passed since I had last seen him. "He was crawling along in the last stage of exhaustion and distress. "As he passed to beg a copper he recognised me. "I had always wondered what had become of Judkins; and I resolved now to find out. "'Ah, doctor,' he said; 'spare us a copper.' "'I'll give you five shillings if you'll tell me anything you know about Judkins,' I said. "He stared at me in a half vacant, idiotic way. "'All right,' he said at last; 'but give us a drop of drink.' "I took him into a public-house and gave him a quart of gin, which he tossed off at once. "'Ah,' he said, 'I don't care for wittles. I live on drink. A dropping drop o' summert like that does wake you up.' "'Well,' he said, 'we get to hear o' thar bein' summart wrong. He gone out early, and he comes bostin' back as wite as a sheet. 'Lumpy,' he says, says he, 'it's all up; the gal's bloomed, and we're just about bust up in our little game. He begun to rammage about a bit, and he says, 'There's half a quid for yer, and I try yer luck at summer out.' 'What,' says I, 'half a quid?' 'Yes,' says he, and he chuckst it down on the table. "'I looks at it,' continued Lumpy, 'and says, 'Mr. Judkins, if it's all up, you ain't made a bad thing o' the business. Give us five quid and I'm off.' Well, doctor, he wouldn't, but away he went out. "Now I know as how he had the money hid somewheres, but I never picked a knife where he kept it. However, thinks I, he'll get it now and be off, so I kep' a good watch on him, and I see him go into the chapel, and then I knew he had all his money hid away there. And my pockets as empty as this here pewter. "I understood the hint, and had the quarter refilled. "After a pull, Lumpy went on— "'I was in the vault, you must know, for I'd gone in there to listen, and I could hear him trampin' about overhead, when the idea all of a sudden came acrost me that he might as well come down below. So I just unbolled the two bolts as held up the trap door in the chapel floor, down which they used to put the bodies, and in about half a minute Judkins treads on it, and down he comes.' "'Was he killed?' "'No, quite, I think. He was only stunned a bit, I fancy, so I got a hundred sovereigns out of his pocket and into mine, and then I popped him into an empty coffin. It was the same as had held the young girl, as there was all the row about, I found out afterwards.' "'And then?' I queried. "'I'll tell you,' and he lowered his voice confidentially. "'I went into the kitchen, and I broke open the cupboard and took Judkins' got in 'tis coff, and mixed myself a dram. Perhaps I overdid it, but all at once some idea came acrost me that I'd better make old Judkins snug, so I just went into the vault again and screwed him down all proper.' "'In the coffin?' "'Rather.' "'And what happened then?' "'Well, I hardly know. I set there a-drinkin' till a lot of people came and punished me all round and turned me out, and since then I've spent all my tin, and come down to what you see me. But if so be as you wants Judkins very particular, you'll find him there now,' and the fellow chuckled at the thought. "'I felt as if I could have annihilated the monster, who related the horrible fate of his former master as he would that of a trapped rat or reptile.' "'How jolly nice you are all at once,' said Kelly, with a diabolical sneer. "'Oh, I forgot. Birds of a feather, you know,' retorted Avery, with a look that spoke of contempt and dislike. "'However funny as it may seem to you I was disgusted with the brute, and throwing him his five bob, motioned him to be off, which he was not long in doing."

CHAPTER CCXV.

NED PLANTS THE SWAG AND HIS PAL.

Thus ended Avery's "strange, eventful history." On the pair drove for some considerable time. Avery appeared to know every inch of the way, as well as if he had been "prospecting" there all his life. "Full up," as he cried; "here's the spot (at the foot of a large tree) where the plunder can be hidden until we come and get it. "Each of the parties had their own idea of which would be the successful "digger." Avery meant treachery, not death—Ned meant the latter.

Ned drew the rein.

It was a dreary flat, the horizon only broken in one direction by a dim line of rock and tree. "Are you sure we are right?" he asked almost incredulously. "Quite," answered Avery; "yonder lies the river." He pointed, and Ned, following the direction of his finger, could distinguish its course, marked by the dnten water-holes lying between its banks like a string of irregular beads, as it swept away to the horizon like a wringing
make in alternate articulations of sand, and sedge, and pool.

"Should we drive up to it?" asked Kelly.

"No," replied Avery, "we mustn't bring the wheel tracks any further.

The two men alighted and secured the horse. Ned took off the blankets containing the gold and with some difficulty hoisted it on to his broad shoulders.

"Come, show the way," he said to his companion.

Taking a spade, Avery stepped off in front.

They were making their way to an elbow in the river at some distance down.

Nevertheless despite the weight Kelly had to carry, he appeared to be the fresher of the two when they gained the banks of the stream.

His fragile companion seemed utterly exhausted as he cast himself upon the turf.

The bushranger proceeded to spread out the blankets in which the gold had been wrapped.

Then with great skill he trimmed round three sides of an oblong of turf, and rolled it back so as to lay bare the soil beneath it.

This he began to dig out, casting the loose earth as he threw it out into the blankets.

Avery stretched upon his stomach, with his chin supported by his hands, watched him in silence for a few moments.

"You'll excuse me helping you, I'm sure," he at length remarked, in a tone of old world politeness, strangely at variance with his appearance, and his usual style of address towards Ned.

"All right," ejaculated the latter.

Avery took up a handful of earth, and let it dribble through his fingers, with his gaze fixed on the far away horizon.

In the lurch of the night, the only sounds were those of Ned's hard breathing, and the grating made by his spade.

Avery continued to look across the plain to the horizon now dying out in distance against the darkening sky.

"Yes," he resumed, as though speaking to himself, "this is the safest bank, a bank that holds more secrets than gold.

Ned had all but completed the hole to his satisfaction, and straightening himself as he stood in it, bent on his spade.

"I reckon it's deep enough," he said.

"You're right, deep enough and strong enough. The toes will hold it better than three-inch iron could.

You've been in quod, mate?" he continued abruptly, changing his tone to his usual one of familiarity.

"Yes," replied Kelly in some astonishment.

Then I suppose you've heard the chaplain preach there, if you never did anywhere else. Do you recollect the text about laying up treasures where moth and rust corrupt, and thieves break through and steal?" he continued in his sneering manner.

"No," said Ned sulkily: "I think you're a bit overfed from the way you're jabbering!".

"I almost think so, too.

The bushranger had by this time finished the hole to his liking.

Stepping out of it, he knelt by its side, and taking up the smaller ingots began to throw them in one by one. Kelly had thrown all the smaller ingots in, and only the big one remained.

The bushranger rose to his feet with this held in both his hands.

And he was again staring intently into the night.

Just as this moment a spear came whistling past Kelly's head, and the two men sprang to their feet. The view that met their astonished glances was not very encouraging.

Some fifty Aborigines, laden with spears, seemed to spring like serpents from the ground, and a shower of spears fell amongst the two white men, making a noise like the rustling of bird's wings. Kelly shouted out—

"It's all up!" and bolted like mad for where the horse was tethered.

He unharnessed the animal, took a saddle he had brought with him, in case they wanted to take up a stray mount, and clapped it on the horse with the speed of a practised hand.

As he looked round he saw Avery down with a spear through his body, and being smashed up under the murderous blows of the waddys wielded by the savages. The bushranger was soon on the back of the horse and was off, the fate of Avery not causing him the least concern.

He muttered something about being saved the trouble, and looked forward to subsequently exhausting the buried gold, and having no claimant for a share of it.

CHAPTER CCXVI.
BLACKS AND WHITES.

Ned judged that the best thing would be for him to shift his quarters for a few months, and get a berth at a convenient distance from his late exploits.

He could there lead a perma/ till the robbery had blown over, and come back on the gold.

He heard that a hut-keeper was wanted at an out-station on the Bimber river; and, after an interview with the owner's overseer, undertook the berth, and started for the out-station.

As he approached it, laden with the saddle of a knocked-up horse, a rough but anxious voice rang out—

"Who's there?"

Ned was some yards from the door, walking on the grass as, he judged, making very little noise.

However it was evident that he had been either seen or heard, for the voices continued—

"What cheer, mate?"

He soon enlightened his interviewer, giving his name as Smith.

A door was unbarred, and he was asked in, and when he had entered the bars were all replaced.

He found himself in the presence of three men.

One who had just fastened the bars was putting back his gun into a kind of rack, the other two were watching suspiciously.

"You seem previous skrey of strangers, mates," said Ned. "I've been sent up here by Mr. Calthorpe, and have been on the road since Monday."

"Oh! you're the new hut-keeper, are you," replied one of the men who was the shepherd. "There's the billy, the damper's on the table. Our mutton is rather high."

Ned began to eat his supper.

The other two men were sawyers, stout, broad-chested fellows, who appeared to have lived so long in the wilderness as to have got to regard speach as almost a superfluity.

"And what did old Calthorpe say about the Warrekerro station?" asked the shepherd, when Ned had satisfied his hunger.

"Didn't he pitch it to you that this was the healthiest spot in the colony, that there was next to nothing to do, and that the blacks had given over troubling us."

"Yes," answered Ned; "he said the blacks had bolted."

The shepherd laughed grimly.

"Bolted. They're all round here as thick as sheep tracks, and it's as much as one risk one's nose outside with the chance of a spear in his liver."

"Lively that," said Ned.

"Oh! you're the new hut-keeper, are you," replied one of the men who was the shepherd. "There's the billy, the damper's on the table. Our mutton is rather high."

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"Lively that," said Ned. |
the sight of the poor old squatter, living with his white
infant dabbled in blood; and his daughter, a likely lass of
the shepherd.

"We were in the hunt, old 'un?" inquired Ned.
"Yes, replied the old fellow, and we didn't much
bother up for crossing the bush. Once time, I mind we got
hold of an old four pounder gun that some naval officer
had brought up country with him as an ornament. That
was a fine lark," and the old boy chuckled at the remin­
scence.

"What was in it, slugs?"

"Slugs, no; we'd emmended it to the muzzle with broken
glass and old mfts. A lot of us came up and then we had
a little more fun, for we lighted a big fire and clapped
a chap as did told me that the sight in that camp, when a
man was speared."

After one or two more brushes they were quite settled,
though in my mind if I'd have been one of them I'd rather
have been out that way than served as a mob wore
by a canny Scotch squatter on the Murrambies.

"What's the yarn?"

"Why, he just let them help themselves to as much
poisonous food as they could lay hands on. He'd got a lot of
arsenic up for dressing the sheep and he mixed it up
with flour so that the beggars poured down on it and
carried it off to their camp. I didn't see that myself, but
a chap as did told me that the sight in that camp, when a
visit was paid to it, was enough to make a fellow feel a
bit cramped. Men, women, and children all suffocated
with their faces twisted up in their agony, their teeth
bare, their lips drawn back, and the whites of their eyes
showing as they had rolled back in their sockets."

"Well," remarked Kelly, "I only came across your
northern blacks for the first time the other day, and I
shouldn't mind if the whole blessed business were served up
with another light.

"The complaints of cattle killing and hut robbing by
the blacks along the northern coast, from Cairns to
Crooktown are never-ending, and will never cease as long
as there are blacks there."

The Queensland Commissioner of Police, in his report
for 1878, wrote as follows—

"The whole coast is studded with timber-getters and
settlers, by whom the blacks are disturbed, and prevented
from getting their natural food in that direction; whilst
further inland the country is occupied by small cattle
stations, which again cut them off from their hunting and
frequent water fishing grounds.

The intervening scrub is small, affecting but a scanty
supply of fruits in their seasons, and hence the natives
take advantage of the cover it affords, to make sudden
raids on the cattle and huts, which are rendered more easy
by the nature of the ground.

Hence the bitter feeling between the settlers in the
north and the blacks, from whose assaults they are never
safe; and hence the terrible thoroughness of the venge­
cence they have from time to time taken.

On one occasion, in Northern Queensland, two white
men were speared.

The rest met and determined, as a measure of precau­
tion, to hunt up the tribe of blacks against whom their vengeance
was avenged, by the destruction of a whole tribe by the police.

Fearful of reprisals, or apprehensive of danger, most of
the blacks took to the water, and diving like dab-chicks,
tried to elude the bullets of their foes.

It was a vain hope, however, for the whites surrounded
the water-hole, and succeeded in "potting" no less than
fifty of the unfortunate wretches as they swam about in
wild terror.

Near Crooktown, almost within gun-shot of a popular
town, the murder of some white men was similarly avenged,
by the destruction of a whole tribe by the police.

Several of the blacks in this case swam out to sea, to
escape the bullets of the police, and never returned to
shore.

Out of a party of thirty-five men, women, and children,
only three women and a child escaped the triple perils of
the revolvers of the police, the waves of the ocean, and the jaws of the sharks, with which that portion of the coast abounds.

A writer in the *Australian Magazine* has asserted that the policy of the Queensland Government has much to do with keeping up the chronic ill-feeling between black and white.

He represents the superintendent of an absent squatter giving instructions, if he anticipates annoyance from the blacks, to send for the native police.

A travelling tribe crosses the run and Startles the cattle. Perhaps they spear a few, or wantonly chase them, and in the season when the beasts are “topping up” such a scare may take from off the fat “mob” of say three hundred beasts a certain percentage of weight, which in the aggregate represents a fair sum.

Brown, the superintendent, writes to the officer in charge of the district at once. The lieutenant and his party ride up a few days later. Each of the troopers has one spur only; consequently one side of the horse goes faster than the other, the result being a peculiar snail-like style of “policeman’s jog.”

Next morning after their arrival at the station they take a circuit of ten miles and quarter the ground backward and forward till they hit on a solitary track. They run this track with a speed and certainty which the trained bloodhound alone can equal. No impress on the soil, no heat-blade of grass escapes them.

Presently more tracks join, all going in the same direction, and it is evident that they have struck the main trail of the blacks.

The party dismount and hobble their horses in a hollow. Two of them peel themselves of every rag of uniform and glide on ahead, crouching and dodging. In about an hour they come back with the report that there is a camp of blacks on the edge of a scrub some two miles off.

The party stay where they are all night, but at the first streak of day they mount and push quietly but rapidly over the ground. They catch sight of the fires of the black camp they rush on at a gallop.

The alarm is given, the camp is empty in a few seconds, but the troopers are off their horses and into the scrub, carbines in hand, throwing off their clothes as they go in hot pursuit.

The lieutenant waits outside smoking his pipe and watching the prospects of a deal for a colt that he has caught his eye at the station.

Shots are heard in the scrub, and the troopers come back after an interval. They have cut off some half-dozen of the last of the fugitives, whose dead bodies lie in mangled guiles under bush and thicket.

The leading men of the tribe have of course escaped; and, with broken-hearted women and crying children, shriek to heaven for vengeance against the horrible “whitefever,” to whom they ascribe all this. It is as likely as not that Brown, the superintendent, never pulled trigger on a black, and does not even hear of how the lieutenant and his men carried out their “duty.”

Only, if Brown’s horse does come home riderless some evening, and his owner’s carcass is discovered riddled through with bullets, it is hardly to be wondered at.

As to his superiors, they, of course, never know anything about the matter, being merely business speculators working the station with bank money.

Questions of policy or humanity to the blacks have nothing to do with them.

*India—Our Australian Cousins.*

“Blacks on our premises? Why then, they were trespassing. It’s clearly the business of the authorities to turn them off.”

That is all they know or understand about it. Their concern with the Gondary station is simply one of personal shillings and pence; and, as long as the money comes out right, what more is wanted? Meanwhile, half-a-dozen black corpses lie in their blood in the scrub, because the tribe they belong to, or some other tribe unknown, is suspected of having gone near the Gondary cattle camp.

CHAPTER CCXVII

AN ATTACK ON THE HUT BY SAVAGES.

Ned found a hutkeeper’s life fearfully wearying. The silence all day until the return of the shepherd at sundown left him without resource. He resolved to “cut it” at once; but he had a little experience to go through before he carried out his intention, which was not altogether unpleasant to a man of his active habits. He soon had an opportunity of becoming practically acquainted with the dangers of the spot.

It was five or six mornings after his arrival. The shepherd was away on his rounds, and the bush-ranger was alone. He was sitting in his usual place, and before him hung a little circular mirror resting on two nails. He threw a careless glance at this, and all at once his attraction became fixed on it.

Across its face were reflected two small straight sticks.

He usually sat in that position, and knew every bough outside that the mirror reflected; but these two sticks were new to him.

He was about to go to the window and put out his head, when a sudden reflection caused him to change his mind. He leaned forward instead, and slightly shifted the position of the mirror so as to take in a wider field.

He was partially successful in this. He could see a little more of the sticks, and also make out the slender fingers and muscular forearm of the native who held one of them.

It was evident that they were a couple of spears, and it was odds that one of them did not come flying through the open window of the hut and into his body.

The position was a ticklish one, and Ned knew it. He felt that the black outside was watching him, and that if he gave the slightest sign that he was aware of the enemy’s presence it would be the immediate signal for an attack.

He looked round. His gun was in the rack, but if he stepped up to get it, no doubt the spear would at once be thrown.

“Curse that black snake!” he muttered; “he’s got his eye on me for a certainty.”

The door of the hut as well as the window, was open, and, for all he knew, a black might be lurking by that, too.

The window could be closed by a shutter now swung back against the wall, but to step up to it for that purpose would be to receive the black’s spear in his chest.

At last he made up his mind what to do. He rose and took up a pail as though about to leave the hut. His eye was on the mirror, and he noticed that the position of the spear shifted.

It was evident that the savage was watching every movement he was making.

“Hell! think he’s got a better chance of nailing me outside!” muttered Ned, and moved to the door.

But instead of passing the threshold he swung the door to, shot the bolt, and jumped back at once into an angle of the hut formed by the walls, in which the door and window were.
It was well he did so, for even as he moved away a spear came flying through the window and struck the door, just where he had been standing, and was followed by another.

In his angle he was comparatively safe.

The wall in which the door was to his left, and that in which the window opened to his right.

Hence he was out of reach of any spears, unless too thrower thrust his head into the hut.

But with only one opening to guard instead of two, Ned felt pretty safe.

The next job was to shut the window.

If the shutter had swung back towards him as he stood, this would have been easy enough.

But, unfortunately, it swung back against the further half of the wall, so that to get to it, it was absolutely necessary to pass before the window.

His gun, and also his revolver, which he had not dared to seize for fear of drawing the fire of his enemies by this action, were also beyond the window.

A clumsy-looking, old-fashioned pistol of the shepherd's, was, however, hanging on a nail on the wall near him.

He unholstered it, and examined it.

It was loaded, but had evidently been charged a long time before.

"Just the sort of thing to miss fire when a chap's life rests on it," he thought, "I must get mine at any risk.

Here goes."

It was absolutely necessary to cross the window to get to his arms.

The only plan to do so without being seen, was to crawl along the floor of the hut in a stooping position.

But could he be certain of doing this unseen?

How did he know but that the blacks had not found some crevice or knothole, through which they were observing his movements.

He could not tell how many foes he had outside.

More than one he was certain, by the way in which the two spears had been thrown.

After reflecting, he decided to crawl along past the window, keeping as close to the wall as possible.

He lay down, not on his face, but on his back, so that he could watch the window all the while.

As noiselessly as possible he worked himself along.

He could see on the square of sunlight opening in the wall, as inch by inch he edged himself along.

At length he was abreast of the window, which his glances had never left.

A moment more and he would be past it, out of reach of arms, and away to his arms to his hand.

All at once the patch of sunlight was darkened.

A hideous shadow obscured it.

A face appeared at the opening.

A black, repulsive face with gleaming teeth, and eyes red with the fire of savage vengeance.

A woolly head was thrust boldly through the opening simultaneously with a lean, but muscular arm, holding a short, sharp spear.

Ned's movements had evidently been gauged.

A grin of triumph spread over the face of the black as he marked the position of his prostrate foe.

He poised the spear just over Ned's chest.

A look of anticipated enjoyment rendered his features positively demoniacal.

For a moment even Ned's blood ran cold.

There was no way of avoiding the coming stroke, by jerking or rolling himself to one side.

Accustomed to spear fish in the rivers, the black's arm was a sure one.

The bushranger glanced up at the grinning face above him, and read in it a desire to prolong the agony of anticipation he was enduring.

The black did not notice the pistol, and thought that his enemy was quite unarmed.

"If this old pistol is a duffer, I'm a gone coon."

Raising the weapon in question, he took a swift aim at the hideous face bending over his own, and before the black had even time to realize that his foe was armed, pulled the trigger.

As he did so he jerked his body towards the middle of the floor.

There was a flash and a report, followed by a cloud of smoke.

Ned heard the spear feebly strike the door, and simultaneously the thud of a heavy body falling across the window-ledge.

Then came a pattering sound, like a gentle rain.

By this time he had secured his gun and revolver, and advanced to close the window by closing the shutter.

There was an obstacle to this.

As the smoke cleared away he saw the body of the black hanging as limply as a damp rag over the window-sill, with the blood patterning on the floor from a ghastly wound in the face.

"I reckon you'll never come trying to spear white fellows again, you crawling black vipers," was Ned's only comment.

Grasping the body with one powerful arm, and pulling it into the hut, Ned peered round the edge of the shutter.

He caught sight of another black stealing off towards the nearest shelter.

He raised his gun.

The steady barrel flashed out, and the second native seemed to sink peacefully down.

Ned glanced round.

There were no more signs of natives in that quarter.

A noise from the side of the hut in which the door was, attracted his attention.

Speeding the shutter he stepted towards the door.

As he neared it a blow was struck against it, and a voice without feebly cried—

"Open quick, mate."

Ned withdrew the bar, and cautiously opened the door to the extent of a couple of feet or so.

The shepherd staggered in and sank on to the nearest seat.

"Hallo," said Ned, seeing him sway from side to side, "are you hit, mate?"

"Yes," moaned the other feebly; "a spear under the shoulder.

There are a gang of the devils gone down to the river to surprise the sawyers. Can you get down there in time to warn them?"

Ruffian though he was, Kelly was by no means the man to let such a tragedy be perpetrated without trying to prevent it, even at the risk of his own skin.

After lashing up the weapons on to his hands, he could he left the hut which the other barricaded after him, and started for the sawyers' camp on the river.

Sounding the ground as he advanced, he noticed a swaying of the grass some distance ahead.

Presently he noticed the upper part of a native's head rise above it, and the thought of an ambush occurred to him.

If there was only one, he judged the best plan would be to advance, risk a spear, and boldly rout the lurker on the path.

Again the grass moved, and again the black fellow's head rose above it as Ned drew quietly nearer.

A couple of bounds would place him at Ned's mercy before he had time to raise a weapon.

Grasping his gun, Ned jumped forward.

The head was again lifted, and the eyes looked straight into his, with the perplexed, wild look of a trapped animal.

The face was drawn with pain, and the lower lip had fallen, and the brown was damp with sweat.

As the wild, clouded eyes rested on Ned, the wretched creature held up first one hand and then the other, to show that he was unarmed.

It was the native he had fired at from the hut.

Ned's bullet had struck the black fellow's spine, rendering his lower limbs dead and useless.

Behind him the grass lay broken down in a long furrow,
where he had staggered himself along by the mere strength of his hands and arms, in the hope of gaining the river.

Ned looked at the wretched creature, and, raising his gun, hesitated as to whether he should put an end to his sufferings.

He reflected, however, that the shot might attract other blacks who might be prowling about, and passed on.

It was not long before the blacks showed themselves in a party of about a score, headed by a fellow of gigantic size.

Ned saw at once he was the leader, and resolved to shoot him down.

Just as he raised the gun, a long, faint "cooeey" fell on his ear from the direction of the sawyers’ camp.

As soon as they heard it the blacks plunged into the scrub, and disappeared with the quickness of lightning.

Ned cooeyed in reply, and made his way in the direction of the sound.

As he pushed through the thick scrub he could not help thinking how easy it would be for the blacks to tend a dozen spears through him before he caught a glimpse of them, but at the same time he guessed pretty well that the danger for the day was pretty well over, as far as he was concerned.

 CHAPTER CCXVIII.

THE MASSACRE OF THE SAWYERS.

The melanthal gloom in which his "cooey" was answered from the sawyers’ camp told him that mischief had been done there, and he had no doubt that it was the party he had just sighted who had done it, and who, having accomplished their murderous work, were wriggling back to their holes like snakes.

The sawyers whom he had seen at the hut, had told him that the blacks who might be prowling about, and passed on.

As he pushed through the thick scrub he could not help thinking how easy it would be for the blacks to tend a dozen spears through him before he caught a glimpse of them, but at the same time he guessed pretty well that the danger for the day was pretty well over, as far as he was concerned.

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"Hadn’t you your guns?"

"Yes, they were close handy, but we hadn’t no time to use ’em. As I said, Bill and I were at the pit—he on the top, and I at the bottom—and the saw was going terribly, when all of a sudden I felt it stop in my hands. Before I had time to look up to see what was the matter, there was a loud cry from poor Bill, and a screech from twenty black devils. It told me all at once what was up. "Aye, there’s no missing when the brutes do give tongue!"

"I scrambled out of the pit, and the first thing I saw was my brother lying bleeding just where he had fallen after jumping off the log. Before I had time to see any more, a whack from a waddy tumbled me back into the pit. I was stunned, and the fellow who hit me thought he’d settled my hash at one swipe; and I don’t wonder at it, for he was the biggest black I ever set eyes on."

"A big black?"

"Yes, a whopper—nearly seven foot high, I should think."

"That must be the same chap I saw just now, heading a party. I wish I’d have had a chance of a shot at him. I’ve got a fancy for that fellow. Well, what happened next?" said Ned.

"I lay stunned for some time, as I guessed by the sun, and when I came to myself all was quiet. I got out of the pit, and there was poor Bill lying there where I saw him before, with a pool of blood round him. He had five spear-wounds in the breast, but, for wonder, not a blow on the head; and he just gasped out to me that the tall black had the chief hand in it."

"Curse that black! we owe him one!"

"One him one, one, and I’ll pay him," said Holt, with flashing eyes. "I’ll never rest till I’ve had his blood."

"And the other two men, what about them?" asked Ned.

"Raikes and Bolton. They were lying a few yards away quite dead, with their souls and faces battered in, and their arms and legs broken by waddies. I was hardly able to hold up, but I managed to get poor Bill on my back, and I brought him on as far as this, till I felt clear knocked up, and obliged to sit down. So then I began to cooey; in the hope the shepherd might be this way, or that Bailey might hear me from the camp by the river."

"Perhaps they’ve done for him too," suggested Ned.

"I think not; he’s an artful old fox, and up to all their dodges. But come, mate, I feel up to moving now; so lend me a hand to get poor Bill down to the river. There may be a chance of his pulling through after all."

Ned looked at the prostrate man.

He was no surgeon, but he saw at a glance, from the blood coming from his mouth, that the poor fellow had been speared through the lungs, and that his case was hopeless.

Even as they looked, the eyes of the dying man were turned upwards till nothing but the whites were visible, and a thrill shot through his frame.

In another minute all was over.

Even Ned was moved, as they stood in the lonely scrub with the corpse at their feet.

An Australian thicket is a dull place at all times, and when it was doubled with gloom it was doubly gloomy.

The two brothers, though rough fellows, had been very fond of each other, and had gone through many dangers in company.

They had been sailors, and had run from their ship together, and intended, as soon as they had got some money, to go back to England, where their mother was.

Jim suddenly threw himself down on the ground beside his brother’s corpse.

He seized the clay-cold hands in his.

"I know what’ll make the earth lie lighter on you, Bill, and any other, I’ll do it! If ever I set hands on that big black—and I’ll not rest night or day till I’ve done so—I’ll put him across the pit alive and cross-cut him with the saw."

"I’ve got a fancy for that fellow. Well, what happened next?" said Ned.

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In another minute all was over.

Even Ned was moved, as they stood in the lonely scrub with the corpse at their feet.
There were no means of digging a grave for the murdered man, so they broke off and boughs to rudely cover him, and the old fellow had sold his life dearly.

Jem glanced round at his auditors.

"Yes," said the captain. "You want to kill him yourself.

"No," answered Jem, simply, "I want to take him alive; so on second thoughts, if you can blast at his legs and cripple him, I'll be much obliged to you."

Before the remainder of the crew could get on shore, they were off with their prey, shouting and waving their weapons in defiance.

The captain of the schooner was a determined fellow, and made up his mind for revenge.

The next morning early, he started off in his boat, calling at all the saw pits on the river, and beating up for volunteers.

The sawyers were ready enough to join, and, with them and his own men, he had got a pretty strong muster.

"I'm certain of it."
It is well known that for many years Ned Kelly had made himself notorious by a series of crimes wholly incompatible with the civilisation of the nineteenth century. Ned Kelly's celebrated steed, Marco Polo, is as well known at the Antipodes as Dick Turpin's Black Bess in these islands. — "Telegraph," 7th July, 1891.

"It is notorious that the robbery of Mr. Steward's corpse was mainly performed by the assistance of Ned Kelly's horse, the Capote of what was neither more nor less than a pirate ship." — "Telegraph," 7th July.

"The history of Ned Kelly and his celebrated black horse Marco Polo will ever live in the recollection of the Australian public. The deeds of Dick Turpin, and the performances of Black Bess, are tame beside those of Ned and his steed; in addition to which Ned's history is true, and Turpin is purely fiction." — "Press," July.

The stirring story of Ned Kelly the Australian Bushranger ("Illustrated London Novelist" Office, 290, Strand), pursues its way with unabated vigour. Full of incident, it should suit those who like their literature as they do their cigars—full flavoured. It is published in weekly numbers. — "South London Press," November.

CHAPTER CCXVIII—Continued.

Jim Holt was like a madman, and could hardly rest a minute, but kept staring up to see if it was time to rise, and fingering his gun.

All were glad when daylight came, and a party set off to fetch in the wounded shepherd from the hut from which Ned had started, and another to bury the dead.

The shepherd was found alive, and his wounds were judged not to be mortal by those of the party who had the best knowledge of surgery.

Poor Bill Holt had not been touched by the wild dogs, though the other two men had been shockingly torn by them, and those deputed to bury them had not much heart or dinner when they came back from the job.

The rest of the day was spent in cleaning firearms, casting bullets, and making up cartridges.

Some blankets were torn up to muzzle the ears, and by nightfall all was in readiness.

The blacks had been accustomed, were in the habit of encamping on an island in the river.

One of the arms of the stream divided by the island was broad and deep, but the other was narrow and comparatively shallow, forming a kind of ford, across which the blacks were accustomed to wade to reach the shore.

It was arranged that the captain and half-a-dozen men should take the boat belonging to the sawyers' camp and pull up the broad arm of the river at the shallow place.

Here they were to land, crawl up to the blacks' camp, and from there to join the other party.

The attacking party mustered twenty-seven in all, and it was arranged that the captain and half-a-dozen men should take the boat belonging to the sawyers' camp and pull up the broad arm of the river abreast of the island. Here they were to land, crawl up to the blacks' camp, and join the other party.

Natural all who were not hindered from further flight by bullet or buckshot, would at once bolt across the shallow arm of the river, in the hope of escaping into the scrub on the mainland.

But here they would find the other boat containing Kelly and the rest of the sawyers and sailors waiting to pepper them on their retreat.

The whites got behind shelter to load again.

It was as equally destructive as the former, as the groans of the slain would have time to get out of each other's way, they poured another volley into them.

It was as equally destructive as the former, as the groans and yells simply testified.

The whites got behind shelter to load again.

Surprised and staggered by this discharge, the blacks turned tail and met a whole lot more of their fellows coming over the ridge.

While the two lots of blacks were in confusion, the one party striving to make their way down to the water, and the other to fly back into the island for shelter, the whites had time to reload.

Advancing from their ambush before their foes had time to get one of each other's way, they poured another volley into them.

It was equally destructive as the former, as the groans and yells simply testified.

The whites got behind shelter to load again.

But their big stroke of work was done.

Such a formidable camp of fighting blacks were not going to be frightened very easily.

Their numbers were much greater than had been supposed.

They had been taken by surprise, and would have been glad enough to get away, but now that they were 'hail'd up,' like rats in a trap, and could not turn away without facing the guns, they showed fight like devils.

There were no women or children amongst them, but only the warriors of their tribe.

They laid off their women and children amongst them, but only the warriors of their tribe.

"Wah! Wah! Wah!" answered one of his companions.

"Heads below, and look out for squalls. We'll have spears and sticks whizzing round us like bees in a minute." His prophecy was correct.

"There's enough of us to tackle five hundred black fellows," he said, "so let's go in and have a slap at 'em at once, like bulldogs. Is that the sort of game, mates?"

Some of the rest were tempted to listen to his suggestion, but more prudent counsels prevailed, though doubts were expressed as to whether the captain's party, instead of surprising the natives, had not been themselves surprised and cut off.

"No," said one of the number, "we should have at least heard one or two shots in that case."

It afterwards turned out that the captain was puzzled to find a good place to land, without making too much noise with the cracking of the dry reeds and branches which stretched right out into the river.

All at once Ned's party heard a shout, evidently from a black fellow, followed by a general howling and yelling, and the discharge of firearms.

It was evident the attack had commenced.

"Steady, mates, we shall have 'em here in a minute," observed Ned.

The party with him stood to their arms, as the howling and hooting came nearer and nearer.

Presently the blacks came pouring over a little ridge, near which Ned and his companions were lying in ambush, and began to leap into the river at the shallow place.

"Now's the time," cried Kelly, and the volley rang out with deadly effect.

Surprised and staggered by this discharge, the blacks turned tail and met a whole lot more of their fellows coming over the ridge.

 Whilst the two lots of blacks were in confusion, the one party striving to make their way down to the water, and the other to fly back into the island for shelter, the whites had time to reload.

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A shower of spears and nullah-nullahs flew through the air, and the fight began in earnest.

The blacks kept so well under cover that their adversaries could no longer inflict anything like the preceding amount of damage upon them. They never did any harm to be in much danger, but they fired away almost at random, for when once the blacks had got amongst the trees it became almost impossible to get a fair aim at them.

"Just as he was, Ned had also managed to get very fair aim at his enemies, and the sawyers, all pretty well broken to such fighting, were equally lucky.

The sailors, however, were unused to bush work, and four of them were lying wounded, though not mortally, and there was a prospect of using up all their ammunition.

"We had better get back to the boat," suggested the mate of the schooner, but this was found to be no easy matter.

The ground was more open nearer shore, and, as Ned’s party began to attempt a retreat, they were exposed to the fire of the blacks.

"You were never able to take cover," said the mate. "We'd have been here before," said the captain, in exasperation.

One of the sawyers dropped with a spear in the thigh, and the mate of the schooner had the top of his ear cut off.

The whites retreated back to their cover again.

"All we can do is to keep close under shelter, pop away, and take care of the wounded," said the sawyer.

"I'll not do so, my powder will give out in time, and then they will rush us. We must get to the boat."

They were preparing to move down in a body at all costs, when a shot occurred to Ned.

He communicated it to the others.

"It was that he should slip down to the six men left in the boat, and get them to land and fire a volley."

Under cover of this the retreat could be effected.

It was agreed, and, with some difficulty, Ned managed to crawl down unobserved to the water’s edge, and to signal the boat."

Ned retired towards the middle of the island.

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into blowing the fire up, which wouldn't be so blessed easy as you may think for, and in the second, if you jump on his back, you'd get a hoist that would send you as high as the top of that gum tree before you could say jack.

"Well, then, knife let it be. Let's stick a knife into him."

"No, that'll never do. If we did, the blessed traps would swear we found him dead in the bush from their shots, in order to do us out of the reward. If we want the cash and the free pardon, we must take him in hand him over alive."

The temptation had staggered Briggs, and he was now quite willing to enter into a scheme for Kelly's capture.

"We shan't have far to go for the traps, if once we get him," he observed.

This was true, for the two men were themselves being pursued by the police, and knew where to find these later. In a few more words they briefly matured their plan.

Ned returned to the camp a minute or so later. He had no particular suspicion of Briggs or his companion, but habit had rendered him cautious in such company.

He kept his gun beside him, and his revolver ready to his hand.

The two traitors began to think their plan would not be such an easy one, after all, to carry out.

One was agreed that they should watch in turns through the night.

Briggs and Spurrell thought that there might be a chance of surprising Ned in his sleep, but he lay with his hand on the stock of his revolver, and when one of them, whose watch it was, accidentally approached him, started him up in a way which showed him to be semi-stunned.

Next morning they gathered round the fire.

Spurrell brought up some wood to feed it. He threw on two or three boughs, and then laid hold of one about four feet long and as thick as a man's wrist.

He raised it, but, instead of pitching it into the fire, brought it down, with the swiftness of a crack-stick player, smack on to the top of Ned's head.

The blow was a tremendous one.

"It would have cracked the skull of nine men out of ten like an egg-shell."

But Ned's skull was almost as thick as a bull's, and was almost as hard to damage, as though he had his iron helmet on.

The blow, too, was deadened by the thick felt of hair with which his mit was thatched, and by his hat.

It was hard enough, however, to make him imagine that a procession of thirty-six thousand lighted candles was passing before his eyes, and to knock him backwards in a semi-stunned condition.

Simultaneously with the blow, Briggs gave the bushranger's gun, which was lying beside him, a lift with his foot that sent it flying ten paces off, and, at the same time, slipped a noose, he had in readiness, round his arms.

Spurrell dealt him a second blow with the stick that stunned him, and, after matching Ned's revolver from his breast, joined Briggs in the task of securing him.

Before this was entirely completed, Ned partially recovered.

But Spurrell hold his own revolver within a foot of his head.

"Now, just see here, Kelly," he said, "we're playing life and death, and I hold the ace of tramps here in my fist. It's no time for joking. If you make a single move to wriggle loose, by the Eternal, I'll manure this strip of turf with your brains."

Ned was too stunned to make much resistance, either mentally or physically, and Briggs rapidly finished securing him.

He roped him as strongly with the horse hobbles, and tethered his limbs in such a way as though he had been a young elephant.

He had too often seen the bushranger exert his Herculean strength not to use every precaution.

So, when the pinioning was completed, rose to his feet.
His senses had returned to him. He gazed on his captors with the blood-shot eye of an enraged tiger.

The corded muscles on his massy limbs writhed and swelled like serpents, and as he stood there in his might, like the bound Samson before the Philistines, it seemed as though he had but to make one effort to break his bonds, "as a thread of tow is broken when it touches fire," like the Hebrew champion ere his locks were shorn.

Sparrell read this danger.

"I swear to —", he said, "if you loosen a single knot I'll be a dead man the rest will be tied round. It's our life or yours, and we can't throw a chance away."

"You mean, cutting, white-ivered, treacherous shank!' said Ned, "what's your game? What do you want to do with me now you've tied me up like a wool-hide?"

"Well, we're going to hand you over to the traps, and I reckon they'll cut you off sick to Melbourne."

The word fell on Kelly's ear as one of hope.

It was a good distance to the capital of Victoria, and, for ought he knew, a dozen opportunities of escape might turn up on the road.

"You're a cursed set of hounds to try this game on! A nice pal you've got hold of, Briggs."

"Well, you see," said Briggs, apologetically, "the traps were getting precious inquisitive after us, and we ran a devilish close chance of being nabbed. And when it was a question of that or of surging five thousand quid, a free pardon, and what the blessed newspapers call the gratitude of the entire community, why we couldn't resist it."

Ned was not only bound, but, as an additional precaution, was made to walk on foot between the other two, who were mounted, with a rope from each side secured to his captors' saddles. Such was the awe with which he inspired them, even in his bound condition, that they rode revolver in hand, and warned him that at the faintest sign of an attempt at escape they would shoot him down without mercy.

The almost miraculous escape of Mike Howe was fresh in their minds.

After his capture, as related, this mountebank was marched off strongly bound, one of his captors going in from one eye never beheld him the other behind him.

Both were armed with loaded muskets.

Suddenly Howe, by a miraculous effort of strength, snapped his bonds like pack-thread, faced the man in his rear, disabled him by a kick in the stomach, sprang on the man in front, tore away his knife and musket, stabbed him to death, and then fired at, and mortally wounded, his companion. Briggs and Sparrell were determined to allow no such tricks to be played upon them by Kelly.

Their course was marked off on foot, between the other two, who were mounted, with a rope from each side secured to their captors' saddles.

Sparrell had a heavy riding-boot alighted just where he meant it to—on the tip of Sparrell's nose. With a yell of agony the traitor sank to the ground.

His knee-cap was smashed, and it was fixed on life. You'll have to limp to blazes now!" roared Ned, darting forward at Briggs.

His hands were bound, but he dashed one top of his case-iron-like head full on the man's face, smashing his nose and sending half his teeth down his throat.

It was a trick like this, in the days when butting was allowed in the ring, that alone won young Dutch Sam his fight with Tom Gaynor.

Briggs was picked up insensible, and fearfully disfigured.

This manœuvre caused the sergeant to keep a closer look out on Ned than he would perhaps otherwise have done, and hence he had no chance of escape on the road.

But the bushranger kept up his spirits, counting on finding friends in Melbourne.

CHAPTER CCXIX.

NED ESCAPES FROM MELBOURNE JAIL.

The news of Kelly's capture spread like wildfire through the colonies. His daily progress towards the capital was duly telegraphed to the papers. The liveliest interest in his movements was evinced by all parties, especially by the Government he had hitherto banished and bonâmente so often.

He felt almost proud of the notice he attracted. All great, that is, notorious criminals, luxuriate in the immortality that they produce.

Kelly was the object of every attention from the lower classes. His air was jaunty, and he had that Brute courage will always have its worshippers amongst the English race, and no heroes are so popular as those who display it.

Two powerfully-built fellows, dressed as diggers, made themselves conspicuous by pushing their way roughly through the crowd until they got quite close to the front. They did not, however, seem to be very ardant admirers of Ned.

On the contrary, one of them shouted at the capture bushranger and roared out—"Ah! you black-muzzled bandicoot, so they'd laid you up by the heels at last. If they'd only have done it a bit earlier, I'd have been a few ounces the better off in this world."

Ned recognised the voice. It was that of Zeph.

He glanced at the speaker, whose disguise was so perfect that but for his voice he would have been unable to discover it, and then at his companion, who roared out in turn—"Yes, the greedy sarpint. You won't get another chance of plundering honest diggers again in a hurry. As old Mother Flannigan in Hell-street said to me last night, Old Nick'll have a partner before the month's out!"

This time Ned recognised Solomon Roe.

He knew, of course, that all this abuse was merely meant...
that they were on the alert to help him, and guessed that Salmon Roe's mention of Mother Flannigan meant that they could be communicated with through her.

He was careful, however, not to exchange the slightest sign of recognition with the pair of ruffians, who, after blackguarding him a little longer, fell back amongst the crowd and related to whoever chose to listen to them, how they had been stuck up and carried away.

"Well," he thought, "I've got friends outside the jail, all at events. This child don't mean to dance on you alone this time!"

On arriving at the jail there was a regular assemblage to meet the modern Dick Turpin. Curiosity was abroad, and no tickets on a Patti night at the opera could have commanded a higher price than a "pass" to see Kelly had they been obtainable for money.

Every old log in the colony—Van Diemen's Land had emptied her jail birds into the colony—trooped to the jail as Ned approached and gave him a regular reception.

Amongst those who regarded the Herculanean ruffian with more than ordinary interest was a young girl.

In conclusion, during the crowd, Kelly's glance fell on the girl; he started directly, and looked at her in a marked and meaning manner.

The girl almost screamed, then trembled, and a flush rose to her face.

Ned had recognised Bella as the daughter of the head jailer at Melbourne, and who had returned from her visit to the north.

She too had recognised in the person of Ned Kelly, the bushranger, the so-called Tom Smith, who had preserved her life and honour from the blacks.

Ned felt all the more pleased at recognising her than at his meeting with Salmon Roe and Zeph.

"She ought to prove a friend at court at all events," he thought, and it was with a somewhat jubilant feeling that he crossed the threshold of the prison.

But when the massive door of his cell had clanged to his being closely watched, and that unless he had an occasion, had greatly impressed her.

She had recognised in the man who had rescued her life and honour from the blacks something far more than the personal character, and not Fenianism, was the motive that led to the idea of giving his captors leg bail.

The girl almost screamed, then trembled, and a flush rose to her face.

There was nothing astonishing in this.

He made the Fenian sign.

"I will tell my father all I love to you," she said, "and I feel sure he will do everything in his power to render your position tolerable. He would do a great deal, I am sure, for the man but for whose courage he would never have set eyes on his daughter again."

"Begging your pardon, miss," said Ned, who had already framed some notions of a plan of escape, "but I'd rather your father didn't show me any too much outward kindness.

"If, though, he could just manage to smother those eyes you spoke of for about half-an-hour or so when the time comes, it would help me more than a little bit."

"I can hardly pledge him to that," said the girl, "but I will do my best."

Ned briefly instructed her how to enter into communication with Zeph and Salmon, and this duty she willingly undertook.

Two or three days slipped by, and thanks to the system of communication established between Bella and the warder, Ned was kept fully acquainted with all the measures in progress for his escape.

Still, as time slipped on, and the hour for him to make his appearance in court drew near, he could not help feeling a little anxious, though he did not lose his trust in his friends.

Kelly's trial won't come on till the day after to-morrow, Mr. Bolton, the head jailor, and his second in command—Van Diemen's land; the calendar was a very heavy one, and Ned's name was placed amongst the first.

He was quite the lion of the hour, and would have had as many visitors as Jack Sheppard had in Newgate, had it been allowed.

At length the case commenced.

"The interview was necessarily a brief one. Miss Bolton could not help feeling greatly moved at Ned's unpleasant situation."

"It's pretty nearly certain," said the former, "that their escape in a vessel specially chartered by their brethren in America, thanks to the concurrence of some of those appointed to look after them."

That the attempt to obtain the assistance of the Duke of Edinburgh in Australia be forgotten, though it is maintained by many that private vengeance for a wrong of personal character, and not Fenianism, was the motive that prompted this deed.

The story they tell is a curious one, and some day may be printed at full length.

Ned's courage and consideration, as displayed on that occasion, had greatly impressed her.

She was the one of the brotherhood. There was nothing astonishing in this.

In Ireland itself the bulk of the staff of some of Her Majesty's jails were Fenians.

The escape of Ned Kelly is one of the most astonishing events in Irish history. Dublin, as he would have walked out of his own house, is a proof of this.
note containing full particulars, and another document, of which more hereafter, to Zeph and Salmon Roe.

The next morning Mr. Bolton marched off with the ten prisoners whose names were first on the list, for trial to the court house.

Hammond feeling his responsibility as regarded Ned, passed most of the day in the lodge of the prison-state.

Shortly before half-past three o'clock, Bella came that way, equipped for a walk.

He gallantly came forward to see her let out, and began to talk to her.

Contrary to her custom, instead of snubbing him she became very amiable; and, consequently, he fell in the seventh heaven of delight.

While they were thus engaged, a squad of four of the fort police marched up to the door of the jail.

Their leader saluted Hammond, and handed him a letter.

It ran as follows—

"DEAR HAMMOND,—Send Kelly along at once, under the escort of bearer. No evidence was offered by the prosecution in two of the cases I took up this morning, and the other fellow pleaded guilty; so it is settled they will take on Kelly's case, and open pleadings at once.—Yours truly,

PETER BOLTON."

Hammond glanced over the document.

It was, he had no doubt, in Mr. Bolton's handwriting.

He at once gave an order for Kelly to be brought from his cell, and handed over to the policemen.

"I suppose you four will be enough to take care of him?" he said.

"Oh, yes, sir," observed the leader. "We're to take him in a cab, Mr. Bolton says. Nobody thinks that his trial's coming on to-day, and there's not many people about.

Very good.

One of the policemen had been sent for the cab, and by the time he returned with it, Kelly had been brought to the lodge.

He was handed over to the custody of the police, three of whom got into the vehicle with him, whilst the fourth mounted the box by the side of the driver.

Just as they were going to drive off, Hammond, who did not seem quite at ease in his mind, made a motion for them to stop.

He was about to put some questions to them.

But Bella Bolton began to chatter to him, and in answering her, he quite lost sight of what he had been going to say, and just waved to the cab to continue on its way.

It drove off, and was lost to sight round a corner.

Miss Bolton, after a little more conversation, during which she expressed her regret that duty hindered Mr. Hammond feeling his responsibility as regarded Ned, also left the prison.

He had pulled out Bolton's letter, and was reading it for the second time, when the head jailor returned with several of the prisoners he had taken away in the morning.

Hammond glanced over the ranks.

"Hello!" he said. "Where have you left Kelly?"

"Kelly?" repeated Bolton. "Why, you must be wool-gathering. I left him with you this morning. A nice fellow you are to have in charge of a jail, when you forget all about the most important prisoner in it.

Great heavens!" he gaped. "I never wrote that.

What?" yelled Hammond.

"I never wrote that. It—it's a forgery.

I could have sworn it was your handwriting."

CHAPTER CCXX.

NED GIVES A POLICEMAN A LESSON IN SURGERY.

It is hardly necessary to state that the supposed police escort consisted of Zeph, Salmon Roe, and two of Ned's friends, and that the cab-driver was also a confederate.

As soon as they were out of sight of the prison the policeman on the box jumped down and hurried away.

There was nothing left to attract attention to the cab, those inside it sitting well back with the windows up, so that their uniforms might not be seen.

After sundry twisings and turnings it stopped at the door of a small house in the suburbs.

The four men alighted and hurried into this.

Fresh disguises were hastily assumed, and they then left the house one by one, a rendezvous having been previously arranged.

This rendezvous, as at a lonely hut situate at a spot known as Eleven Mile Creek, between Winton and Greta.

It was tenanted by a young fellow a namesake of Ned's named Dan Kelly, and by two old women, named Wright and Mulligan, and bore by no means a good reputation.

Ned was pleased to learn that Marco Polo was in safety, and that Zeph and Salmon Roe had given orders that he should be taken to the projected rendezvous so as to be in readiness for his master.

Ned having been dressed and 'made up' with as much care as if he had been a leading tragedian about to step on to the stage, started on his journey, and was clear of Melbourne before Bolton's return to the jail had led to the discovery of his escape.

He travelled for several days without let or hindrance, and the nearer he got to his destination the more at home he began to feel.

Not only was the country a wild and broken one, affording capital cover in case of pursuit, but the sympathies of the population were decidedly not on the side of law and order.

At several out-of-the-way spots Ned encountered men who recognised him, but whom he found had not the slightest idea of betraying him to the authorities.

It was almost nightfall when he reached the hut on Eleven Mile Creek that had been appointed for the rendezvous.

It was a dilapidated looking erection of timber, serving as a kind of sly grog-shop and meeting place for horse and cattle stealers.

Kelly approached it with great caution.

He discounted reaching the shed serving as a stable, and locked in.

To his astonishment he saw a horse which, from its accoutrements, he at once guessed to be that of a trooper of the mounted police.

"It is awfully like it. And do you mean to say you have given up Kelly?"

"Yes, to an escort of four policemen who brought your note."

"Four policemen? Four bushranging devils in disguise."

"That was the only thing that made me at all suspicions. I did not recognise any of their faces as belonging to the force, and thought they were hardly well set up. But it was your handwriting checked the matter, or I should have questioned them."

He omitted to mention how much his attention had been taken up by Bella.

That young lady shortly afterwards returned, and expressed the utmost amusement at what had taken place.

She, of course, carefully avoided mentioning the fact that the letter by which Ned's release had been obtained had been forged by her.

Nor did her father even suspect this; or, if he did, he kept his suspicions to himself, no blame attaching to him in the matter.
"You didn't perform the operation as I'd have done. It would have been much safer when you had him to have kept him. He'll bring the traps on you."

"Try jingo! You're right. But, you see, I was on the bolt myself, and did intend to wait for them. However let's stop his gallop."

The three mounted and started off at a break-neck pace towards Bennala on the trail of Fitzpatrick.

The poor fellow had been riding slowly on account of his wounds, but was roused when he heard the noise of his pursuers, who, feeling sure of their prey, came tearing along at the top of their speed, yelling like demons.

Fitzpatrick put spurs to his horse and rode for his life.

He guessed the bloodhounds were on his track.

Fortunately for him his horse was fresher than those of his pursuers, and had had a good rest in the inn shed.

Once, nevertheless, they got near enough to fire at him, though without effect.

This, however, was a final effort, and they had to give over the chase. For their animals were fairly exhausted.

CHAPTER CCXCVI

THE STRINGYBARK CREEK ENCOUNTER.

[The rest of this eventful history is taken from the Colonial press. Our Melbourne contributor has, in the foregoing, supplied us with Kelly's history up to the time his deeds became public records.—Ed.]

On Fitzpatrick reaching Bennala, and stating what had happened, the authorities had no difficulty in guessing that the perpetrator of the outrage had been no other than Kelly.

The entire police force of the district began to scour the country.

It was known he had taken up his quarters somewhere near the head waters of the King River, where the ground, cut up into numerous deep and narrow gullies, and covered with luxuriously growing vegetation, afforded splendid cover.

At the close of September 1878, a party of four policemen, who were in quest of him, pitched their camp at a lonely spot known as Stringybark Gully, about twenty miles from Manfield.

They comprised a sergeant, named Kennedy, and three constables, named Scanlan, Lonigan, and M'Intyre.

They had a shrewd idea that Ned and his gang were hovering somewhere in the vicinity, but they had the greatest difficulty in obtaining the least information as to his movements.

Numerous sympathisers kept him fully posted in every movement of the police.

The men boasted of doing so at drinking bar, and other gatherings.

The movements of the little party of police, already spoken of, were well known to Kelly.

He was under the impression that they included two men, named Steel and Flood, against whom he had registered a vow of vengeance, and full of this idea, resolved to pay them a visit, and, in his own words, to "wipe the lot out."

The police had a tent with them, and had pitched it near the creek, between the ruins of two deserted huts, in a spot where the reeds and long grass grew thick and tall.

On the morning of September 25th, Kennedy and Scanlan left the camp, and went scouting across the ranges.

M'Intyre and Lonigan remained in camp, and in the course of the morning, the former fired at some parrots.

The sound of the shots reached the ears of the bushrangers, who were already stealing on their prey.

"I reckon that's the last shot some of those beggars'll fire," observed Ned.

The two policemen left in camp were quite unsuspicous of any danger.

M'Intyre, who had left his revolvers in the hut, was
railing on a log, whilst Lonigan was standing at a short distance from him.

All at once there was a slight rustling in the dry reeds near them.

The two policemen turned their heads.

The bushrangers, gliding like serpents through the grass, had crawled up on their hands and knees, till they had gained the camp.

Springing on one man to their feet, at the first movement of the police, they levelled their guns at them, and called upon them to surrender.

"Bail up, or we'll let daylight through you," roared Ned.

At the sight of the four outlaws rising from the ground, the constable demurely from a trap, the police were for a moment paralysed.

M'Intyre, who was unarmed, felt that the situation was helpless, and threw up his hands at once.

His companion, however, was a brave fellow.

He drew his revolver and darted towards a tree for shelter.

He was not quick enough.

Ere he could gain the tree, Kelly, who had covered him from the commencement, glanced along the barrel of the Spencer rifle with which he was armed, and pulled the trigger.

As the echoes of the shot died away, Lonigan was seen to throw up his arms and pitch heavily forward on his face.

"Who are the other two with you?" enquired Ned.

M'Intyre answered.

"It’s no good playing any tomfoolery with me," said Ned, "holding the muzzle of his rifle within an inch of his prisoner's head."  "I know there are two more of you who left camp this morning, who are they? Give me an answer or I’ll drop you.

Kennedy hesitated, thinking he was joking.

"Bail up," shouted Kelly from the hut.

Kennedy still thought a joke was intended, and that it was Lonigan who was speaking from the tent.

He merely laughed, and carelessly advanced his hand to his holster.

"For heaven's sake don't resist," cried M'Intyre, who knew the fearfully dangerous position in which his comrade stood.

At the same moment one of the hidden bushrangers, seeing Kennedy's movement, fired at him, but only hit his horse, which he slightly wounded.

Kennedy instantly threw himself from the wounded animal, and jumped behind a tree.

Scanlan, who was armed with a Spencer rifle, also dismounted, and attempted to follow his example, but was shot down before he could reach cover.

Kennedy opened fire in turn from his revolver on Ned, who had stepped out from the tent.

One of his shots actually passed through the fellow's whiskers, and another tore the sleeve of his coat.

Seeing he was in danger of being surrounded, Kennedy made an attempt to gain another tree, in order to effect a gradual retreat.

But he was trying this move, Kelly fired again, the bullet striking him in the side, just as he reached the wished-for cover.

The sight of the bullet caused him to throw up his right hand in token of surrender, an action which Kelly thought for the purpose of getting another shot at himself.

Accordingly he fired again, and this time with fatal effect, his shot scratching the unfortunate sergeant dead on the ground.

Meanwhile M'Intyre had become alive to the true state of affairs.

He saw that the death of his unfortunate comrades was resolved on, and that he would in all probability share their fate.

Profiting by the confusion, he managed to spring on to Kennedy's horse, which was only slightly wounded, and to gallop off at full speed.

He was pursued by a volley of shots and oaths by the bushrangers.

Riding for his life, he tore along at a breakneck pace, urging his half-maddened animal over ground which the boldest steeplechase rider might have thought would be incredible.

At the same moment the constable thought of the police, that of Scanlan and dashed off, alarmed at the firing, and the other two had been unsaddled.
Kelly received timely warnings of all the movements of his pursuers, and was enabled to baffle them with ease, though fifteen years imprisonment was proclaimed as the penalty of all who sheltered him.

In vain they beat up the head waters of King's River and the Mansfield Range, amidst the dense vegetation of which Ned had been lurking, and in vain they strategically surrounded a lonely homestead in the Wombat Ranges, where it was reported he had been seen.

In every case the bird had flown before their arrival.

They began to suppose that he had worked his way north into New South Wales, going round by the head of the Upper Murray and thence to Gippsland.

All at once there was a report of a fresh outrage.

On the afternoon of the 9th of December, one of the station bands of the Faithful Creek Station, named Fitzgerald, was standing at the door of the homestead, when he observed someone approaching on foot.

The new comer was a tall, powerfully built fellow, with heavy beard.

"Good-dy, mate," he began. "Is Mr. Macauley in?"

"No, not just now."

"When d'ye think he'll be back?"

"Well, we expect him in this evening; but if it's anything particular, maybe I could help you."

"Oh, it don't matter," replied the stranger, turning on his heel.

He walked away for a short distance, and suddenly halted, waving his hand as a signal.

At this, three mounted men, whom Fitzgerald had not noticed, rode up at a swift rate, one of them holding the rein of a led horse.

The first stranger vaulted into this, and rode up to the front door with his companions.

Alighting, he boldly marched into the house, into which Fitzgerald had already retreated in some alarm, chiefly on account of his wife, who was its only other inmate.

"How many men have you got about the place?" demanded the stranger. "You'd better tell the truth, or we'll make it hot for the lot of you."

"There's only myself here now," answered Fitzgerald, "and a young fellow working at the back."

"Well, look here," observed the stranger; "you'll have to lug up. We don't want to hurt you, but we must have some grub, and some feed for our horses."

"But who are you?" gasped Mrs. Fitzgerald.

"Ned Kelly," was the answer; at which the poor woman almost fainted away.

Ned was wise enough in his present position not to meddle with station hands and the like, amongst whom he might pick up plenty of valuable information.

Still, he thought it was as well to take certain precautions.

"You're quite welcome, I'm sure, to grub and horse-feed, as far as I'm concerned," replied Fitzgerald.

"Of course, I knew I should be. But see here now," replied Fitzgerald.

"Well, look here," observed the stranger; "you'll have to lug up. We don't want to hurt you, but we must have some grub, and some feed for our horses."

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"You're quite welcome, I'm sure, to grub and horse-feed, as far as I'm concerned," replied Fitzgerald.
There was nothing to be done but to comply, and the poor woman, with great difficulty, managed to gulp down a few mouthfuls.

Whilst partaking of their repast, the bushrangers did not neglect to keep a good look-out. One of the men employed on the station, who came up to the homestead in the course of the afternoon, were promptly seized on and bundled into the slab hut, to keep company with Fitzgerald and his companion.

"If I catch one of you as much as poking the tip of my nose outside," said Zeph, who had replaced Dan Kelly as escort, "I'll blow your heads off!" About half-past four, the owner of the station, Mr. Macaulay, came riding home. On crossing a bridge leading to the cottages, it struck him that the place presented a somewhat deserted look. Being under no apprehension of danger, however, he rode on, and drew rein in front of the door.

"Mr. Macaulay," he exclaimed, "for the Lord's sake, be careful! The Kellys are here, and if anything goes wrong the lives of the whole lot of us'll have to pay for it."

At the same moment Ned stepped through the door, and made his appearance on the verandah, revolver in hand.

"You'd best go slow and behave yourself," he said; "it's not the least use kicking up a row."

"But who are you?" said the bewildered overseer.

"Ned Kelly," was the reply, in an undaunted manner.

"Who's, Ned?" he repeated, for, like almost every one else in the district, he imagined Ned was scores of miles away.

"I'm Ned Kelly; so just get off that horse of yours without any more nonsense."

Macaulay complied, and at that moment Dan Kelly, whom he knew by sight, made his appearance, and convinced him as to the hands he had fallen into.

"You'd best go slow and behave yourself," he said; "I'd have cut his work out for him.

"I don't want to shoot any one unless I'm forced to, and I only want to use this station as a camping-ground to rest ourselves and our horses," continued Ned.

The overseer was tolerably satisfied with this arrangement.

"I don't want to shoot any one unless I'm forced to, and I only want to use this station as a camping-ground to rest ourselves and our horses," continued Ned.

The overseer was struck with the appearance of their horses, and especially with that of Marco Polo.

"You've got a pretty valuable lot of beasts there," he observed; "and they don't look as if they wanted much feeding either."

"Ne," replied Ned; "we can always lay our hands on good horses when we want 'em."

After a short interval a cart was seen approaching the station. It belonged to a hawker named Gloster, who had a place of business at Seymour, and was in the habit of travelling about the district, vending clothes and fancy goods.

He was a pretty frequent visitor to the station, and, in accordance with his usual custom, he drew up his cart and unharnessed his horse within a stone's throw of the homestead.

 Leaving a boy who assisted him in charge of his cart, he stepped up to the kitchen to get some hot water for his tea.

Mrs. Fitzpatrick met him there.

"For goodness' sake, be careful," she said; "the Kellys are in the place."

Like Macaulay, the man was incredulous, and simply laughed at her.

"It is so, I assure you," she said.

"Nonsense," was the answer. "I ain't a-going to be gammoned in that way."

Mr. Macaulay, who was sitting in front of the house, knowing Gloster to be a plucky fellow, grew terribly anxious at his advent.

He felt almost certain that he would show fight, and feared, in this event, that the life of every one in the station would be sacrificed without mercy.

Gloster was about to return to his cart when Ned called out after him:

"Stop."

"The hawkers, who thought it part of a joke, paid no attention to this command. Dan Kelly levelled his gun and was about to fire, but refrained at Macaulay's entreaties.

Meanwhile Gloster had gained his cart and mounted it. Ned, however, had already given him a chain with a revolver to his check, ordered him to descend.

"What d'ye mean?" replied the other.

"What do I mean, you infernal fool," cried Ned; "why I mean you to ball up, to be sure."

Still Gloster seemed unable to realise the fact that he was struck up by bushrangers.

"Who are you, with your airs?" he said sneeringly.

"I'm Ned Kelly."

"Go to blazes, I ain't a-going to swallow that yarn."

"Oh, you ain't. Then it strikes me you'll never wait to swallow anything else in this world."

Ned's finger was on the trigger, and probably in another minute he would have fired, when Mr. Macaulay, who had come up, interfered.

"Don't fire, Kelly, for heaven's sake. Gloster, this is Ned Kelly; and the lives of the whole of us are at his mercy."

"I'd like to have met him, Ned Kelly or no Ned Kelly, with one no else to lock on," said the undaunted hawker.

"I'd have cut his work out for him."

"I'll blow the top of your skull off, and see whether you've got any brains at all inside, if you say another word," shouted Kelly, who was losing all control over his temper.

Again Macaulay interpolated.

"I've a devilish good mind to put a bullet in him; there's not one man in a hundred would have dared to check me in that fashion," grumbled Kelly.

Gloster began to realise his peril, and reluctantly consented to join the other prisoners under Zeph's charge in the hut.

The two Kellys and Salmon Roe proceeded to ransack his cart.

The find was a capital one, the man's stock consisting of clothes. Each of the four desperadoes in turn selected a complete rig out.

"This is a bully find," said Salmon Roe, strutting about like a peacock.

"Smartens one up a bit," said Kelly as he inundated his beard and garments with a bottle of scent from the hawker's stock of perfumery.

"It will be just the thing for our visit to Europe to-morrow," said Zeph.

"Right you are," said Ned; "why, we look so respectable, I guess the bank clerks won't be able to refuse us anything."

"What are we to do with the old duds?" asked Dan Kelly.

"Oh, leave 'em about," replied Salmon Roe.

"Not a bit of it," broke in Zeph; "we must burn every stitch of 'em right off."

"Why?" enquired Ned.

"So that they may never be used as a means of tracking us. Suppose they were used to give a bloodhound to smell in order to put him on our trail?"

Their toilettes completed, the bushrangers sat down to supper.

Mr. Macaulay had the honour of sharing their meal, but only as a special measure. As with Mrs. Fitzpatrick, he had to partake of every dish in turn, before they ventured on a mouthful, lest they should be drugged or poisoned.

Ned showed himself in rather a jovial mood at supper.
He conversed freely with Macauley, and related with exultation the manner in which he had surprised the police camp at Stringybark Creek.

"It's not the last job I'll do, either," he said. "I'll send a hundred of 'em to kingdom come in a bunch, one fine day."

It was afterwards known that he had referred to a plan he was hatching, for pulling up the sleepers on the railway lines.

The gang watched their prisoners turn and turn about throughout the night.

CHAPTER CCXXIII.

HOW NED STUCK UP THE BANK AT EUBOA.

The next morning the bushrangers appeared in high spirits.

Noticing the state of the wires, several of the trains stopped on the way, and in some instances the guard had to repair them.

"It's not the last job I'll do, either," he said. "I'll send a hundred of 'em to kingdom come in a bunch, one fine day."

It was afterwards known that he had referred to a plan he was hatching, for pulling up the sleepers on the railway lines.

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THE CELEBRATED NOVELS,

BY W. STEPHENS HAYWARD.

Picture Boards. Published at 2/-

NED KELLY
THE IRONCLAD
AUSTRALIAN BUSHRANGER
CHAPTER CONXIII.—Continued.

Brady smiled that bland smile, peculiar to bank clerks when they have anything disagreeable to say.

"It is past banking hours," he said.

"What?" cried Ned. "Can't you stay it?"

"It is in past four o'clock—the bank has closed for the day."

"Can't I see the manager?"

"Hum! I fear it is no use."

"Oh! you deal Mr. Macauley's all right, and I've got to start up country to-night," pleaded Ned, with well-natured anxiety.

The accountant thought that there might be some truth in this story. Little dreaming that Ned had purposely put his visit until the bank was closed, in order to be secure from interruption from any customer.

"Perhaps you'd better see Mr. Scott," he said.

He ushered Ned into the bank, where the manager and two clerks were engaged in making up the day's accounts, and balancing the books.

"A man who will insist on seeing you about a cheque of Mr. Macauley's," said Brady to Scott, who was busily writing.

Ned stood in front of him with his hands in his pockets, and the downcast, sheepish air, of a countryman who has been long absent from the city.

He drew himself up to his full height.

"Why do you deal Mr. Macauley's all right, and I've got to start up country to-night?" he asked, with a stern look.

"What are you going to do with us?" said Scott, surlily.

"Now where's the way?" said Ned.

"What's going on?" said the accountant. The manager, heedless of his peril, stepped forward with glaring eyes and clenched hands towards him.

"If you come an inch nearer I'll drop you," said Ned, with a stern look.

"Listen a minute, Kelly," said the other, in excited tones, "my wife and children are in there, and you will frighten them to death. If you'll only let me go first to reassure them by a word, I promise I'll not try to give you the alarm. But if you hurt a hair of their heads, I'll break you."

"All right," said Kelly, curtly. "I don't want to harm your blessed kids."

Ned advanced to the door of the room, in which his family, consisting of his wife, her mother and seven children, were, and implored them to remain quiet and not be alarmed.

The prisoners were obliged to stand in a row in the centre of the room, whilst Ned searched them; Salmon Roe and Dan Kelly, who had come in after him, keeping guard over them.

"Now where's the way?" said Ned.

Scott, who was a courageous man, had by this time recovered himself.

"I can't, perhaps, prevent you from taking whatever you may lay your hands on, but I'm hanged if I'll help you to a single farthing," he said.

Ned glared at him with unmistakable ferocity, and began to search the place.

He succeeded in laying his hands on £300 in gold, notes, and silver.

"This isn't enough," he said. "Keep a close look-out over these beggars, whilst I overhaul the rest of the crib."

As he spoke he moved towards the door, leading to Scott's private residence, which adjoined the bank.

The manager, heedless of his peril, stepped forward with glaring eyes and clenched hands towards him.

"If you come an inch nearer I'll drop you," said Ned, with a stern look.

"Listen a minute, Kelly," said the other, in excited tones, "my wife and children are in there, and you will frighten them to death. If you'll only let me go first to reassure them by a word, I promise I'll not try to give you the alarm. But if you hurt a hair of their heads, I'll avenge them even if my life's the forfeit."

"All right," said Kelly, curtly. "I don't want to harm your blessed kids."

Ned advanced to the door of the room, in which his family, consisting of his wife, her mother and seven children, were, and implored them to remain quiet and not be alarmed.

He then broke to them the news that they were in Kelly's power.

The ladies took his advice and did not betray any outward alarm, though they felt anything but ease.

Ned, after rummaging about, discovered the door of the strong-room, and fitted one of the keys found on Scott, to it.

On opening it he discovered upwards of £2,000 in gold, silver, gold-dust and notes.

He also came across a couple of revolvers, and some cartridges, which he secured.

The plunder having been placed in a strong sack, preparations were made for an immediate departure.

Dan Kelly was sent to get "out Mr. Scott's buggy and drove towards him.

"What are you going to do with us?" said Scott.

"Well, we're just going to take you for a little jaunt into the country along with us," replied Ned.

"And my wife?" cried the manager.

"Oh, well bring her and the kids along too. Don't be skerrick, we're not going to hurt any of you."

With the vague idea of putting off the departure as long as possible, in the hope that help might turn up in some way or other, Scott said—

"Will you have a drink before you go?"

"I don't mind one," was the reply.
A bottle of whiskey was produced from the dwelling house, and a staff was poured out.

"Now, then, bottom that," said Ned to Scott.

"But I don't care about it.

"Whether you do or not, you'll just tap it up before I swallow a drop. I am not to be dozed.

Scott swallowed the whiskey in order not to arouse Ned's suspicions any further, and then the bushrangers each took a glass.

"Now then," exclaimed Ned. "off we go."

The procession that started from the bank was one of the most singular ever witnessed.

Indeed, the whole of the details of this daring robbery are of so startling a character as to be almost incredible.

First came the hawker's cart, driven by Dan Kelly, and containing the three bank clerks and a female servant.

Next came the buggy with Mrs. Scott, Mr. Scott's mother, and the children, seven in number, packed into it.

This was followed by the spring cart, in which the sack containing the money had been placed, and which was driven by Ned himself, his companions being Mr. Scott and a female servant.

Salmon Roe brought up the rear on horseback.

"I'll listen to me, one and all of you," said Ned, when they were on the point of starting. "If any one of you — man, woman, or child — raises the least alarm as we go through the town, does the least thing to call attention to us, I swear I'll shoot you down on the spot."

The way in which this threat was delivered was enough.

It is one of the peculiar features of the affair that this motley party of fifteen prisoners and three guardians, failed to attract the least notice when passing out of the township.

This was all the more strange as the bank was only a few yards from the railway station, and was only separated from the other houses in the vicinity by a small, vacant allotment.

The party drove straight for Faithful Creek Station, Ned consulting Longran's watch, which he wore in order to ascertain the progress they were making.

The only incident on the road was the falling of the horse Ned was driving, which caused a temporary delay.

Faithful Creek being reached, the whole fifteen were placed in the hut with the twenty-two people already in custody, this making a total of thirty-seven prisoners.

The gang then began to make preparations for departure.

"Hang it," said Zeph, "you're always flashing that blooming tuber. I'm dashed if I don't have one, too!" exclaimed Zeph, and stepping up to Mr. Scott, he coolly appropriated his watch and chain.

"Now listen to me," said Ned, addressing the prisoners.

"It's now half-past eight. We're going to start, but we're going to leave one of our pals behind here to watch the hut for three hours. You'll be done, and the first of you that puts his nose outside before that time is up will be shot down. So you'd better keep close if you value your skins."

Mounting Marco Polo, to whose saddle the sack containing the money had been attached, Ned rode off in company with his three companions.

Such was the terror he had succeeded in inspiring, that none of those who saw the trio guessed that the tall, full-bearded fellow, whose stalwart figure was set off to such advantage by his uniform, was Ned Kelly in person.

Early on Monday morning, Zeph took the whole of his horses to the blacksmith's to be shod, and Salmon Roe ascended into the town and purchased some provisions.

At ten o'clock the gang left the barracks, leaving one of the constables bound within the building and giving Richards the other with them.

The two Kellys walked with their prisoner between them. Zeph and Salmon Roe following on horseback.

Ned, Dan, and their captive proceeded straight to the Royal Hotel, which they entered.

The landlord advanced to meet them.

"Mr. Cox," said Richards, addressing him, "this is Ned Kelly."

"Don't be bullyed, old bladder chops," said Zeph. "I'm Ned Kelly sure enough, and I want to use your crib whilst I rob the bank; but I'm not going to hurt any one if they only be quiet."

The cool and audacity of this statement was nothing to what followed.

Zeph and Salmon Roe rode up, and mounting themselves in front of the hotel.

As fast as customers came up to get a drink they were seized and compelled to enter a room where Dan Kelly said was concealed.

Ned then proceeded alone to the bank, which he entered from the rear.

Suddenly making his appearance with a revolver in each hand, he called on the manager and his clerks to surrender.

"Ned Kelly," he shouted,
The order came on them like a thunderbolt, for they had not the slightest notion that Ned was in Jerilderie. He had reckoned, however, that the mere mention of his name would be enough, and so it proved, for his order was instantly complied with.

After looking up the staff of the bank in an inner room, Ned set to work to make the premises secure. Whilst he was engaged in this pleasing task, three gentlemen entered the bank on business.

To their annoyance the building seemed deserted. Suddenly Ned popped out of the manager's room, revolver in hand.

The three stood petrified. Then one of them turned to flee.

"Stop," roared Ned. "If you pass the doorway I'll drop you like a dingy."

The three saw that escape and resistance were equally out of the question, and having surrendered were compelled to join the bank clerks in their confinement.

Dan now joined Ned, leaving the other two bushrangers to look after the prisoners at the hotel, and the pair, after getting together upwards of £2,000 from the bank coffers, armed themselves by destroying a lot of the books.

The next night it began to disport itself about the town like the soldiers of a conquering army. Incredible as it may seem, they went from hotel to hotel drinking and standing treat to everyone they met with great apparent civility, but keeping Richards in their company.

At one hotel, in sheer bravado, Ned placed both his revolvers on the bar, and swaggered up and down the room with his hands in his pockets.

So universal was the terror that he inspired, that not a man present dared attempt to seize his weapons and shoot him down.

The bushrangers then "stuck up" the telegraph office, destroyed the wires, and compelled a number of residents to cut down several of the telegraph poles.

At seven o'clock they left the town in triumph, with their plunder and two splendid horses belonging to the police, and recrossed the Victorian boundary.

"What are you going to do with all that money?" inquired one of the townsmen to Ned before he rode off.

"Oh, I'm going round robbing banks to get a pile for my sister to marry on," was the jesting reply, though, if the truth be known, it was to the judicious d'ri...

As they had previously hitched their horses to a fence, these were seized and carried off by the bushrangers.

Meanwhile, Ned and his friends were yet more comfortable.

After a time they quitted their island retreat and led a pleasant nomadic life, being well informed of all the movements of their pursuers beforehand, and well supplied with necessaries by their friends.

It was during this period that Ned caused suits of armour, similar to his own, to be forged by a blacksmith out of boiler iron for the rest of the gang.

"I'm blessed if I don't ride into Melbourne and pick up the governor himself one of these days," he said, "as soon as we can get the whole colony." From time to time they were reported as having been seen and the police bolted after them, but in vain, till the old doggerel rhyme made when Sir Frederick Pottinger was Superintendent of Police in New South Wales and spent his time in fruitlessly chasing Frank Gardner, the bushranger, and beginning "Sir Frederick took his eyes for a shot, and missed in the usual way," began to be applied to them by one and all.

Kelly's example led to similar deeds in New South Wales.

A man named Scott who took the alias of Captain Moonlight, and who had previously served a term of imprisonment in Pentridge jail for high-way robbery, and a gang of half-a-dozen together and began to plunder on the Murray-bidge.

On the 18th November, 1879, he stuck up the inn at Wantabegory, twenty-five miles from Wagga-Wagga, where Orton used to live.

Information reached that latter place and four police started for the scene of the outrage. They came up with the bushrangers, six in number, near the inn. After a sharp encounter, the police being outnumbered, were forced to retreat by force of arms.

As they had previously bunched their horses to a fence, these were seized and carried off by the bushrangers.
They proceeded to Wantabadgery station, where they found the bushrangers had bailed up thirty people from the Saturday night till the Monday morning.

No one of the authorities at open defiance, declared that the administration of the police in the north-eastern part of the colony had been anything but satisfactory.

The conduct of Captain Standish, the chief commissioner, was not characterised either by good judgment or by zeal for the interests of the public service; and the inattention of the assistant commissioner, showed himself to be a capable and zealous officer, he indulged under great difficulties, through the undue interference of the captain, and the jealousy occasioned by the latter's favouritism towards Superintendent Hare.

Inspector Brook Smith, for having neglected a favourable opportunity of capturing the outlaws, in November, 1878, was recommended to retire.

The Commission also, amongst other things, recommended that Superintendent Sale should be placed at the bottom of the list of superintendents, for errors of judgment whilst assisting in pursuit of the gang, that Sergeant Steele should be reduced to the ranks, for having failed to take advantage of the opportunity of capturing the gang, thrown away by Inspector Brook Smith; and that Detective Ward should be discharged, for having misled his superior officer on several occasions.

Such a state of things as is revealed by these recommendations, plainly establishes a good reason for the length and success of Kelly's predatory career.

It is a fact worthy of note, that very many, if not most of the leading bushrangers of the Australian colonies, were shot or captured by private individuals, and not by the police.

Ned continued to have his imitators throughout the colonies, though, it must be confessed that their success was not equal to his.

On November 5th, 1879, two brothers, named Shank, young men of twenty-one and twenty-two, attempted to stick up the Bank of Australasia, at Moos, in South Gippsland, but were beaten off by Mr. Munro, the manager, and subsequently captured.

A man named Wills, stuck up the Queensland National Bank, at Cunamulla, the following January, and secured £170, after shooting a local store-keeper, who came to the assistance of the bank managers.

He left the building, and would have got clear off, had not his horse, which was a magnificent one, broken away before he could reach it.

Owing to this, Police Sergeant Byrnes and some of the townsmen were enabled to secure him.

On the other hand, Ned's immunity was due to the blundering inefficiency of some of the police.

A royal commission, appointed to enquire into the reasons which enabled Kelly and his followers to set the authorities at open defiance, declared that the administration of the police in the north-eastern part of the colony had been anything but satisfactory.

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Notwithstanding this, Ned's capture seemed as far off as ever, though the hour was approaching when he, too, was to pay the penalty of his crimes.

CHAPTER CCXXV.

KELLY TEAKS UP THE RAILWAY LINES.

For some time Ned remained so quiet that a local writer observed that "the Kellys are forgotten, and may be enjoying themselves in London for ought we know." The truth was that he was still lurking in the north-eastern part of the colony, where the hilly and rugged nature of the country, with every inch of which he was familiar, and the information freely imparted to him by his sympathisers in the district enabled him to set all pursuers at defiance.

Of all outlaws the Australian bushranger perhaps, the most difficult to catch.

Ned, with his large frame, is usually mounted on a horse, in whose veins run the purest blood in the stud book, and who would fetch a "monkey" at Tattersall's any day.

Hence he has little difficulty in showing his heels to the police if they do catch sight of him.

But he knows them for all that, and marks them down.

His horse, in whose veins run the purest blood in the stud book, and who would fetch a "monkey" at Tattersall's, can sometimes make a game of treading in the face of armed men.

The bare-legged girl, tending a flock of sheep or goats, was Ned's farthest lurking-place; and when his pursuers arrive and surround the spot it is only to find that he has flown on, slighting the little heifer.

The King River, which is a tributary of the Murrumbidgee, was Ned's favourite lurking-place at the time, and here he had selected an unsailable position, from which—as it was afterwards admitted by the authorities—a hundred armed men could not have dislodged him.

As to the sympathy and aid which the bushrangers received from the people, on their way to the north-eastern part of the colony, it may be judged from one simple fact.

A state of things as is revealed by these recommendations, plainly establishes a good reason for the length and success of Kelly's predatory career.

It is a fact worthy of note, that very many, if not most of the leading bushrangers of the Australian colonies, were shot or captured by private individuals, and not by the police.

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Ned continued to have his imitators throughout the colonies, though, it must be confessed that their success was not equal to his.
In April they had announced that, if the Kellys were not captured by the beginning of July, the reward offered for their apprehension would be entirely withdrawn.

To maintain the system of terrorism in all its efficiency and effect, the extreme centre of this or that, in all probability, final blow at the police, Ned resolved on a master stroke.

"I'm going to set up a little trap for some of the big bugs amongst 'em that'll open their eyes a bit," was his remark.

In obedience to his orders, his three associates got ready, and, on the evening of Saturday, June 30th, the four bush-rangers mounted and armed to the teeth, dressed like a dark thunder-cloud down the ranges towards the little township of Glenrowan.

Glenrowan, which is in Moira county, is situated about 185 miles from Melbourne, in a gap of the Futter's Ranges, which bound it to the north-west and to the south-east.

To the north-west, in the direction of Wangaratta, is an extensive plain, whilst to the south-west the ground is low, flat, and swampy.

At a short distance from the town stood the hut of a young man named Aaron Sherritt, who had at one time been an acquaintance of Ned's, but who had recently married and had settled down to hard work.

Ned had received information, which was correct, that Sherritt was in communication with the police.

Indeed, at the very moment of the outlaws' arrival there were four members of the force in the hut.

They were talking of seizing the horses, and getting the stable's.

"What do you mean to do, Ned?" asked Dan Kelly.

"Do? Why, try and stop up the whole blessed lot of 'em, since luck has thrown 'em in our way. We're a match for ten times as many as our armour.

"All right," was the reply.

"But first and foremost, we must set up square with the sneak who's about to sell our necks. I'm not going to miss him at any rate, to-night."

We'd better tie him outside them," said Zeph.

"Yes. He don't know your voice, so you'll be the best to do it, but, mind, I'm going to have first crack at the crawling skunk."

"Very good; we'll not fire unless you miss," said Salmon Roe.

That's not very likely," was Ned's grim remark.

Advancing softly, Zeph knocked at the door of the hut.

"Sherritt! Sherritt!" bawled the voice of the stableman.

The unsuspecting man opened the door.

At first he did not recognise his visitors.

"Just step out a minute, I want a word with you," continued Zeph.

Sherritt stepped across the threshold, and, as he did so, Ned strode forward and confronted him, revolver in hand.

The unhappy man realised his peril.

He guessed Ned's terrible errand only too well.

Fear, however, parted by the royal commissioners for cot ma it to his joint, and, before he could reach it, it was burst in.

"What's this mean?" cried the bewildered official, as several men entered the passage.

A tall man clad in a long overcoat stepped forward.

"I'm Ned Kelly, and you'll have to come along with me and pull up some of the rails."

Stanistreet, having finished dressing, followed the bush-rangers on to the rail line, where six or eight of the inhabitants of the township were standing, under the guard of Salmon Roe alias Stephen Hart.

"Now then," roared Kelly, "tell those beggars how to get the rails up. We're expecting a special directly."

The unfortunate station-master felt his blood run cold.

"I know nothing about lifting the rails," he gasped.

"Who does then, you thick-headed fool?"

"The platelayers."

"Where are they?"

"In their hut, a quarter of a mile down the line."

Leaving Salmon Roe in charge of the station-master, whom he roused from his slumbers, to return with him to the station.

"Now then," said Salmon Roe, giving Stanistreet a prod in the ribs with his gun, "where are the tools to rip the rails up?"

"I haven't got the key," was the reply.

"Where are they?"

Stanistreet had to point out the place where the tools were stored, which was in a shed near the station, the lock of which was promptly forced.

Forcing the two platelayers to equip themselves with the necessary implements, Ned started off with them to a spot a little beyond Glenrowan towards Wangaratta.

Here, under his direction, the rails were torn up and a trench cut across the line.

"I guess if they once get into that hole they'll not wriggle out in a hurry," muttered Ned, as he surveyed the result of two hours' labour on the part of the platelayers.
This task accomplished, he returned to the tool-house, where the station-master and six or eight others had remained prisoners, in charge of Salmon Roe.

Ned proceeded to question Stanistreet as to the method of signalling. The other gave some explanation.

"But there's a way of training a lamp with a sign, ain't there?" said Kelly.

The station-master admitted there was.

"Well, now, you just mark my words. There's a special train coming. I'm certain going to run on clean through past this station. If you try to stop it by your lamps or flags, or other devilments, you'll be a dead man the next minute. Watch his face," and here Ned turned to Salmon Roe, "and if he gives any sign shoot him down."

The station-master and his companions were matched back to hi' dwelling, and left under the charge of Salmon Roe.

Other persons were made prisoners and lodged in the near building, to the number of seventeen.

They remained locked up all day on Sunday, but in the evening were allowed to go over to Jones' Hotel, situate near the hotel, to the number of seventeen.

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As the words left his lips the second object rode along-side the station platform and came to a halt. A host of dark figures leaping from it sped towards the hotel.

CHAPTER CXCVI

The Attack on Jones' Hotel at Glenrowan.

The fact was that the attacking party had maintained themselves of a measure which Ned had not foreseen.

The train had reached Benalla at half-past one o'clock, having Inspector O'Connor and his black trackers aboard, and there joined by eight troopers and their horses, under the command of Superintendent Hare.

As they were now about to enter the Kelly country it occurred to the authorities that it would be as well not only to keep an extra sharp look out, but to send on a pilot engine in advance.

This was done, and the train resumed its journey at two o'clock.

It was travelling at a rapid pace, and had arrived within a mile and a quarter of Glenrowan, when it was stopped by the pilot engine, owing to the following circumstances.

Some persons captured by Ned at Glenrowan was the schoolmaster, a man named Curnow, who was seized in company with his wife and sister.

Ned, however, allowed him to go home with these ladies, as the same time warning him "to go quietly to bed and not dream too loud," or he might get shot.

Curnow had heard the outlaws mention the plan of lying in ambush for the train, and resolved to foil it.

He went home quietly, but got ready a scarlet woolen scarf to serve as a danger signal, and a candle and matches.

With these he started from his house during the small hours, and met the pilot engine a little way from Glenrowan.

On reaching a straight part of the line, where he judged those on the train would be able to see the signal at some distance, he lit the candle and held it up behind the red scarf.

This was observed by the people on the pilot engine, who at once pulled up.

Curnow came forward and told them that the Kellys were in Glenrowan, and that the rails had been torn up just beyond the town.

The pilot engine halted, and warned the train when it came up.

Superintendent Hare ordered the carriage doors on each side to be unlocked, and his men to get in readiness. The lights on the train were then extinguished, and following close behind the pilot engine it advanced on Glenrowan.

It was the pilot engine that Ned had mistaken for the train, but he was quickly undeceived, for whilst it passed through the station and then halted, the train itself drew up alongside the platform and the police leaped out.

The next moment Salmon Roe came rushing up from the station to the verandah of the hotel, where Ned and the other two were still standing in astonishment.

"The traps, the traps!" he gasped. "They're on us thick a' as wasps—a whole train full—trooper and black trackers."

The words had hardly escaped his lips, when the dark mass of men was seen advancing from the station towards the hotel.

The police on alighting from the train had at once been told of Kelly's whereabouts.

Here at the head of his troopers, followed by Conyngham and his blacks, advanced on the hotel building, the out¬thers of which they could discern in the darkness.

"Come on," shouted the former, charging almost up to the verandah.

"I'll take the crew out of that cock," said Ned; "leave him to me. Now blaze away, boys."
A fringe of fire broke out along the verandah in obedience to this order, and lit up the black darkness beyond.

A groan escaped Hare as Ned's bullet struck him on the left wrist and shattered it.

Nothing daunted, however, he continued to fire with one hand, till he became exhausted from loss of blood.

The police and the bushrangers blazed away at each other furiously in the darkness for about a quarter of an hour, during which the reports of their weapons and the screams of the terrified women, kept as prisoners in the hotel, made in combination a deafening uproar.

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A momentary struggle stirred him at the thought of abandoning his companions.

They had stuck to him faithfully and well.

But, on the other hand, it was evident that all could not escape, and it was better, he thought, that one at least should be saved.

Still he felt angry and ashamed of himself.

He was in a rage, and naturally wanted to vent it upon some one.

A respectable old fellow, named Martin Cherry, who was one of the hostages the bushrangers held as prisoners in the hotel, was standing near him.

"Pull aside that blind," said Ned, indicating one that hung before a window through which he wished to reconnoitre the ground.

The old man hesitated, as well as he might, since to do so would probably be to draw a shot from the watchers without.

"Pull aside that blind," repeated Kelly, "or I'll blow your brains out, you old bandit!"

And as Cherry hesitated with fear, he raised his revolver, and sent a bullet through the old man's body.

Up to this time the prisoners, amongst whom were several who were in reality active sympathisers with the Kellys, had been well treated.

This unprovoked act of brutality filled them with horror.

Ned saw this, and it fairly maddened him.

Suddenly quitting the room, he darted down the verandah steps and was soon swallowed up in the darkness.

No sound reached those within indicating that he had been spotted by their foes.

"By all that's lively," exclaimed Zeph, " I believe Ned has got through them.

And so, indeed, he had.

Of all the miraculous escapes that marked Ned's career, there is not one more wonderful than that from the beleaguered hotel at Glenrowan.

Sealing noiselessly as a ghost across the ground, he advanced unperceived towards the cordon of police by whom it was surrounded.

As soon as he was close upon them he threw himself on his face.

They did not see him.

Wriggling along like a snake, he passed between a couple of them, and had soon gained the cover of the bush and broken ground extending in their rear.

He made his way in silence towards the spot where he had tethered his horse.

In a few moments more he stood beside Marco Polo, who joyfully pressed his velvet muzzle to his master's shoulder in greeting.

In a few moments Ned could be free from all danger.

He had but to spring on Marco Polo's back and give the noble beast the rein, and he had seen the last of his peril for many a day to come.

Yet something seemed to weigh heavy on Ned's mind as he stood in silent thought with his hand upon his horse's bridle.

CHAPTER CXXVII

NED KELLY IS CARRIED.

Meanwhile the siege continued, the hotel being surrounded, and a vigilant watch being kept up through the dark hours.

Firing went on intermittently, as occasion served, and bullets were continually heard whizzing through the air.

Several fired from the hotel lodged in the station building, and some struck the train; but the police had found admirable cover amongst the trees and palings, and were not hurt.

At all events, about five in the morning, a heart-rending wail, issuing from the beleaguered hotel, chilled the blood of those who heard it.

It was the voice of a mother mourning for her firstborn; of Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted.

The son of the landlady, Mrs. Jones, had been accidentally struck in the back by one of the besieger's bullets, and it was supposed mortally wounded.

The distracted mother came out of the hotel crying.
bitterly and wringing her hands, and then returned in despair to its shelter.

She ultimately succeeded in removing the wounded boy from the building, with the aid of the released prisoners, whose courage was all very useful when you were in the open, but, cooped up here as we are, all it does is to tire a chap and hinder him from jumping about as spry as he might.

"Don't make a Fool of yourself, Dan," said Zeph.

"You'd better stick to your plating to the end."

"I wish," said Salmon Roe, half to himself, "that the chap who first hit on the plating dodge had stuck to us as we meant, 'we're in a trap for certain,'"

Even as he spoke a random bullet entered the bar-room window.

The glass he held dropped from his fingers with a crash on to the floor, and the next instant he had sunk down beside it as though paralysed.

Zeph and Salmon Roe advanced to raise him, but he was already a corpse.

"If Ned doesn't pull us out of this," exclaimed the former, "we're in a trap, for certain."

"If it is one I'm not coming out of it alive," was the reply, given with despairing energy.

"You'd better stick to your plating to the end."

"No, I won't. He's working some dodge to pull us all through, I'll swear. Ned Kelly's not the cove to go back on a pal," cried Zeph.

"Bravo! a capital dodge!" cried the superintendent.

"The bunyip is a mysterious and destructive creature, on which no white man in Australia has yet set eyes, but which the natives, who profess the deepest dread of it, assert to have a semi-human shape, and phantom strength and rapacity."

"They've hit the horses," said Salmon Roe to his pal.

"Yes, and what's more they means to," replied the other, who had guessed the plan. "The fellow who is bossing this show has got his head on the right way, and our chance looks devilish dicky."

Nevertheless, the two bushrangers had no thought of running, but continued to load and fire steadily.

"Hullo, here they come at last! Stand firm, boys," cried the superintendent.

The door had opened, and several figures appeared in front of the hotel.

"Hold on, don't fire," yelled Connor, whose keen-eyed blacks had detected who these were; they are women and children."

They were, indeed, the women and children who had been made prisoners in the hotel, but who were now suffered to depart.

"Let 'em through one by one," was Foster's order, "and see there are no tricks on travellers. I don't want to have Master Ned go sneaking off under our very nose under cover of a petticoat."

Accordingly the women were challenged individually as they approached the police lines, and were carefully examined before they were allowed to pass through them.

Close attention was paid to the hotel, it still being thought that the hold-up of the gang was there, for Ned's departure and Dan's death were unknown to the women who had left.

Before daylight a revolving rifle and a cap had been found about a hundred yards from the hotel, in a pool of blood.

They were Ned's, who had found that the wound in his arm was more troublesome than he had thought, and who had consequently abandoned his rifle.

Suddenly, whilst every eye of the attacking force was fixed on the hotel, a series of shots rang sharply out in their rear.

They turned, half panic-stricken, nor was the sight that met their eyes, one calculated to reassure them.

A weird, unearthly-looking figure could be distinguished, gliding towards them through the trees.

Its stature approached the gigantic, and its bulk seemed still further magnified by the grey lights of early morn, whilst its outline was startling and fantastic.

The head was covered with a strange and hideous mask of iron, and a long grey garment floated down to the knees.

"It's a madman!" exclaimed one of the constables.

"It's the devil!" cried a second.

"Holy saints! it's a bunyip," ejaculated a third, named Murdoch, in accents of unspeakable terror.

The bunyip is a mysterious and destructive creature, on which no white man in Australia has yet set eyes, but which the natives, who profess the deepest dread of it, assert to have a semi-human shape, and phenomenal strength and rapacity.

Then a voice rang out—

"Steady, boys, it's no bunyip; it's Ned Kelly himself."

A brief glance showed that it was indeed Ned, who had made up his mind to free his comrades at any cost. His wound prevented him from using a rifle, but he carried a revolver, and walked coolly from tree to tree, receiving the fire of the police with the utmost indifference, and bearing a shot whensoever a good opportunity presented itself.

Their bullets smacked off him like rain-drops from a westerner's pancake.

"It's charmed he is," cried Murdoch. "Nothing but a silver bullet will ever bring him down."

"Deuce take me, if I can make it out," said an old trooper. "I sighted fair at his chest, and I swear I saw my bullet pop off him like a parched pea."

Shot after shot was fired without effect, and the men were fast growing demoralised by their seemingly super-human antagonist, who bade their bullets defiance.
Ned passed further along the line, and found himself confronted by Sergeant Steele, of Wangaratta, Constable Kenny, and a railway guard, named Dowsett.

They took aim upon him persistently, but, to their surprise, with no effect.

"His hide's bullet-proof," said Kenny.

"No," suddenly exclaimed Steele, "he has got armour on. Blaze away for your lives at his legs!"

Steele set the example.

He kicked, bit, tore and yelled, till after numbers and the loss of blood prevailed over his Heracles might, and he was disarmed and secured.

"Curses you all. I wish I'd shot myself," he ejaculated as he lay bound and panting. "You think you've done a precious fine thing, you cowards, when I'm only one arm and couldn't handle my rifle. I could have got away last night if I had liked, for I got into the bush with my horse and lay there safe and snug all night. Yes, I could have got off, but when I saw them all pounding away I thought I would wait and see it out."

At this moment a woman dressed in a black riding habit, red underskirt and white Galsworthy hat, galloped recklessly up, despite the warnings of the police for her to keep back.

On seeing Ned she sprang from her horse and threw herself down beside him.

It was his sister Kate.

"Oh! Ned, Ned," she cried, "have they got you?"

"Yes, through no cleverness of theirs, though. I got into the bush with Marco Polo and could have rushed away, but I wanted to see the thing out, and remain." Ned was almost fainting from loss of blood.

He was at once carried down to the station and attended to by Dr. Nicholson, of Benalla.

His face was smeared with blood, and his body literally covered with wounds. He had a shot in the left foot, left leg, left arm, right hand, and twice in the region of the groin, but no bullet had penetrated the armour that had protected the vital parts of his body.

His wounds having been dressed, the doctor declared that he was in no danger from them, and arrangements were made to convey him to Melbourne in course of the day.

CHAPTER CXXVIII
DESTRUCTION OF THE GANG.

The siege had all this while been maintained without interruption.

The fact that the other three outlaws were in the place was confirmed by Ned, who was ignorant of Dan's fate, and they could be heard shouting and tapping their arms.

The interest and excitement heightened every moment.

The Kelly gang were at last within reach of the hand of the law they had so often defied.

Only before that hand could tighten its grip on them, it was very probable that there would be a siege on the ground.

Zeph and Salmon Roe had witnessed Kelly's attack on the police, which they judged was intended to release them.

They marked his fall, and knowing that he had vowed not to be taken alive, held that he was slain.

"Ned's gone under," exclaimed Salmon Roe.

"Yes," said Zeph, "didn't I tell you he'd not desert his pals while there was life in him."

"You were right. He was a game one."

"A game one. The pluckiest bit of mag. flesh that ever trod in shoe leather."

The two continued to keep up a steady fire from the rear of the building where they had barricaded themselves after Dan's death.

From time to time they exposed themselves recklessly to the police, shouting defiantly as they did so.

It was the mad recklessness of despair, for it was impossible for them to hold out for ever, despite the mail made out of ploughshares with which they were covered, and which at least a dozen times saved them from what would have otherwise been a deadly bullet.

It struck Foster that the police would act with still more vigour if the persons whom they knew were confined in the hotel were allowed to make their escape.

At ten o'clock in the forenoon he gave orders to cease firing, and called on all prisoners to make their escape.

As soon as word to that effect was passed on by the police lying nearest to the front of the building, a white handkerchief was held out as a flag of truce at the front door.

Immediately afterwards there was a rush of about thirty men out of the building, all holding up their hands above their heads in token of their harmlessness.

"By Jove, there are a lot more than I thought for," said Foster. "We must take care and see if there is any wheat in all this chaff."

The police levelled their guns at the advancing crowd, and called upon them to stand.

They at once did so, and then, in obedience to a further order, threw themselves down on the ground, a precaution highly necessary, as the outlaws might have been amongst them.

The scene presented, as they all lay on the ground attempting to verbally demonstrate their respectability of character, was unique.

"This is shameful! I'm a respectable citizen," cried one.

"I'm Smith—John Smith, of Glenrowan."

"I've lived here twenty years," shouted another.

"Good heavens! do I look like a bushranger? I'm a barber," yelled a third.

"I'm a storekeeper from Benalla," explained a fourth.

"It don't matter, darlins, who the divil ye are!" exclaimed an Irish constable, in answer to these appeals.

"It's only what ye aren't, we're after seekin', and if ye aren't Kelly's lot, we've no consarn wid ye."

Nevertheless they were all examined, and passed beyond the police lines one at a time, two brothers, named McCallum, suspected as Kelly sympathisers, being detained in custody.

The police now heard of Dan's death, and that there were only two of the desperadoes left alive.

The siege was kept up till three o'clock in the afternoon, by which time the fire from the hotel had grown considerably slack.

The police were so sheltered that Salmon Roe and Zeph had resolved not to throw away any ammunition on them unless with certainty.

They thought that by playing possum a bit they might tempt them into the open.

The assailants, though sticking to their cover, began to grow impatient.

The best part of the day was over, and things seemed very little advanced.

"Mayn't we go the place, sir?" was an appeal made by them to their leader several times.

"No," was the reply. "I can't trust your lives. There are several hours daylight yet, and we're bound to get the best of them."

"But there are only two—or, mebbe, one left. We could do them easily," expostulated Kenny.
The house began to fill with smoke, which rolled in stifling clouds along the passages. Noxious tongues of flames leaped up here and there from the floor, and clamped up the walls which they attacked.

To the sharp cracking sound of burning timbers, was joined a muffled roar like that of a furnace in full blast. The fire had got well hold of the house. Zeph and Salmon Roe retreating before the flames gained a room in the rear.

"What's to be done?" said the latter, "it seems to me that this time the game is up."

"I'm afraid so."

"Well, shall we bolt out of this infernal blazing hole? We'll be roasted if we stop much longer."

"I don't much see the good of bolting out," remarked Zeph casually.

"Have you got a fancy to be grilled?"

"If the persons are right, we shall both be grilled to all eternity, so little more or less won't matter. Besides, I'd as soon be grilled as hanged."

"So'd I, for the matter of that."

"Well, see here, if we get out, we can't get clear. They'll fire at us, and as they can't kill us through our armour, they'll cripple and capture us to hang us at Melbourne."

"I'd blow my brains out first."

"That's just what I was thinking of. Only I'd as soon die by a pal's hand."

Salmon Roe understood him.

"You're right there, he answered.

The two men so strangely united by the bond of long continued common crime held out each a hand. They gave one another a firm grip to bind the strange bargain they had concluded.

Then each laid aside his breast armour.

Standing face to face and leveling their revolvers at each other's chest they paused a moment.

"At the word three," said Zeph.

In unison they counted "One! two! three!"

Then there was a loud report.

"What is that?" cried one of the assailants.

"It must be the first got to some cartridges," said a comrade.

It was the death-knell of Salmon Roe, alias Stephen Hare, and Zeph, alias Byrne, who had fallen, shot to the breast each by the other's hand.

Seven more explosions followed from the burning building.

Still no signs of life appeared, despite repeated calls addressed to the inmates to surrender.

All eyes were fixed on the blazing and now silent pile, and it was evident that they had shot each other. How they shot them, but only to find that life was extinct, and had barely time to ascertain this, before the flames forced him and those who followed him, to leave the room without venturing to risk attempting to remove the bodies.

As they were those of Zeph and Salmon Roe.

They certainly were not "lovely in their lives," but it could be truly said of them that "in their deaths they were not divided."

The corpse of Dan Kelly, which lay at the entrance to the bar-room at the eastern side of the house, was recovered, but not until it had been dreadfully scorched.
Hardly had this been done than the roof fell in.
In a few minutes all that was left of the hotel was a lamp-post with a sign board bearing the following inscription:—"The Glenrowan Hotel. Ann Jones. Best accommodation," swinging in mockery above the pile of smoking ashes, that had formed the funeral pyre of the "Kelly Gang."

CHAPTER CXXXVIII.
CONCLUSION.

Ned, after having had his wounds seen to by Dr. Nicholson and Dr. Ryan, was placed in a railway van and sent off to Melbourne, where the excitement during the "Battle of Glenrowan" had been indescribable.

The newspapers had been publishing fresh editions concerning it every hour.

When it was known Kelly was en route, this excitement increased, but the authorities did all they could to keep the time and place of his intended arrival dark.

Crowds assembled at the Spencer Street Station, but the train halted at North Melbourne, where he was removed, prostrate and helpless, from the van on a stretcher, transferred to a covered waggon, and driven to Melbourne jail, where another dense crowd was assembled.

As soon as he had been sufficiently doctored up, he was taken to Beechworth, the chief town of the Murray River and Ovens districts, by special train on August 6th, and placed at the bar of the police-court charged with the murder of Constables Lonigan and Scanlan.

Being committed for trial, he was brought up at the Beechworth Circuit Court on August 11th, and sentenced to death.

The excitement in Melbourne continued to be immense and a strong feeling of sympathy manifested itself in his favour.

"Flying Scud" was put on at one of the theatres, in order to introduce Ned's horse, which was loudly cheered every evening.

A monster meeting, presided over by no less a person than David O'Connell, Chairman of Committees in the Legislative Assembly, was held at the Hippodrome, and the 4,000 persons who obtained admission, and the 2,000 more for whom there was no room, passed unanimous resolutions in favour of a petition for a reprieve for Ned.

It was signed by no less than 32,424 people.

Nevertheless the law took its course, and on the 11th November the Victorian Jack Ketch fitted the fatal noose round the neck of Ned Kelly, the Ironclad Bush-ranger of Australia.

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