OLD CONVICT DAYS

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EDITED BY

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INTRODUCTION

'FROM DISTANT CLIMES, O'ER WIDE-SPREAD SEAS, WE COME,
THOUGH NOT WITH MUCH ECLAT, OR BEAT OF DRUM.
TRUE PATRIOTS ALL! FOR BE IT UNDERSTOOD,
WE LEFT OUR COUNTRY FOR OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD;
NO PRIVATE VIEWS DISGRAC'D OUR GENEROUS ZEAL,
WHAT URGED OUR TRAVELS WAS OUR COUNTRY'S WEAL,
AND NONE WILL DOUBT BUT THAT OUR EMIGRATION
HAS PROVED MOST USEFUL TO THE BRITISH NATION.'

MANY years have passed since the narrative of the strange adventures of William Derricourt, or Day, appeared in the columns of an Australian newspaper, the *Sydney Evening News*, and from the introductory note to the story, written by the editor of that journal, I take the following extracts: — 'The narrative will, though a record of actual experience, be found to contain episodes that have never been surpassed in any novel. It shows the career of one who, arriving in this part of the world as a convict, gradually, and not without some temporary slips backward, worked his way to a position of competence and respectability, finally arriving at a point sufficiently assured for him to be able to reveal his past without fear of anyone making it a reproach to him. His record incidentally shows, set forth as nearly as possible in his own words, a state of

society that has now passed away almost as completely as the Dark Ages. Touching England, one reads in our hero's recollections of the Midlands —then almost as savage as when John Wesley preached through them—a region of bull-baiting, dog-fighting, and sports even still more barbarous. Journeying with the writer to the southern half of the globe, there is revealed in sober matter-of-fact the horrors of the Convict System of Van Dieman's Land, as vividly as the late Marcus Clarke dealt with them in fiction. Turning to the continent (of Australia), the details of *Bush-ranging Days* find confirmation in reminiscences of such celebrated bushrangers as Gardiner and the Clarkes; and there is, too, a picture of diggers, lucky and unlucky, their triumphs, and disappointments, and reverses, which has not yet been equalled in popular literature. The wild days of the "fifties" are traced . . . right down to the present time of half-exhausted fields, and of veterans who could once come down to Sydney on sprees of almost fabulous proportions, working for wages on the scenes of their former glories. . . . One can again see the gold escort start in the days when gold escorting was a service of real danger; one can hear the ever-fresh tale of the masked desperado waiting for the old lumbering coach at the lonely turn of the road.'

It may be considered by some readers that Part V. of Mr Day's narrative, which deals almost

exclusively with his life on the Turon Gold-field, might have been omitted as not possessing the same vivid interest—gloomy and painful as it is in many respects—as the rest of his story. But to have done so would have interfered in a great measure, not only with the continuity of the history of his chequered career, but have left unrecorded, in a more lasting form than the columns of a newspaper, a truthful and interesting picture of the wild, rough life of the digger on what was once a rich and famous gold-field. It may be urged that other and more skilful writers have long since given us fascinating books dealing with the romance of the gold-seeker, and that Mr Day is hard, bald and prosaic in his details. That this is so is doubtless a fault against literary 'style and polish,' but neither the author of the 'introduction' which I have just quoted nor myself thought that Mr Day's rugged, honest style required more than to be left alone in its integrity as it was taken down from his lips, and that to attempt to tamper with it would be an injustice to the old gentleman, and, perhaps, annoying to the reader, as an instance of good material spoilt by incompetent hands.

In reading our hero's recollections of his prison life on Cockatoo Island, I was greatly impressed with the retentiveness of his memory and the accuracy of his description of this once dreaded island. As a lad of ten years of age,

I well remember the place, with its gloomy prison buildings perched high upon its treeless sides, the ever-pacing, red-coated sentries, the sonorous clang of the prison bell, and the long lines of wretched convicts marching to and from their toil in the dry dock or among the sandstone quarries.

Directly facing the island jetty, and less than a quarter of a mile across the river, and where is now the Atlas Engineering Works, were two or three houses, and in one of these my father lived. On two occasions my brothers and myself were taken over the island by that same 'humane superintendent,' of whom Day speaks, to see the works. And it is curious for me to reflect now that at that very time (1861-3) William Day was there serving his sentence for bushranging. It may be that some of us boys have spoken to the man himself, for we were allowed to converse with the better-conducted men. It—'the island'—was to our youthful minds what Marcus Clarke has called Port Arthur—'the abode of horror'; for the cells, hewn out of the solid rock, were just as he (Day) has described them in this work. Sometimes when a fog descended upon the Parramatta River and hid the island from our view, and the sentries were doubled, we could hear the guard boats rowing round and round the island, and, with other youngsters, would go down to the rocks to listen for a shot from a

sentry's rifle, followed by the muffled clamour of that dreadful bell and the sound of someone near us panting hard in his swim for liberty. We had once heard these sounds and seen, early in the dawn of a winter's day, a wretched, exhausted creature clinging with bleeding hands to the oyster-covered rocks beneath our house, too weak to drag himself further from his pursuers.

The military then doing duty on grim Cockatoo were, if I am not mistaken, a detachment from the famous 'Fighting Fiftieth'; and as bearing on Day's testimony to the good-nature and sympathy of the soldiers who had the inglorious task of guarding convicts, I may mention one instance of these feelings. It has always been a pleasing remembrance to me. One intensely hot day some older boyish companions and myself were fishing from a boat between Cockatoo and Spectacle Island, when we saw a sentry stagger, drop his rifle, and fall on a pile of stones at the water's edge. We went to his assistance, and the man, when he recovered, came to thank us. We plied him with questions about the prisoners, and my mother, who was present, remarked that she would like to send some fruit to the convicts sick in hospital, and would see the superintendent on the subject.

'Ah, ma'am, they would be glad of it; but it's them who ain't in hospital as suffers most on that horrible island. Now, if any of these

young gentlemen here was to come along in a boat within the fifty-yard limit when *I* was on sentry go and chuck a lot of small pieces of tobacco out on the road or among the loose stones on the bank, *I* wouldn't see them until it was too late, and no more would the other sentries, I believe. And none of it will be lost, ma'am. A bit of tobacco is a prize to most of the poor beggars, and none of us chaps would notice them picking it up.'

We were quick to take the hint, but, boy-like, overdid the thing, and strewed the broad road which had been cut out around the base of the island to such an extent with little square pieces of tobacco that that 'gentle and humane superintendent' had to become (officially) exceedingly indignant. One evening he came to dine with my father, and we, the culprits, were sent for and duly lectured upon the enormity of our offence against the laws of Great Britain. 'Many of these men, my dear boys,' said the kindly-hearted governor of the island, 'are utterly reckless and callous. To obtain one stick of the tobacco which you have thrown upon the shore, any one of them would commit such a breach of the regulations that I should have to order him to be severely flogged. And it pains me, my dear boys, it pains me to have a man flogged.'

As he spoke a tear trembled in his eye.

LOUIS BECKE.

CONTENTS

PART I

DARK ENGLAND

PART II

THE LAND OF THE LASH

OLD CONVICT DAYS

PART I

DARK ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

MY EARLY DAYS—APPRENTICESHIP—BULL-BAITING—COCK-FIGHTING—DOG-FIGHTING

I WAS born on June 5, 1819, at a house between the Maypole and the Pack Horse Inns, in King's Norton, Worcestershire, England. I was one of a family of four brothers and two sisters. In due course of time I was sent to school, where, if I did not shine at my books, I certainly showed the same turn for mischief and adventure which distinguished my future life, though I can truly say that even in those early days I had a good heart, and was ready to stand up for the weak and oppressed.

The first adventure that I can remember had not anything much to do with those amiable traits. On the occasion to which I refer I had been crowned with the 'dunce's cap,' the mark of disgrace at the

'dame's school' I attended, and had been locked into an empty room, doomed to remain there until the dismissal of the school. I looked about—as I had to do many times afterward—for the means of escape from what I considered undeserved tyranny. Seeing no way out but the chimney, I at once made up my mind to try that. Being of rather stout build for my age I only succeeded in climbing up the flue after much straining and squeezing. When I got to the top of the flue my troubles were not over, as I found the exit was narrowed by the usual chimney-pot, on the presence of which I might have counted. Nothing daunted, I forced my head and arm through, but there stuck. In my struggles I unshipped the obstacle, and toppled over with it crash into a bed of onions which were the particular hobby of my good schoolmistress.

This incident had an importance little thought of at the time. Fifty years afterward, however, it was remembered, and helped to identify me when, after all my wanderings, I returned home to become party to a Chancery suit. My other youthful adventures, as fights, etc., I will pass over as not so closely foreshadowing my future career, and will turn to a most important event—my apprenticeship.

I was apprenticed early to one Toby Duffell, a gun-lock filer, and also a publican, living on the Leas, near the Ranters' Chapel, in Darlaston. Here my teaching was so varied that my attention to my proper work was much hindered. My master was an inveterate fancier and breeder of bulldogs and game cocks. Bull-baiting on Monday and cock-fighting on Tuesday was the order of the week. Young as I was—having to stand on a box at the vyce while

using the file—these sports had a great attraction for me. I lost no opportunity of making myself acquainted with some of my master's dog-breaking tricks. The old story is true that, to prove the tenacity and courage of a bull slut, first one front paw and then the other would be lopped off, and after each operation the unfortunate beast would be tried to see whether it would face the charge of a bull. This barbarity was practised on beasts incapacitated from active service by loss of teeth. If they stood the test they were nursed and tended so as to be fit for breeding purposes. The most promising of a litter of pups had more care than their owner's children. As the pups grew up, they were confined in a darkened place, and were not allowed to see anyone but my master or myself, or be handled by any other person. So keen was Duffell about dog-fighting, that before a match I have seen him run his tongue all over his opponent's animal to make sure that no bitter aloes, or other drug, had been applied to prevent his dog seizing and holding.

Brought up in this school, and having it always dinned into me that the man who keeps a fighting dog must be a fighting man, it is very little wonder that I got some of the nature of those around me—men and dogs alike. Having shown some fighting qualities, I was frequently backed and forced to take part in what in Darlaston was called 'French and English.'

For 'French and English' two boys were matched to 'fight to a finish' in this style: Each boy was perched on the shoulders of a man who held his (the boy's) legs tightly, leaving his arms free. In this position the two boys met in a real ding-dong,

hammer and tongs sort of fashion. Neither of them were able to get away, being kept up to it by their bearers, and after battering and bruising each other for a time one would have to cry for quarter.

From my many successful engagements in this style, I was a great favourite among the fighting people, and was soon fitted to look on at something worse. In a close room where, for the sake of security, pokers and tongs were chained to the grate, a number of rats, bought for the purpose from the rat-catcher, were turned loose, and men with their hands tied behind their backs undertook to worry the wretched creatures, using, of course, only their teeth, as dogs might have done. The men competed for a money prize, or for the honour and glory as to who should kill the greatest number.

A curious Darlaston custom to try the pluck of boys was observed at intervals of about six months. About thirty of the toughest youths of Darlaston were picked out and matched against a like number of youths from Wilnon, which was a town about a mile distant, the canal from Birmingham to Walsall separating the two places. On the bridge crossing the canal, and leading to a field known as The Leisures, the parties met, and, under the leadership of several captains and officers, endeavoured—using no weapons but hands and feet, arms and legs—to force one another back. This was never accomplished without the loss of much blood and skin, and had sometimes resulted in fatal injuries. Boys were bruised and stunned, or fell, or were thrown, over the bridge into the canal, escaping as best they could. Drownings had been known. After the scrimmage

the wounded were wheeled to their homes on barrows. On the left-hand side of the road, between Wilnon and the Canal Bridge, stood a building known as the Red Barn. A murder had been committed in it, and it was generally supposed to be haunted. A young man from Wilnon, who used to come courting my master's servant, was so afraid of passing this barn after dark that he hit upon the strange notion of always pushing before him, when he started out late, a wheelbarrow with a creaking wheel that could be heard half a mile off. This he seemed to think would frighten the ghost. He was never meddled with anyhow, and brought his courting to a happy end.

CHAPTER II

I RUN AWAY—CANAL LIFE—THE CHOLERA OUTBREAK

So far my apprenticeship had gone on to my master's satisfaction. But one day my mistress gave me the remains of a pot of beef broth to give to the dogs. I set this down, without seeing that there was in it a piece of hard shin-bone. One of my master's best dogs seized this bit of bone, and was quietly gnawing it in a corner when its owner unfortunately came in, and fearing his pet's teeth would be destroyed, turned

his fury upon me, and so beat me that I at once bolted, and, for the time, cut his acquaintance and lock-filing. Having made my escape, I wandered along The Leisures until I was lucky enough to obtain employment at half-a-crown a week on the fly-boat running to Worcester. My business was to take the shift either day or night in driving the towing horses. After some time I learned to steer the boat, and gave up the whip to another hand. In passing the locks it was my place to assist in opening and shutting the lock gates, and as I was deficient in strength for this purpose, my employer bestowed on me heavier curses, and still heavier blows. So fearfully was I beaten that I determined to take French leave of this fresh-water sailing. Learning from a lad on the boat that, in a tunnel through which we had to pass for a distance of two miles, there was a sort of landing-place, I made up my mind to jump off the boat I was steering, unseen by the man who was 'legging' her through the tunnel.

This I succeeded in doing, and at once made off, guiding myself through the slime and ooze by groping with my hands against the damp and dripping wall. After what seemed to me hours of crawling along I came to a flight of steps, up which I proceeded for some time. I at last saw a light ahead, but on reaching it found the stairway blocked by a heavy iron grating, which was locked. I shouted and screeched the remainder of the afternoon, till, completely worn out by cold, hunger and fatigue, I fell into a deep sleep, and never stirred till morning. Feeling then somewhat refreshed by my long rest,

I began shouting again, endeavouring to draw the attention of some chance passer-by or inmate of the place, which I afterward found to be one of the underground entrances to Dudley Castle. At length a woman belonging to the castle passed by my prison bars on her way to find her cows, and, hearing my clamour, brought the blacksmith, who, after calling a constable, cut the lock from the grating, and so far released me. But this was merely out of the frying-pan into the fire; for on being questioned, and my account of myself not being satisfactory, I was marched off to the lock-up, and, upon inquiry being made, I was discovered to be a runaway apprentice from Darlaston, and forthwith handed over to my former employer of bulldog-keeping fame. After being taken to him at Darlaston I was removed to Bilston, tried for my desertion, and sentenced to one month in Stafford Gaol, with a flogging at the beginning and the end of the term. After my last flogging and discharge I was so overcome with the fear of further punishment that I hastened back to the place of my apprenticeship, passing through Pancridge and Wolverhampton.

I arrived in Bilston at the height of the fearful outbreak of cholera.* So severe was the disease in Bilston that nearly every third house had the window-shutters closed, showing that there had been a death there; while in all directions 'dead carts' were hurrying with their ghastly contents to common pits and trenches. While passing down a street in Bilston

* Cholera, it will be remembered, first appeared in Great Britain in 1831, and raged till 1832. It was not, however, so fatal as it was on the Continent. In Paris 18,000 persons died between March and August 1832.

I met an old man with a roll of street ballads in his hand, who was bellowing out lustily the following rhyme suitable for the occasion :—

> 'The best advice as I can give
> Is moderation ; let us live,
> And we shall have no cause to grieve
> For Mr Cholera Morbus.'

In the midst of the chorus, 'For Mr Cholera Morbus,' he dropped down dead at my feet, while I seized on a batch of his ballads and made off.* Returning shortly afterwards, I saw him picked up and borne off by the dead-cart.

CHAPTER III

SOME ENGLISH CUSTOMS—SELLING A WIFE BY PUBLIC AUCTION—BULL-BAITING AGAIN

On my way over to Darlaston, a little before crossing a bridge over the canal below The Leisures, I saw an immense crowd gathered near the toll-bar, and, forcing my way through the people, I found myself alongside a man who held in his hand one end of a halter, the other end of which was attached to a woman's waist. The man, spying me, offered me a penny to hold the halter. He then offered me another penny to keep hold while he filled his pipe, which he did

* The word 'drunk' was probably omitted after 'dead' in the original MS.

with the utmost composure, I, meanwhile, walking along leading the woman, who offered not the slightest resistance, though surrounded by an immense, rough crowd. We thus walked until we reached the Market Place in Bilston, where my charge was taken from me, and, then and there, put up for public sale. She was knocked down to a bidder of five shillings. I have thus seen a man sell his wife, apparently with her full consent, and I myself received two pence for my share in the transaction. This took place, it must be remembered, too, where people were being swept off by cholera by tens, dozens and scores.

When near Darlaston I was met by my old master's son Sam, who, seeing the cruel state of my back, took me to his mother, who killed a fat goose, dressed my sores with the goose grease, and behaved with a kindness that I can never forget. We ate the goose next day.

After my recovery I remained some time longer at my master's, until he, having had enough of fighting dogs and cocks, removed from Darlaston to Birmingham, entirely breaking up his business as a gunsmith.

I was then turned over with my indentures to one Tom Butler, also a gunsmith and publican. With him I had to work quite as hard outside my trade as I had to do with my former employer. This Butler kept what was called the 'bull stake,' in the very centre of the town. Mondays were devoted to bull-baiting, Tuesdays to dog-fighting, and the cocks had their outing on Wednesday. The bull was entirely in my charge, to feed, water and groom as carefully as I might have done a racehorse. So accustomed had he got to me that, on exhibition days, I would mount him, ride him

into the ring, chain him up, and, during his bout with the dogs, stand by him, patting and otherwise encouraging him. Sometimes he would fling dogs clear out of the ring through windows or over low roofs. On some occasions he would he attacked by two dogs at once, and upon being hard pressed, would make a desperate plunge and rush, snapping his chain from the stake, and go straight for his stable, with me at his heels. On his way he would scatter everything before him, stalls, tables, baskets and apple carts, seriously damaging the owners, many of whom, being from Birmingham, were not so well up to the ways of bulls as the Darlaston folk. When he was once in his stable I had to wash him, dress his wounds, groom him, and feed him up to make him get strength for the next baiting.

At this time Darlaston, although a big and important town, had neither magistrate nor courthouse. An infirm old man acted as the constable, watchman and beadle. If he wanted to take anyone up, he had merely to go to the culprit and say 'Come.' Strangely enough, the men thus apprehended nearly always did as bidden, and were then walked off to Bilston, one mile distant, where there was a magistrate. Mostly all our quarrels were settled by and among ourselves, either amicably—or otherwise.

As well as bulldogs and cocks, my master had a great fancy for carrier pigeons, by which in those days, before steam or telegraphs, he could get the most speedy news of any race or fight within miles of the town. These pigeons were also under my care, for apprentices then had not the protection that they have now, but had to be at their master's beck and call for

any purpose he might think fit. One night, after I had got into my master's good graces by detecting one of our neighbour's cats stealing these pigeons, and had warmed the beast up with a flat iron so that it never went near pigeon-houses again, a fatal match was made in my master's taproom.

CHAPTER IV

A FIGHT AND WHAT CAME OF IT—MY ADVENTURES ON THE ROAD

THAT night my master declared that his son would fight any lad of his weight and age in the town. The challenge was taken up, a match made, and on the next day it was agreed that the fight should come off in The Leisures. Accordingly the lads met, and I, being always forward in such affairs, acted as bottle-holder for my master's son. The battle was a desperate and determined one; but after it had lasted a good time, an unlucky blow from my champion stretched the other lad dead. His body was at once carried off by his party, and we went home. Soon after the old constable came, and in his usual quiet way told young Butler he was wanted, and would have to go with him. As they were leaving the house I came in with a hod of coals, when the old constable

said to me, 'Ah, Will! you'll have to go too. I'll come for you to-morrow.'

I thought to myself, 'You may come for me, but I fancy you won't find me.' Having once had a taste of Stafford Gaol, and with the horrible feeling of the lash still fresh in my memory, I determined to turn my back on Darlaston. I did not see the place again for fifty years.

The day after the fight saw me on my way to Birmingham, with my little belongings done up in a bundle. Without stopping in Birmingham I stepped out along the Worcester Road till I arrived at Sally Oake Bridge, crossing the canal running between Worcester and King's Heath. On the bridge stood a young girl of about fifteen, carrying an infant in her arms and crying piteously. I questioned her, and she told me that her parents had turned her out of doors with the child, that she had nowhere to go, and had come to the canal to drown herself and her baby. She said that if it were not for the baby she could get a place as servant in Birmingham. As it was she knew not what to do. I did all I could to console her, and told her to come away from the water, as the very look of it made me shudder. Then I trusted her with my secret that I was in trouble myself, being a runaway apprentice on my way home by King's Heath. I persuaded her to come with me, and we would try what could be done. She consented, and off we went, I carrying the child and she my bundle. Towards night we came to a sort of cowshed. The night was bitterly cold, so we went in for shelter. The child became peevish and restless, and we were without food of any sort. I could milk, and proposed to milk a

cow that was tied up to a stall, but had some difficulty about finding something to serve instead of a pail. At last I hit upon the idea of using my boot. I pulled it off and wiped it as clean as I could, and then filled it with milk and drank the first draught myself.* The girl then had a drink, and we had a bootful for the baby. We then made holes in the straw for beds, and were soon sound asleep.

In the morning we made for my home, as I had great hopes of getting my mother, who was a good, kind woman, to take charge of the child, at least for a time. Then I remembered a Mrs Anson, the wife of a tailor, who lived close to my mother. Mrs Anson was without family, and had often expressed a strong desire to find and adopt a child. Acting on this idea, I proposed to the girl that I should go at night to Mrs Anson's house, and find some way of giving up the child to her. Accordingly, about dusk we crept into the shrubbery and lay concealed under the bushes. I after a time took the child, and carrying it to the gate, pinched it and bolted. The child screamed lustily. Watching from behind a thick holly bush we presently saw the gate open and Mrs Anson appear. She picked up the baby, and, after fondling and caressing it with an appearance of perfect delight, carried it into the house.

Seeing the happy result of our scheme, the girl and I hurried off, till, nearing my mother's house, I bade my companion wait. Presently I let her into the shop where my father used to work, and put her in the loft above it. Afterward I stole a loaf from my mother's cupboard and a quantity of lard. I gave this

* Such noble candour is deserving of the highest praise.—L. B.

to the occupant of the loft, and told her in the morning to make straight for Birmingham. I never saw her or the child again. I heard, however, of them through Mrs Anson. That lady had a female friend, the owner of a large factory in, I think, Great Charles Street, who was very much struck with the little waif that I had left outside the gate. The factory owner begged to be allowed to take care of the foundling alternately with Mrs Anson, and told her servant that during the time the baby was in the house she (the servant) must act as nursemaid. The girl was my old friend who had shared the milk with me in the cow-shed. She was overjoyed at thus being called upon to again care for the infant that she thought she had lost.

CHAPTER V

MY FRIEND THE PEDLAR AND HIS DOG—HIS DEATH —I AM WHIPPED AT THE CART'S TAIL

BEING still in dread of my old acquaintance, the constable, following me up, I said farewell to my mother, and then turned my face towards Warwick and Leamington. On the canal near the latter place was a slow boat tied up for the night. I pitched the captain a plausible tale, and thus obtained leave to camp for the night in a side bunk in the cabin.

The next morning, careless which way I went, I started off for Banbury, and that night slept in a nice warm haystack near the town. I sank right into the hay, and was only awakened early in the morning by one of the thatcher's tolls pricking me. My starting out of the hay so frightened the man that he fell down the ladder, and I had a chance to run for it.

Leaving Banbury, I followed the road which I thought would bring me to Oxford, but at last found I was on the Woodstock Road. However, as it mattered little to me whither I went, I followed it, but was soon overtaken by a man in a light cart drawn by three splendid Newfoundland dogs. The man turned out to be a hawker of small hardware and other nick-nacks. Pulling up, he asked me whither I was bound, to which I answered that I did not know—anywhere where I thought I might get a job of work so that I could have something to eat. I had, by the way, a small stock of cash which my mother had given me, but I was very careful of it. He told me to jump up in the cart and have a talk. I readily agreed, and was then asked if I were willing to work, and if I were honest. To the last question I replied that I had never so far stolen anything from anyone. The man seemed satisfied with my looks, and said that if I behaved myself and was careful he would act like a father to me. We drove into Woodstock, and he made me caretaker of his trap and dogs while he was about his business selling his wares. During his absence I frequently strolled round the place, accompanied by the three dogs, and had a look at the parks, etc. I was used to dogs, and had no trouble

at all with those of the pedlar. The wants of the Woodstock people in the hardware line soon being supplied, we harnessed up and took the road for Oxford. On arrival we halted at St Thomas's, and took beds at a lodging-house opposite the Lamband Flag Inn. Here I was again left in charge of the dogs and of the chattels in the cart, while my master sold his wares around the streets of Oxford. I must say of my kind friend, that though his trade was fairly profitable he was much given to strong waters, and often returned from his rambles more than half seas over. At such times, and indeed on every return, he would hand me his takings to mind, such confidence had he placed in me, partly from my stoutly refusing to take drink, the evils of which I had so often seen when with my former masters, who, it will be remembered, were both publicans. When I received the takings from the pedlar I had some doubt as to their safety in the lodging-house, and so, with their owner's consent, I carried them out of town to a spot at the end of the Holly Bush Lane on the Whitney Road, where I buried them in such a manner as to be easily found when wanted, only keeping one pound for current expenses.

After one of his trading excursions through Oxford, my master failed to return home as usual, and I was soon horrified to hear that he had been found dead in one of the suburbs. There was a bottle of spirits in one of his pockets, and his basket of wares was by his side.

Here was a pretty fix for a young lad to be in! Left with a large amount of cash planted in a lane, a valuable stock-in-trade, and three grand dogs of a

breed at that time rare. No one knew what had been my connection with the pedlar. He always called me 'My boy,' or 'My son.' Acting on the advice of the people in the lodging-house, I resolved to pass myself off as his son, believing that I could thus come into both cash and goods.* At the inquest held on the body I took a bold stand, and all was going in my favour when some traitor from the lodging-house, who had got an inkling of the true state of affairs, completely turned the tables upon me by revealing what he knew to the coroner and jury. On further inquiry the whole truth was found out, and I was committed under a charge of false pretences. I stood my trial, was found guilty, and sentenced to be flogged at the cart's tail from the 'Butter Bench,' as the watchhouse was termed, to the end of the street.

On the appointed day I was tied up to the back of the cart, and the order was given to start. I had, however, only received three strokes when the whole thing was turned into a joke by the mob rushing the cart and whipping up the horse. I had, tied by the hands as I was, all I could do to keep up. But the end of the street was very soon reached, and there, by the law of the day, I was free. My easy escape was mainly due to the good turns I had done to two young girls, sisters—runaway apprentices from the dressmaking business in London—who stayed in the lodging-house. They were poor, but seemingly honest, never gadding about the town, but cheering up the earlier part of our evenings indoors by ballad-singing, for which they had excellent voices. By

* The note on page 13 need not here be repeated.

means of this singing, and my giving them a part of mine and the pedlar's rations, they had managed to live fairly well. On seeing me tied up to the cart's tail, and witnessing the first fall of the cat on my bare back, one of the sisters, picking up a paving hammer, had hit the horse in the ribs with it. As she was immediately seconded by the mob, my rescue was made good.

After the inquest upon the hawker's body, his goods, cart and dogs were seized, but the money I had planted, by a kind Providence,* remained mine, as nobody else knew of its whereabouts. Some time afterward, when sauntering about Somerstown, a short way out of Oxford, I was accosted by a young man, and in course of our talk he asked me whether I lived in Oxford, and, if so, whether I had seen anything of two girls whom he described—runaways from their apprenticeship in London. They were, he said, his sisters, and he had traced them thus far. Of course I told him all I knew, and, to his great delight, took him to our lodging-house, where I joined with him in persuading the girls to return to their employment, at the same time giving them a pound out of my stock to carry them on their way. Previous to the brother's coming the sisters were often reduced to great straits, for though I had the pedlar's money safe enough, I was very careful of it, not knowing to what shifts I might not be put to earn a living. In their need first one sister sold her hair, a magnificent lot, to a barber, and then the other followed suit. Seeing the first one with an odd-looking granny's cap

* It is evident that, despite his bull-baiting and dog-fighting experiences, the youth had pious instincts.—L. B.

on her head one morning, my curiosity was roused, and, snatching off the cap, I found out the secret. But I paid dearly for my rashness. The two laid hold of me, and gave me as sound a basting as ever I had in my life. In all their want they were truly honest girls. Often and often was I offered sixpences by students to carry notes to them. I, of course, took the sixpences, but there was no tempting them to any appointments. That I knew well, for I had often helped them to resist impertinences at the lodging-house.

As I was pretty well off for money, I was in no great hurry to leave Oxford, but wandered about the place seeing what I could. One day as I was sitting on the bridge over the Isis, just where a swift mill race runs from the river, I saw a young girl of about seventeen endeavouring to dip up a bucket of water. The steps leading down to the race were slippery. The current caught her bucket so suddenly that she had no time to let go, and was dragged in headlong. I rushed on to the miller's green, seized a clothes-prop (letting a lineful of clean clothes fall into the mud), and reached one end of the pole to the girl. She seized it, but I felt the current was too strong, and that I must soon let go, or be dragged in too. No one answered to my shouting, and so chancing for a moment being able to hold the pole with one hand, I with my other tore off my boot and flung it through the mill window. This brought out the miller, who was the girl's father, and his wife. The father ran and stopped the mill, but the woman, despite that the girl was by this time within fifteen feet of the great wheel, and must in a moment lose her hold, seemed

principally troubled about the spoiling of the week's wash. When the mill was stopped we got a ladder and finished the rescue just in time. The miller insisted that I should take up my quarters with him for some days, and I was treated with the greatest kindness and gratitude by him and his daughter. The old woman, however, whom I ultimately discovered to be the miller's second wife, and therefore the girl's stepmother, always seemed to have a certain prejudice against me. She at last made herself so disagreeable that I decided to leave, but I often used to visit her husband.

While on one of these visits I strolled on the bridge and was the means of effecting another rescue from drowning. I had seen a young man starting in a skiff from a neighbouring boathouse, apparently to cross the river. When, however, he reached the middle of the stream, a gust of wind capsized him. I dropped off the part of the bridge on which I was standing to run to his assistance, but found that before I could reach the bank I must get over a high-spiked gate. I managed to do this, but in my hurry caught the third and fourth finger of my left hand on a spike, and nearly tore them off. Nevertheless, I went into the water and dragged the drowning man to shore. When I reached it I fainted quite away, and next came to my senses in the hospital, where I had to remain for a very long time. There I was often visited by the young fellow I had saved, who proved to be a student of Worcester College, and who treated me very liberally.

CHAPTER VI

I WITNESS A STRANGE MURDER

Soon after this I made an arrangement to travel with some cheapjacks, whom I had met, and help them in their business. They were going to Thame market with their carts. I was left a little distance behind, meaning to overtake them. As I was trudging along I met a man who asked me where I was going, and upon hearing offered to show me a short cut. We turned into the fields, and upon reaching a stile came upon a man waiting there, who had the appearance of a gamekeeper. The keeper seemed to have had some quarrel with my guide, for he angrily said that if he had his gun he would march him off to 'the hall.' My guide said he would wait until the gun was fetched, and coolly sat himself down on the stile. The keeper went away, returned with a gun in a few minutes, and, to my horror and amazement, immediately raised it to his shoulder and shot the other man dead. I was horribly frightened, both at the sight and at being grazed by a stray pellet. I rushed away across the field shouting, 'I'll tell, I'll tell,' when the savage raised his gun again, saying, 'Take that,' and tried to let me have the contents of the second barrel. Fortunately it was a miss-fire. I ran until I came to a man ploughing, who, upon hearing what I had to say, lent me one of his horses, upon which I galloped to a neighbouring inn and raised the alarm. There was at once a rush to the scene of the murder,

where the crowd found the criminal still standing as though rooted to the earth. He was seized; and, after some rough handling, taken to Thame. Here, after the inquest, he was committed to take his trial at the next Oxford assizes on the charge of wilful murder. Meanwhile, I, as an important witness, was sent to an inn to be looked after and provided for until the case came on.

One morning, soon before the assizes were to begin, I was waked by a man who told me to get up quickly, dress myself in a new suit of clothes which he had brought, and come along with him. He said he was going to take me to Ireland, showed me a handful of sovereigns, gave me several, said I should have plenty more, that I should never want for anything, and that he would be my friend.

Dazzled by the gold I agreed; and, following him outside the house, found that he had a horse waiting for him, and that there was a pony for me. We rode to Banbury, where we were to stay that night; but my new friend soon proved to be the wrong sort of man to have been entrusted with the smuggling off of a witness. He picked up some loose company, hung about drinking with them for two or three days, and then, giving me a further supply of money, asked me whether I could find my way to Ireland by myself. I told him that with plenty of money and a good horse I could find my way anywhere. I then started off, passing through Warwick, meaning to visit my home and tell my parents all my adventures. When I arrived the whole family was thunder-struck. I gave each of my brothers and sisters a sovereign, and much more to my mother and father. I went to bed,

leaving all the rest of the money in my pocket. When I awoke every coin had disappeared. My father told me in a most serious manner that there were such things as fairies, and I was simple enough to believe that there might be something in what he said.

After puzzling my brain for some days about this, I at last told my people that I would go back and try and get another supply of money.

They tried to persuade me not to do so, but seeing I was determined, my mother gave me a sovereign for expenses, and I set out, leaving my pony and new clothes behind, and dressed in some old things belonging to my brother. I made for my former lodgings in St Thomas's, Oxford. By this time a large reward had been offered for the missing boy, the witness of the murder, but it was not known in Oxford that I was he. One day as I was loitering about I saw a large crowd hurrying along the street, and, on asking, found that the trial of the keeper was just beginning. I went to the court and, although hungry, stayed there the whole day and until, I think, 11 o'clock at night. During the trial my name was called three times, but, no answer being given, or appearance made, the Attorney-General, addressing the jury, declared his fixed belief that the missing witness had either been murdered or in some way got rid of. The murdered man's heart was produced in court, and from the evidence to hand, exclusive of mine, the keeper was found guilty, and sentenced to death by hanging.

On the day appointed for the execution immense crowds were gathered together; but to the dis-

appointment, no doubt, of many it soon became known that the death sentence had been commuted, and the prisoner was sent to the hulks.

CHAPTER VII

I AM UNJUSTLY CHARGED

KNOCKING about, and with my sovereign nearly gone, I strolled down to the canal, and by, as I thought at the time, good luck, got employment from the captain of a light flyboat, carrying about eighteen tons, beside passengers. Finding that I had before worked in such boats, and could steer, the skipper offered me five shillings a week and food, which I gladly accepted. This boat ran right through from Oxford to the Potteries, near Hanley. On our way we passed through Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Brood, and within a mile of Darlaston, where, I trembled to think, lived my old acquaintance—the constable.

On our return, when nearing Pancridge, the horse cast a shoe, and the other boy and I took him to a forge. Another boy, who worked with me in the boat, left me at the forge for a time, and went for a stroll. By-and-by we both went back to the boat, and, on reaching Brood, my companion told me that he had a beautiful long-sleeved plush waistcoat that

his mother had given him. He arranged that when we got to Wolverhampton I was to take the waistcoat and try and sell it, so that with the money we might go to the play together at Birmingham. I was told to say that the waistcoat was my own, and was quite unaware that it had been stolen when I was waiting with the horse at Pancridge. I went on my errand, and, near the court-house, I saw a man whom I thought looked a likely purchaser. I asked him if he would like to buy a waistcoat, assuring him that it was my own property. He said, 'Oh, yes, come in and let me have a look at it.' I went with him, when I found to my horror that I was offering a stolen waistcoat to the constable of the place. He told me that he was looking for someone of my sort, as the coach from Pancridge had brought notice of the robbery. Thus was I, though innocent, again laid by the heels in Wolverhampton.

Brought before the magistrate I told him my story, true in every particular, but the evidence against me for having stolen property on my person was strong enough to commit me to Stafford Gaol. I had to acknowledge to the magistrate that nobody had seen the boy give me the waistcoat, and the constable remarked that mine was all a cock-and-bull story. The owners of the property from Pancridge swore that their house had been entered the same day that we had the horse shod, that entrance had been made through an open window, and this waistcoat and a handkerchief stolen. Fearing that the full report of the case might reach the old constable at Darlaston, I, upon being asked my name, replied, 'William Jones,' dropping my proper name, 'William Derri-

court.' It was under my assumed name that I was removed to Stafford to await my trial at the next Quarter Sessions to be held in two months.

During my detention, while one day exercising in the yard, I was rather surprised to see a man brought in whom I at once recognised to be the captain of the very boat upon which I and the actual stealer of the waistcoat had served. On one of the trips of his boat this man and another had criminally assaulted and brutally ill-used a young woman passenger, and then, fearing detection, had murdered her, and sunk the body in the canal. The charge against him was, of course, 'wilful murder,' and the boy through whom I had been sent to prison had turned Queen's evidence. In talking to the prisoner I learned that the woman's body had been brought to the surface by the disturbance caused in the water by the passing of a rival boat, and, being fresh, had been identified. The murderer tried to comfort me by comparing his position with mine, telling me that, as a young and active fellow not afraid of work, I ought to be glad of a chance of being sent to one of the new colonies, where by patience, submission and industry I might one day become a respectable member of society, and even a man of ample means.

This kind of talk rather reconciled me to my fate, and on my trial before the judge I made no great effort to get off, but was content to tell again the same story that I had told before the magistrate at Wolverhampton, and with no better success. My sentence was, however, delayed, pending corroboration from this magistrate, but it appeared that while I was waiting for my trial he had committed suicide, because

of money and other troubles. So my case remained as it was, and the result was that I was sentenced to 'ten years' transportation beyond the seas.'

CHAPTER VIII

I AM SENT TO THE HULKS AT WOOLWICH

AFTER sentence I was condemned, previous to being sent to the hulks, to the treadmill in Stafford Gaol. There being no corn to grind and no opposing friction to the weight of the steppers on the wheel, if ever mortal boy walked on the wind I did then. The turns were so rapid that should anyone have missed his footing a broken leg might have been the consequence.

This time came to an end, and orders were received for my being passed on with others to the hulks at Woolwich. Quarters were assigned me on board the *Justitia* hulk. Before going on board we were stripped to the skin and scrubbed with a hard scrubbing brush, something like a stiff birch broom, and plenty of soft soap, while the hair was clipped from our heads as close as scissors could go. This scrubbing we endured until we looked like boiled lobsters, and the blood was drawn in many places. We were then supplied with new 'magpie' suits—one side black or blue and the other side yellow. Our next experience was being

marched off to the blacksmith, who riveted on our ankles rings of iron connected by eight links to a ring in the centre, to which was fastened an up and down strap or cord reaching to the waist-belt. This last supported the links, and kept them from dragging on the ground. Then we had what were called knee garters. A strap passing from them to the basils and buckled in front and behind caused the weight of the irons to traverse on the calf of the leg.

In this rig-out we were transferred to the hulk, where we received our numbers, for no names were used. My number was 5418—called 'five four eighteen.' I was placed in the boys' ward, top deck No. 24, and as turfman's gang our first business was repairing the butts, a large mound of earth against which the guns were practised. After completing this we were employed some days at emptying barges, and then at a rocket-shed in the arsenal cleaning shot, and knocking rust scales from shells, filling them with scrap iron, etc., as great preparations were going on for the China war. At other times we would be moving gun carriages or weeding the long lanes between the mounted guns. One particular job I had was cleaning 'Long Tom,' a 21-foot gun at the gate. During all this time I was never for a moment without the leg irons, weighing about twelve pounds, and, indeed, so used to them had I become that I actually should have missed them had they been removed. Though our work was constant, we did not fare badly as regards victuals. Our mid-day meal often consisted of broth, beef and potatoes, sometimes of bread or biscuit and cheese and half a pint of ale. One custom of the times was that for each prisoner one

penny per week was laid aside by the Government, with the object of securing the workers from the disgrace of being simple slaves. This money, any man, on recovering his freedom, could claim by proving to the proper authorities who he was; but it is hardly necessary to say that, for personal reasons, very few cared to go to this trouble.

At intervals the Chatham smack would come alongside and take a batch of the boys from Woolwich for Chatham. Although I was at the boys' ward, I, being bigger and stronger than the others, was worked in the men's gang, thus escaping being sent to Chatham, where the discipline on the hulks was much more severe than at Woolwich. I became boss of the boys' ward and had to see that the regulations were properly carried out. I had to look to general cleanliness, lashing and stowing hammocks, and the victualling department. In all my time on this hulk my conduct was very good, and on only one occasion did I get into the slightest trouble. This happened in this wise: One of the boys, on my reproving him for neglect and carelessness in regard to his hammock, became obstinate and cheeky, and from words we came to blows. Instead of reporting him, I, then and there, lathered him, was complained of to the captain, and ordered to be flogged. With two others I was taken to the place of punishment, where victims were laid across a small cask, their feet and hands being extended to the utmost, to in this position receive, if boys, a certain number of stripes with a birch rod, or, if men, a certain number with the cat. The sight of the effect of the rod on the first boy's skin positively made my flesh creep; but before my turn came both

the captain and Twyman, the guard of the gang, pleaded so strongly for me because of my general good conduct that I was let off.

On board the *Justitia* hulk there were about 400 of us, and occasionally the 'Bay ships,' or transports, would come up the river to take off drafts from the different hulks. We always knew the transports by the number of soldiers on their decks. The drafts were, of course, for transportation to the various penal colonies.

At the distance of about a mile from our hulk lay the hospital ship, which I only once had the misfortune to visit. While at work one day I was seized with a paralytic stroke, entirely disabling one side, and making me almost speechless. After three days in hospital I nearly recovered the use of my side, as also of my voice; but I was kept on board a short time longer, engaged in light duties among the patients.

In the berth next to me was an old man employed in the same way. I once found him in one of the funniest fixes I can ever remember. One day when I was at work in another part of the vessel I lost sight of the old fellow and, upon seeking for him, found that he had actually buried himself. The thing happened in this way: On board, stowed away in one corner, were a number of empty coffins. The day being hot, the old man got into one of these and fell asleep, not knowing that his resting-place had been used to hold pitch. The weather was warm, and the sleeper, when he woke up, found that he had sunk into the remains of the pitch, which still filled about a quarter of the depth of the coffin, and could

by no means get out. The coffin had to be knocked to pieces to deliver him, and he received 25 lashes for neglect of duty and idleness.

I only remained in hospital one week and was then returned to the *Justitia*, where, because of my having suffered from paralysis, and my general good conduct, one of my irons was struck off. The feeling of having one leg fettered and the other free was very curious. On one was twelve pounds of iron and the other seemed as light as cork, and, do what I would, I could not get them both to act together. I wished over and over again to have my fetters arranged as before, instead of having all the weight on one leg. I actually asked the captain to have this done, but he only laughed at me and told me I should soon get accustomed to the change, as I shortly did.

I want here to particularly mention the Christian treatment of prisoners in England in the hulks as compared with the misery and hardships they had to endure in the colonial depôts. The daily practice on board the *Justitia* was to choose a delegate, as we called him, from each ward, whose duty it was to receive all rations supplied, to inspect them, and refuse all he considered unfit for use, drawing, say, good pork instead of bad beef, or good biscuit instead of bad bread. We were frequently visited by a Church of England clergyman. This good man, before the sailing of any convict ship, would address the various drafts in a way so full of feeling that he often drew tears from his listeners. To the older men he would point out the rewards and blessings of reformation, appealing by sound and earnest counsel to their better feelings, rather than working on their fears. At the

same time he did not fail to point out the punishment that would surely follow fresh crimes. To the young he would tell of the many opportunities they would have of securing for themselves the full rights of free citizenship in the land of their forced adoption, and the chance of their becoming independent by integrity, frugality, industry and perseverance. More than once I heard him say that he hoped those who went across the wide waters would sometimes, whether in prosperity or adversity, have a kindly thought for the old minister who would always have the warmest wishes for their happiness.

Shortly before my turn came to be removed to the transport ship, our kind captain of the *Justitia* told me that as I had declared my innocence of the crime laid to my charge he had made all inquiries as to the magistrate who had committed me, and as to the captain of the flyboat upon which I had served with the boy who really stole the waistcoat. He had, of course, discovered that the magistrate was, as I have already stated, dead, and that the flyboat man had been executed for the canal murder. The captain of the hulk—whose name I cannot now remember—could therefore find out nothing to help me; but with the greatest kindness he told me he would manage to let me have the choice between Bermuda, Botany Bay, and Hobart Town, in Van Dieman's Land. He said that though, if I chose Bermuda, I might get a remission of half my sentence, the climate was deadly, and he would advise me to go to Van Dieman's Land, and he would endeavour to make arrangements for me to be kept in Hobart Town. I thanked him, and assured him I would be ever grateful for his kindness, of

which I was soon to have another proof in the treatment accorded me on the voyage.

I have now arrived in my story at the year 1839, when I was about to say good-bye to the old country, with no knowledge when or how I might again set foot in it. On the arrival of our ship, the *Asia* '5th' —so called from the voyage on which she was starting being her fifth one to the colonies—we were ranged on the quarter-deck of the hulk, and two smiths freed us from our irons, now endured for nine months. The sensation of having the twelve pounds struck off from one leg was exactly the same as that felt on the taking off of the first iron. Our irons being off we were taken by boats in batches to the *Asia*, there to be guarded by a detachment of the 96th Regiment.

Previous to our removal the doctor of the *Asia* came on board the hulk, when the captain, following up his former acts of kindness, pointed me out to him, said that my conduct had been very good, and that he believed there was in me the making of a good man. This was the means of making my life on the long, weary voyage somewhat more comfortable than it otherwise might have been. On being put on board the *Asia* there were served to each man his cooking, eating, and drinking utensils, with a small keg for water. We were then told off to the bunks, which held four each. Besides these bunks there were some hammocks, and, through the captain of the *Justitia* having spoken of me to the doctor, I was given a hammock at the bottom of the hatchway, and soon appointed to a billet. A sailor was sent to show me where the water and pumps stood, and my duty was to fill the men's kegs. Some time after, having made

friends with the steward's assistant, he managed to put a bag of biscuits close to a partition, so that, by putting my arm through a chain hole, I could just reach it. My friend filled up the bag again when it got low, so that I was provided with extra bread throughout the voyage.

After arriving at Portsmouth, and just before starting again, the bumboats came alongside, and those who were lucky enough to have any money were allowed to buy. Very few had anything to spend, but I had been careful to save up the little that I had received while at Woolwich. I had in all eight shillings. Part I spent at Portsmouth, and the rest when I reached Teneriffe.

PART II

THE LAND OF THE LASH

CHAPTER I

I ARRIVE AT THE CONVICT DEPOT AT HOBART TOWN

NOTHING of moment occurred on the voyage out to Van Dieman's Land. On first landing from the ship at Hobart Town we were all ranged up round the yard called the Hobart Town Tench. This place had a church in one corner and a treadmill in the other, besides various offices. The superintendent was a man named Gunn. He was six feet five inches high, but had only one arm, the other having been shot off by the bushrangers. The first to inspect us was the Governor himself, Sir John Franklin, who addressed to us a long harangue on the advantages to be gained from good conduct, and the consequences sure to follow bad conduct or breach of discipline. Ours and the three vessels that had arrived just previously—the *Hindostan*, the *Canton*, and the *Mandarin*—were what were called probation ships, that is, those who were sent out in them were given a year's probation to test their conduct; if this was satisfactory, they were then assigned to employers with a good recommendation.

I was doomed to be soon in trouble. With another prisoner of about my own age, I was sent to join a gang working a quarry near the signal station. One of the two constables who guarded us treated us very harshly, and this, with the hard labour and want of good food, soon made us wish to be back in Hobart Town. The other constable was a good-natured rogue, who hated the quarries as much as we did, and he and I often had friendly talks on the subject. One day he said to me, 'I want to get removed to the town again, and if you two will help me I shall help you. You must run away and let me capture you. It will mean that we shall all be sent back, and I shall be promoted. I will give you ten shillings for the job.' Then he told us of a spot where we were to hide, and told us not to be long about it.

The very next day my mate and I were sent to carry a piece of timber to the signal station. We found the signalmen absent and the hut door open. Being always half-starved we searched for food, and found a little flour, a very small piece of beef and three raw potatoes. All this was soon put out of sight, and while we were searching for something more, in came the signalman. My mate, finding a two-pronged pitch-fork, charged with it at the signalman, pinning him by the neck to the door. The man was not hurt as one prong went on one side of his neck and one on the other. When he was thus prisoner he asked us whether we were new hands and we told him yes, that we had come out by the *Asia* 5th and were making a bolt. He told us that he was an old hand himself and did not want to hurt us, and that if we would release him he would not take us, but would

give us something to eat. We took the fork from his neck, and he then drew from the ashes on the hearth an immense damper, dusted it with a bullock's tail, and gave us half—five or six pounds—smoking hot. After having had a good feed we thanked him and left at once, as he was afraid that his mate would return, when they (the signalmen) would have been obliged to take us or appear to be sheltering runaways.

We then went and hid, waiting for the constable. He soon came cautiously up, and saying, 'Well, here you are to your promise,' gave us our ten shillings. He then whispered, 'Take no notice of me when I call, but run away. I'll fire, but I won't hit you. When I shoot fall down.' When this was arranged he went back to the place where he had left his gun, and in a minute set up a tremendous shouting. We, of course, started running, and I soon duly fell. The men in the quarry thought I had been shot dead. The lockup keeper now joined the constable, and we were taken to Sandy Bay lockup, a quarter of a mile distant. That night we had a grand meal of bread and meat, and tea, and even butter. Next morning we were marched off to the police-station at Hobart. At ten o'clock we were brought before the magistrate, Mr John Price, that noted tyrant afterwards murdered at the hulks in Melbourne,* where he was superintendent. Our apprehending constable stated in his charge that, going along through the bush, he heard something creeping close to the edge of the quarry,

* John Price, Superintendent of Prisons at Williamstown, Victoria, was murdered by a gang of convicts on March 26, 1857. He is supposed to have been the original of Marcus Clarke's 'Maurice Frere,' in his famous novel, *For the Term of His Natural Life.*

whereupon he peeped in and spied us, and shouted 'Stand.' We ran, he fired to frighten us, one of us fell, and he captured both. The magistrate told him he would be specially recommended for taking two such daring scoundrels, Price, looking at us with an eye that seemed to pierce one through, sentenced us to twelve months each in irons at the Newtown hulks. Before giving me my sentence he asked me who I was. I told him that I was William Jones number two, the lifer. I had been put up to this by the old hands on the chain gang. If I passed myself off as a lifer no time could be added to my home sentence, whereas a short-sentence man had the punishment for each fresh crime added to the original penalty.

After leaving the police-court we were sent to Hobart Tench to the mill, and underwent a very strict search. My five shillings was rolled up in my sleeve. I had it in the form of two rupees and a dump. The former I managed to swallow, to the great damage of my throat, keeping the dump in my mouth. The dump was so small that it did not interfere with my speaking.

CHAPTER II

A MODERN JACK SHEPPARD

WITH my first irons in the Tench I had no leggings, up and down straps or knee-garters to protect my legs. Luckily, however, there was a man who in two days would finish his time, who promised to let me have his 'up and downers' if I would give him my dump. Meanwhile I tore off a piece of my shirt and the lining out of my hat to protect my legs as well as I could. I had to walk to Newtown in my irons, and a painful tramp it was. At this time I had in my kit two shirts. One was taken from me, and on Saturday afternoons, when shirts had to be washed, I was obliged to strip my body for the purpose. No fire was allowed, and so the shirt had to be dried by waving it in the air, or, on damp days, to dry on my back. At night we were sent on board the hulk, where there were two rows of bunks, one above the other. Mine was a lower bunk. On turning in, I found that on account of the state of my legs I could not walk well, and, when I was out of sight of the sentry, I said to those about me, 'You won't catch me going back to the gang.'

'Won't I?' said the sub-overseer.

'Come on,' I challenged, and, seizing my opportunity, I dealt him a blow with my full strength, stretched him senseless and decamped. Afraid of losing myself in the bush I kept the road in sight. I came soon to a rocky place, and there managed, by repeated hammering with a large stone, to oval my basils and get rid of my irons. My magpie

suit I, of course, could not get rid of, having no other clothes. That night I slept in a hollow log, and next morning was soon sighted by two armed constables, run down, captured, and returned to Hobart Town for trial, on the charges of assaulting the overseer and bolting, and placed in the 'dust hole' at the lockup until my case should be called.

After two days' close confinement I was brought before Mr Price again. Too miserable and desperate to pay much heed to him, I received an additional sentence in irons without uttering a word. In a few hours I was again back on the hulk.

The following day I was sent on shore to work in a road gang, and the sub-overseer ordered me to come with him into the bush and cut hammer handles for the stonebreakers.

'Ah,' I thought to myself, 'here is another chance for me.'

The spot where we had to cut the handles was pretty thickly timbered, and after I had been working for an hour I watched my opportunity, and got away without the sub-overseer seeing me. But as soon as he missed me he gave the alarm, and, unfortunately, not looking where I was going, I ran right into a sentry who was standing guard over some quarrymen, and of course I surrendered as gracefully as possible. I was hurried back into town again, and once more consigned to the 'dust-hole.' But I was not at all disheartened, and determined, if I could get free again, to give the constables something to do to catch me. I waited till darkness, and then set vigorously to work.

Having my iron mess-spoon with me I set about grinding the edge until I had made a sort of knife. With it I got one of the hoops off my night-tub, broke it in two, and, by hitting one edge against the other, made a rough sort of saw. With my spoon-knife I loosened all the mortar round one of the stones as high up as I could reach. By means of a tub-stave I then prized out the stone and so got to the ceiling of my cell, which proved to be also the floor of the prison church. The church was partly inside the prison walls; but the end of it for the public ran outside. In the floor there was a small mouse-hole. This gave me room to use my saw and my knife, and I soon had some boards cut away, and had forced myself into the church. With my rough tools I broke the clasp off the bolt of the door, and next minute stood in the street, opposite the 'Old Commodore' public-house, a free man again, except that I still had on my fetters. I crept along the streets, not knowing where I was, and was soon met by a prison constable who, hearing my chain clank, grappled me and held on by my irons. I was overpowered, taken back to the Tench, this time placed in one of the Mill cells, and next morning brought up once more before the terrible John Price.

'Ho,' said he, 'you are here again in spite of my threatening. You dare me to my teeth. Take him away.' In five minutes I had received a sentence of two years in chains at Port Arthur.

I was then lodged again in the 'dust hole,' to be once more tried for breaking out of it. When there I ripped up every article of clothing that I had, even to my boots,

At 9 o'clock next morning a camp constable came to take me before Mr Gunn. On opening the door, and seeing that I had not a stitch to cover myself with, he reported my condition, and was ordered to provide me with a long watchman's coat and bring me up. Standing in this single garment I was sentenced by Mr Gunn to thirty days' solitary confinement. I returned to a cell under the mill to do my term, and never came out of it again for the full month, although in other places it was usual to allow a prisoner two hours' daily exercise in the yard. The only light I had in the cell was when my daily allowance of one pound of bread was brought me in the morning. My supply of water was passed me through a small hole in the wall.

As I was young I soon began to find my pound of bread was not enough to satisfy me, and I cudgelled my brains for a plan to get more. I hit upon one at last. Out of the up and down straps supporting my irons I made a line with a running noose. I intended that, when my gaoler came with the bread, I would slip this noose round his neck, draw him up to the hole, and demand more. Everything turned out as I had planned. While I had the man tight in the noose, I said, 'Give me more bread or I'll strangle you.' When I lowered the fellow down again to his basket he gave me three pounds of bread, saying, 'Well, for a proby (probationer) you're a plucky one. I won't report you. You deserve credit.' He kept his word, and after this I always had something beyond my allowance. I met my gaoler years after on the Turon Goldfield in New South Wales. He was known through the colonies as Paddy Sinclair, of

fighting renown. Many a good laugh we have had about that bread.

I was now under a sentence of three years in irons, including the one year at the Newtown hulks from which I had bolted. At the end of my thirty days I again got on full rations, though still confined in the same cell. I was, however, allowed in the open air while my den was being thoroughly washed and cleansed. The first effect of the sudden change from darkness to the full light of day was to make me helpless and insensible, and thus I remained until nightfall.

CHAPTER III

PORT ARTHUR, THE ABODE OF HORROR

I WAS kept in the Tench until the cutter regularly employed in carrying prisoners to the different stations arrived. Soon she came into the harbour, and I was taken from my cell with the others bound for Port Arthur. Guarded by prison constables on each side we were driven down, some of us with, and some without, chains, to the craft in waiting. I was wearing simply the long watchman's coat, and nothing else. On boarding the vessel we were put down in the hold, where there was stretched a long cable,

one end of which was passed round the capstan. To this cable we were fettered. Passing the Iron Pot, a small island down the harbour, we all began singing, shouting and making a great noise. We were told that if we did not quieten when told we should be forced to do so. We still persisted, when two or three turns were given to the capstan, tightening the cable, and we were held up by our fettered feet, and with our heads downward, until we promised good behaviour.

As an instance of the peculiar feeling prevailing among prisoners at that time, I may mention that, as we were all ranked up in line before going on board, the hangman came along shaking hands and taking leave of departing prisoner friends. On coming, however, to a man who, although he was really a flogger, was known as 'Hangman Thompson,' the regular hangman hung back, saying, 'I can't shake hands with you. When I have to deal with a friend I finish him off in a decent manner; in your line he would be tortured to death.'

This man Thompson, I heard and believe, was afterward himself tortured by bushrangers somewhere in the territory that is now known as the colony of Victoria. He was torn limb from limb, horses being fastened by traces to his legs and then driven different ways.

Nothing of importance occurred on our passage to Port Arthur after we had once been reduced to order by means of the cable. On reaching Port Arthur we were thoroughly washed and supplied each with a new magpie suit, pannikin, dish, spoon, bed, blanket, and two shirts. The suit of slops was supposed to last six

months. The custom was for two men to go into partnership and save a pair of trousers each when new things were given out. When opportunity offered these trousers were given to the tailors, of whom there were always several among us. The tailors would separate the two colours, and by joining black to black and yellow to yellow, make, instead of magpie garments, one pair of black and one of yellow. The former would be sold to the soldiers, and the latter dyed with some material found in the bush, and the numbers removed with soft soap and turpentine.

In a few weeks I was told off to what was known as Morris's slip gang, and employed carrying knees, planks, and other timber for the building of a vessel called the *Lady Franklin*. Our usual load was to each man seventy-five pounds before dinner, and seventy after. When we had to remove a long heavy beam, all the bearers were ranked up on each side, and at the word 'lift' being given, all hands laid hold and raised the beam shoulder high. The sub-overseer would then tell a number of men to step from under, leaving the rest to carry the burden, upon the top of which he would always ride. When on his perch he would prevent the men steadying themselves by putting their hands on the top, instead of at the side of the beam, by giving severe and often damaging raps on the knuckles. These beams had sometimes to be carried a mile or a mile and a half through the bush, over rough and smooth, up hill or down, at times throwing such a weight on the bodies of the wretched men as almost to force their eyes from the sockets. Should any man stumble or fall down, his number was taken and he was had up for punishment

under some pretext or another. When leaving the settlement to fetch timber some men were in irons and some not. The gang was always headed by two men in comparatively light irons, the more heavily ironed being, if possible, forced to keep up with their leaders. New hands at the work of course suffered most, and, through my irons being rusty and not traversing as quickly as the others, I was generally among the 'crawlers,' or men particularly bullied by the overseer, who would threaten to leave all laggards at 'the green door'—that is, the commandant's quarters.

At times we were removed from the dockyard work and told off to carry bricks or mortar, the cheerful order being given, 'Knock off work and carry bricks.' I have known men just fresh from the lash ordered to shoulder a load of unslaked lime, and this coming in contact with their raw and bleeding flesh would produce the most horrible torture.

In Port Arthur there was a church to which we were marched on Sunday mornings. On arriving at the door the word was given, 'Halt; Roman Catholics fall out.' The unfortunate Catholics were then obliged to stand in rank, were it sunshine or rain, until the end of the service. At this time there was no priest stationed at Port Arthur; but one used subsequently to visit. At this place we were never allowed to see a friend, and no letters could be written or received by prisoners.

Crushed down, worked like a beast of burden, and oppressed more than human nature could endure, I made up my mind to 'bush it' again. One day, being at Tunketyboo, as we called a place two or three miles distant from the settlement from which we carried the

timber, I, instead of returning with my load of shingles, once more gave the keepers the slip. Having nothing to eat, I wandered about in the bush, and at last took shelter in a hollow log. All round were the signal stations. In the event of a convict having broken loose, the arms of the semaphores notified his number for miles and miles around. As I lay in sight of a semaphore, I could see my own number go up, and I had to act with caution. Next day at dawn I crept down to the beach and got a supply of winkles and limpets, and fortunately found a good-sized muttonfish. I had to eat my fish raw, as I dare not make a smoke, and had no charcoal, with which smokeless fuel 'bolters' often provided themselves. In this way two days passed over without discovery. To make my tracks to and from the beach so that they could not be recognised I fastened stones securely on the soles of my boots. After two days I made for a spot called The Peninsula, near the Cascades and towards the Sounds. When I had decided to go in this direction I waited till night, and then quietly stole into the water and moved noiselessly along with my nose and mouth just above the surface. The more surely to escape the vigilance of the sentries stationed on the narrow neck of land, and of the number of ferocious dogs chained to kennels on stages in the water, I surrounded my head with a large bunch of seaweed. When about half-way along the neck a swell in the water swept off my seaweed and showed me to the dogs, which immediately set up a furious barking, and aroused the sentinel on shore. On the instant came the report of a gun, and a bullet pinged into the water, barely missing my head. I at once dived; but on

coming up again I heard the challenge: 'Now, youngster, if you attempt to escape, I'll soon put you past diving. Come on out.' I surrendered, and was taken to the guardhouse, and placed in the guardroom. The capturing sentry had been relieved, and came on with me. As I was wringing wet he found me some old soldier's clothes, and brought me a canteen of tea, and also some pea soup, pork and bread, saying, 'Put this into you; you'll find it better than the salt water.' When he had seen my ravenous hunger he said he would not give me a second supply then, as it might be bad for me. But in the morning he returned me my clothes dried, and gave me some more bread and meat, and a canteen of tea enough for two or three days. I was then taken back to the settlement by two armed guards.

On once more reaching Port Arthur, I was thrust into a cell for the night, to be the next day brought before the Commandant, Captain O'Hara Booth, and, of course, punished. Before passing sentence, the commandant said, 'As you are quite a young man, I will give you another chance. I do not wish to put you under the lash as I would do an old hand who had neglected the opportunities given him of bettering himself, and who would have to undergo a hundred lashes. Such a punishment might be the means of ruining your constitution. The sentence I pass upon you is that you shall work for twelve months in irons at the chain, and at night be kept in solitary confinement.'

It will now be seen that I was under a sentence of four years in irons, all my sentences being not concurrent, but cumulative. My doom for the present

being thus sealed, I was next placed in the hands of the blacksmith, and loaded with irons of between twenty and thirty pounds' weight. Along the road was stretched a stout iron ship's cable, firmly secured at each end, to which we were locked. A heap of large stones was wheeled in front of each man, and each had to do his allotted task standing; no change of position was allowed him. At night, on the bell being rung, I was unlocked from the chain and led, or, rather, driven, off with the other men in the yard to night quarters. For bedding I was provided with an empty tick, one blanket and one rug, and was locked up alone to think over my sad condition. In order to make my scanty bedding as warm and comfortable as I could, I was in the habit of rolling my blanket and rug inside my tick, and then creeping inside into the middle of the folds.

At the cable one of my neighbours was a man named Travis, who suffered much through his stubborn and obstinate nature. One day Travis said to me, 'What's a man's life worth tied up like this, away from the freer men in the yard? My life is only a misery to me, and I would rather shorten it. I don't care what means I take, or who it is I pitch on. That man wheeling over the heaps of stones always brings me the largest and hardest of the lot. I'll either knock his brains out, or the overseer tyrant's, or do for someone. As you are next me, you'll be brought up as a witness, and it would be doing you a good turn. You'll get a quieter life in Hobart, away from this d——d chain work, and have better times.'

I told him I wouldn't like to appear against anyone

even for that, and that I would rather stop on the chain, as I should consider I was lending a hand to take away his life. I asked him how I could manage to get off the chain. He said: 'Plenty would be glad of your chance. I have a bit of copper in my pocket, kept on purpose, and I'll put you fly how to use it. Get a bit of string and tie it tight round the muscles of your arm. Keep the copper always on your tongue when you are in your cell of a night, and, when you are ready to face the doctor, say, when you are called, that you are too sick to get up. The doctor will be sent for. Upon hearing him coming, knock your elbows hard on the wall. The doctor will want to feel your pulse and see your tongue—without the copper though. He'll exempt you from work, and you can lie in your cell all day. If you want to keep up the game take some soap pills to upset you.'

I followed his advice and found that the plan answered. I succeeded in making myself appear to be very ill, and was taken off the cable.

While I was lying in my cell the keeper told me that Travis had smashed some man's skull, as he had threatened to do, and that I was lucky to have been taken off the chain, otherwise, being his neighbour, I might have been accused as an accessory to the murder. When I was brought back to my stone-breaking, however, I found that the men on each side of Travis had only been taken to Hobart as witnesses and had been glad of the trip. To show the tyranny of the system under which we were, I may here mention that, even if Travis had been acquitted of the charge of murder, he might have

received a sentence of three years at Port Arthur for rendering himself liable to a serious criminal prosecution.

During the time I was on the chain I continued to behave myself in an orderly manner, not taking part in any kind of scheming. One day I was consequently summoned to the office, and recommended to be removed from the gang. My heavy irons were knocked off and replaced by lighter ones, having a chain six or seven feet long with a log of wood dragging at the end of it. In this new harness I was set to work at several jobs in the settlement, and, besides carrying my loads as before, had to drag the log after me, not daring to lift it or to put a hand to it in any way. At night I found a use for it, as I put it under my head for a pillow.

My good conduct was still kept up when the commandant, passing me in the settlement one morning, dropped a piece of tobacco, as though inadvertently. I picked it up, but not quickly enough to escape the hawk eye of the camp constable, who pounced upon me, knocked me down, seized my treasure, and in due course brought me before my would-be benefactor, who I may say was in the habit of now and then allowing small favours to those of us he thought deserving. It was hard, however, upon anyone who might be found in the illegal possession of any article, for, no matter how he had come by it, he had to suffer. In my own case, not daring to say how I had got the tobacco, I strongly denied ever having had it, and was awarded seven days' solitary by the man who had given it me, I suppose for being so foolish as to allow myself to be caught.

In a few days more the commandant sent for me to the office and told me he was going to give me a chance to reform. He was going to have a new station formed out in the bush on the Salt Water River, where no one had ever been before. Accordingly, I, with ten others, was picked out for the task, and next morning started off under guard. Our work was to clear the ground and build huts for prisoners and quarters for officers. This occupied a good time, and everything was done with order and quietness.

The occupants expected soon came to hand. They were brought by either the *British Sovereign* or the *Lady Raffles* from Ireland, being part of a large batch of Irish prisoners conveyed by one or other of these vessels. The scene on their landing was one never to be forgotten. The contrast between the old country and the new land to which they had been brought seemed utterly to bewilder them. They were hustled ashore and driven off to the huts like a flock of hunted and frightened sheep. We older prisoners were quite amused at their astonishment at seeing our strange dress of yellow and black. I tried to talk to some of them, but could not make out a word of what they said, and the overseer soon rushed my way shouting, 'Come out! come out!!' Perhaps he thought I should corrupt his new guests. To keep us apart from the newcomers our rations were actually brought to us, and soon we were all marched off to the old settlement.

CHAPTER IV

THE COAL MINES

ONE day Captain Foster, the Comptroller-General, suddenly decided on an exchange of prisoners at the coal mines. All the old hands were withdrawn, and replaced by probationers. The old hands were sent back to Port Arthur, a settlement that differed from the others in the important respect that the rations were sufficient.

On my arrival at the coal mines I had my irons split—that is, the centre ring was removed, so that I could fasten the loose chain of links to either leg, thus having a great deal more freedom to move. The five or six hundred workers at the mines were told off in shifts for the different workings. They were divided into wards ranged round the yard. The cook-house was in one corner of this yard, next to the men's huts, and the police barracks were within shot, and so situated as to command a view of everything going on in our enclosure. Near the office of the court-house a sentry was posted on an embankment over-looking the sea, while the semaphore, a short distance off, communicated with Port Arthur and Hobart Town.

The day after my reaching the mines I was placed in one of the shifts and set to work with the rest. In hauling up the coal to the top eight men were employed at the roller and flywheel. The trucks or boxes containing the coal were each placed on a frame on four wheels and run along a tram-line to the screen,

where the coal was loaded into larger trucks holding a ton each, and with a trap-door in the bottom for emptying purposes, when they had been run over the hatchways of the colliers.

On the top of the colliery shaft there was a large crank, called the 'Walmsley,' which was worked by twelve men on each side continually pumping water from the workings—Sundays as well as week days.

On my first morning I was lowered down the shaft sitting face to face with another man, and our whole shift thus came down in couples, sitting astride on an iron bar, with a hook at each end and the rope from the roller passing through a hole in the middle. At the bottom we landed on the 'sump'—a large hole boarded over, in which were fixed the pumps. We then passed along the drift—a double roadway, with two sets of rails.

At the bottom of the shaft, on this double road, we met three men, or 'Dervon donkeys,' as we used to call them, hauling a truck of water in a fashion which I soon had to learn. They were, because of the lowness of the drive, almost on all fours, holding on and dragging with their hands on the rails. Some of them had boots, and some of them, who were not yet due for 'slops,' had none. They were puffing and blowing, and reeking and steaming from their exertions. The poor donkeys were forced to make every effort to get their work over by a certain time. The sooner this was done the sooner they were allowed on top; while, on the other hand, if any should lag, he and his companions would have to wait down without food while the next two shifts were being hauled up.

In my turn I was fitted with my harness. A collar

was passed over my shoulders and I had breeching and trace chains, which last were passed between my legs and fastened by a hook to the drag chain, which ran from the leading donkey to the coal truck. Three men were hooked on in front one after the other, and the fourth, or putter, was stationed behind to prevent tipping up. This man, to protect his head, wore a great padded arrangement, something like that on which Italian image-sellers balance their wares.

The drives were lighted, though dimly enough, by lamps filled with oil or fat. These added greatly to the stifling heat of the mine. The haulers were able to wear nothing but their trousers.

Being yoked up in the way described, the word was given to start and off we went, up and down for about a mile to the face of the workings. It was known by a system of tally marks by which hewer each truck had been filled, and if the hewer put in too much slack his truck was returned to him. The quantity of coal to be sent up was forty trucks or boxes each shift, and these had to be drawn out and returned by stages like a line of coaches. I, a new hand, had for my portion the sharpest and hardest part of the road, near the shaft. This was the usual plan, as later the newcomer could be promoted to a more level way further in.

By this time, owing to the comparatively mild form of my punishment at the settlement, where I had had to drag the log as described, I had nearly recovered my strength. I looked back with regret to the settlement. I had, it is true, been considered an incorrigible—'a government pebble and no sandstone,' but, through the pity shown me, I had often dropped in for extras—a fig of tobacco, or some other trifle placed

in my way by passers-by. Now a fig of tobacco six inches long would supply me with many little luxuries. Tobacco cut into inch lengths was our money. An inch of tobacco would buy two cubes of bread—one man's ration. Strong as I was now I often relieved my brother donkeys by dragging single-handed, with merely the help of the putter to keep the load from tipping. Together with my strength, my early training among bulls, dogs, and fighting men stood me in good stead, and I was soon in a position to bully down any who were inclined to interfere with our turn in getting our truck loaded or molest us in any other way. As I was 5 feet 11 inches, my chain was too short for a middle donkey, and so I was promoted to be leader and spokesman of our team. I used my position to threaten the hewer and filler with my vengeance should our truck be sent back for bad or short coal.

When the last of the shift finished we were hauled up, waited till all hands were mustered, and then were marched off to the yard, all being carefully searched by the gatekeeper. Dinner was next brought from the cook-house. The messes were of six each, provided with wooden kids for soup and meat. When the meat pot was put on the table the contents were divided into six shares. The soup was served out in tins, with two or three potatoes dry, but any other vegetables were swimming in it. When all was ready one man stood up with his back to the table, and another, tapping each successive lot of victuals with his knife, asked 'Who shall have this?' If there was a particularly bony portion, the auctioneer would strike the bone smartly with the knife, and then he

always got from his assistant the answer, 'Newchum.' Because of my well-known skill with my fists I, however, soon escaped from being put upon in this way. There was a Scotchman in our mess who, when the shares seemed unequal, used to say, 'Tak a wee bit frae the mickle ane and pit it to the wee ane.' At night the huts were well guarded, a sentry being placed outside; and, before we turned in, the corporal, sergeant, or superintendent would read the roll, when each prisoner had to answer to his name or number.

The principal officers at the mine were the superintendent, parson, doctor and 'coxswain,' the last a one-armed man. The mining manager was a ticket-of-leave man, who could neither read nor write, but who was taught to do both by his servant while I was at the mines. Every other office was held by a selected prisoner. All cases of misconduct were heard by Captain Bartley, commanding the troops.

After our first week's work I and my mates were tired, dirty, and as black as any devils through crawling in slush and mud, made up of wet coal dust. Unfortunately, my first Sunday was passed at the 'Walmsley,' or pumps. Next week I was put on nightwork, consequently I had no spell between shifts. The one advantage was being in the yard during the day. When the commissary boats came from the Sounds with rations, the word was passed for volunteers to carry stores. I, anxious to see about the place, and being put up to how to act by the old hands, always volunteered. In carrying meat, I, being strong as a horse, would reach the resting-place on the embankment long before the others staggered up from the jetty. Should there be a bit of meat to

be screwed off, off it came, and the same with flour when I could manage to get any by sticking my fingers into the bottoms of the bags. Raw potatoes, too, were heartily devoured. The only way to get anything without detection was to bolt it immediately.

The Governor, Sir John Franklin, attended by the Commandant, Comptroller-General, and the Commissary-General — I think at that time Captain Moriarty—was in the habit of visiting the mines every two months or so, and after all hands mustered he would, for about twenty minutes, lecture them earnestly on their position, their duties and the necessity for obedience and good conduct in general. I shall never forget him as he used to stand during his speeches, with his face turned up and his eyes closed. He would now and then pause and take a huge dose of snuff with a golden spoon from a golden snuff-box which he carried in his deep waistcoat pocket.

During the first part of my time in the mines I was fairly lucky in keeping out of all scrapes. My troubles later had much to do with the state of my boots. By continual working in the drives these had become utterly useless. I could not even tie them on my feet. It wanted two months to the time when boots would be served out, and for one entire month I worked quite barefooted in the mine, and had to walk from it to the yards in the same state. My feet at last became so burned and blistered that the pain was almost unbearable.

CHAPTER V

A FINAL BOLT

One day, while carrying rations from the jetty, I had espied a boat belonging to the island, with a lantern in it. The lantern was always lighted up at night, and a sentry kept guard on the embankment above, opposite the barracks. I resolved to seize the boat and make for the mainland, which I was told by some of the men was straight across the water, and at no great distance. I consulted no one, but I made up my mind as to the course I would steer, and how, by keeping more out to sea, I would avoid the neck or the Peninsula, where I had before come to grief. I had saved about an inch of tobacco, and with this bought an extra dinner of bread and meat, which, as I was on the afternoon shift, I carried with me. Returning from work I dropped out of the ranks and hid myself behind a great clump of ferns. I then got rid of my irons, the ankle rings of which I had already taken care to oval when down the shaft, and, when all was quiet, I crawled along under cover of the embankment until opposite the boat. While on my way I found a stick about twelve feet long, with a fork at one end, which I took with me to steady myself, as I had to wade in the water nearly up to my chin. Low down as I was I could watch the movements of the sentry above. When I came to the boat I stuck the long stick firmly into the sand and hung the lantern on the fork. I then quietly unmoored the boat, let the painter drop into the water,

and dragged her along the sand to the jetty. I still kept under cover, going almost up to the coal jetty. When I thought I had passed the sentry at the men's huts I got in, took out the oars and began to pull out. I knew I should not be missed for an hour, as washing and supper would take up that time, and the roll would only be called after supper was over. Accustomed as I had been as a lad to canal boats I had not much difficulty in managing the one that I had taken, and when once started I pulled with might and main. The night was very dark as I headed seaward. I kept the Salt Water River astern, Impression Bay, Cascades, the Sounds and Rabbit Island on my right, and the fatal Peninsula on my left. Up to Rabbit Island I knew my whereabouts, beyond that all was perfectly strange to me. The further I rowed out the rougher the water became, and a boat such as this being something out of my experience on canals, I was in some danger of losing my oars, and so becoming helpless. By care and steady work I gradually got along better, and became more confident. At Lung Point, which I safely passed, there was a constable stationed, but he did not see me.

I kept on pulling all night, with only short rests, and in the morning spied land and made for shore, thinking it to be the mainland. I pulled in and fastened my boat to a large boulder. I then prepared to hide all traces of the means by which I had made my flight. I spent about half an hour in collecting and gathering heavy stones and pieces of rock, which I piled up in either end of the boat, leaving an empty space in the middle. This done, at the expense of

cutting my bare feet fearfully in walking over the rocks, I looked about for the heaviest stone I could lift, and dashed it into the boat in the empty space that I had left between the bow and stern. It crashed through the planking, smashed some of the ribs, and the boat went down in deep water.

Feeling safer after this was done I looked about for a place of shelter, and found a large crevice between the rocks, partly covered with long, rough grass. I ate the meat I had brought with me, and, creeping between the rocks, lay down. I could not sleep for a long time, being too cold and wet. At last I dropped off, and was wakened when it was broad daylight by hearing a great noise as of a bell ringing. I could not make it out at first, but by degrees became fully aware that it was no dream, but really the ringing of a bell, such as used to summon us at the mines. I was fearfully frightened, and could not form the least idea where I was. I could see the dreaded Peninsula a long way off, and hoped I was on the mainland. On the rock I found a large mutton-fish, a good way off from where I had sunk the boat. While knocking it off the rock I was again frightened by the barking of a dog on the hill above me. I hurried back to my hiding-place, and tremblingly awaited what might happen. Two men, apparently the owners of the dog, probably thought the brute had scented a kangaroo. They followed it straight to the place where I was and urged it in, standing with long sticks ready for when the game should break cover. When I came out they made off, astonished and frightened, calling the dog after them. I fled in another direction, but, going round

the island, for such I soon found it to be, I met a whole tribe of grey jackets, headed by an overseer. There was now no chance of escape. The leader soon spied me, and said, 'Why, you're the bolter from the mines. We saw 39 all round on the semaphores, and knew someone was out. Come on, you're only out of the frying-pan into the fire.' I went along with him, and found that I had landed near a newly-formed probation station. The new chums stared, and seemed to wonder prodigiously at my magpie dress and bare feet.

When I was brought before the superintendent I had to make a clean breast of it and admit that I was the man who was wanted. The superintendent asked me about my want of boots, and I told him that was to a great extent the cause of my bolting, as I should not be due for another pair for about two months. He ordered me to one of the huts, and sent me a new pair of shoes. One of the men brought me meat and bread and some skilly, and gave me a bag so that I could carry with me all I could not eat. I was then put in a boat with an officer and four men and rowed to Lung Point, on the Peninsula. From Lung Point I was returned to the mines, passing on the right of the semaphore on Mount Stuart. At the mines I was put in a cell, and half an hour afterward I was sent to join my three old comrades in harness. Next morning I was had up before Captain Bartley, and with slight form of trial sentenced to receive 100 lashes. A man sentenced to 100 lashes was dealt with publicly in the presence of the doctor and all hands. Other floggings up to three dozen were administered privately in the cook-house yard. While I was standing in the yard wait-

ing to be tied up, the sentry pacing backward and forward gave me a charge of powder and a bullet, telling me to swallow the powder and keep the bullet between my teeth during the flogging.

In due time I was strapped up spread-eagled on the triangles, my three mates standing in front of me. If a man, while receiving his hundred strokes, shouted out through pain, he was looked upon as a 'sandstone' or 'soft crawler.' Knowing this I would have suffered cutting in pieces without a cry. While the flogger was fixing me up he said to me quietly, 'Is there any hangings to it?' meaning had I anything to give him to lay it on lightly.

'Yes,' I answered.

'All right,' he said, and then buckled to his work. The first few falls of the cat were enough to take my breath away and to draw my blood freely, although comparatively lightly laid on. The superintendent, a Mr Cook, stood by, now and then bawling, 'Do your duty.' One blow falling heavily and on a tender part —across the loins—caused me to catch a hasty breath and my bullet slipped down my throat. In spite of this, however, I began singing as loudly as I could the well-known and appropriate song—

> 'If I had a donkey what wouldn't go,
> Do you think I'd wallop him? Oh, dear, no.'

When all was over I was taken to the yard among the men, carrying with me my jacket and an extra ration of bread which I had received, and out of bravado taken to the triangles. I afterward in the cell got one of my mates named E—— to wash my back, dry it with a rough towel, removing the clotted blood, and

apply cloths soaked in salt water. Soon after, when the roll was called, it came to be our shift, and I and my three mates were sent below.

CHAPTER VI

OLD FRIENDS

YEARS after I had left the dreadful mines I met several of the mining people who had known me there. Superintendent Cook I recognised, in 1850, I think, when I was employed as a mailman between Adelaide and the outside settlements. He undertook not to mention my past. The man who used to run the coal from the screen to the jetty I encountered again during the good times on the Turon goldfield when he was called Wigan Jack. He died in the Sydney Benevolent Asylum in 1878. E——, who tended my back after I was flogged, was the same man who had helped me tackle the signalman on the Sandy Bay road. When his time was up he went to Port Philip during the gold fever. Here he joined the Black Forest gang of bushrangers, which stuck up and robbed the gold escort on its way to Melbourne, some lives being lost in the fray. In this gang were two brothers, one of whom, when they were captured along with the rest, turned informer, and swore that my old mate was a leader of the band. In consequence

of this information a charge of highway robbery and murder was brought, but during the trial the informer hanged himself to the bars of his cell, and his brother, turning informer too, gave evidence directly contrary to that first tendered, the result being that E—— was acquitted, and the others hanged in Melbourne. E——, a few years afterwards, snatched a bag containing 200 ounces of gold from a gold buyer in Sofala, fired on Sergeant Gaynor, who tried to arrest him, and vanished. I never saw him again till I visited England, about a claim to some money in Chancery of which I had been advised by an advertisement shown to me by Sergeant Casey, of Braidwood. This was at the time that the Tichborne claimant was 'starring' it in England. I found E—— working like a labourer at his brother's brickworks in Birmingham.

To another of my companions in hauling a coal truck—a man named Courtney—an awful history attaches. Courtney was a brutal and vicious fellow, and, like myself, he was driven desperate by want of boots. After a day's work he could no longer endure the torture, and determined to bolt; but he was not, as I had been, provided with anything to eat. He arranged with one of the other men to join him, and the two managed to escape together. They made toward Mount Communication, on the Peninsula, where, hungry and footsore, they wandered about not knowing how to steer their way. The lookout was very sharp, there were two semaphores close at hand, and the whole district was surrounded by constables.

When they were completely starved and wearied out Courtney turned to his companion and said, 'I

have made up my mind. I would sooner be hung than go back to the mines. I mean to kill you.'

The mate was powerless in the hands of a bigger and stronger man. Courtney continued, 'I will give you a choice. I will either gouge out one of your eyes, which is certain death to you, or I will cut your throat.' The other wretched creature said that he would rather die at once than wander about in lingering misery, blind and helpless. Courtney then tied his mate's hands behind him with strips of stringy bark, and, with the sharpened handle of an iron spoon, hacked and sawed at the man's throat till, believing he had accomplished his purpose, he left his victim for dead. The murderer then wandered along the road between Sloping Main and Mount Communication till he was seen by a soldier at the signal staff, who, with others, started off to make a capture. Courtney surrendered at the sight of the muskets, and, upon being asked about his mate, immediately said that he had murdered him, and led the soldiers back to where the victim was lying almost dead, but not quite. His wounds were staunched and he recovered. He was after this taken, I believe, to Salt Water River, as he appeared no more at the mines. Courtney was marched to Sloping Main and handed over to a line constable named John Doe, better known as Lord Lascelles. John Doe passed himself off on the then Governor of New South Wales as Lord Lascelles, and, under that name, succeeded in getting tickets-of-leave and other favours for the convicts. His disguise was, however, at last penetrated and he was returned to his very humble position as a prisoner of the Crown.

Courtney was sent back to the mines, where he was

tried as a bolter, and, as usual, sentenced to 100 lashes. When he was brought out the next day for punishment he was found to have hacked his throat about with the same iron spoon with which he had so nearly succeeded in committing murder. The wounds were stitched up, and the wretch was brought out in the square to the triangles. He was utterly unable to stand to be strapped in position, and so Superintendent Cook bawled to the flogger, 'Did you never put a heavy stone on a hand barrow?' The triangles were then lowered and again hoisted when the victim had been securely fastened. The doctor, being of course present, felt the pulse of the bound culprit, and retired to beside the superintendent. As the blows fell the blood actually bubbled and frothed from the wounded throat.

While Courtney lay in the hospital, whence he was never able to return to the mines, only crawling about doing light work, a man named Meikleweight took his place on the team. He was, however, only a short time with us, as one day he and some of his mates succeeded in breaking into the bakehouse, and Meikleweight gorged himself with hot bread to such a degree that he actually burst.

About this time the Governor with his suite paid us one of his customary visits, arriving on the Queen's birthday. He made one of his usual speeches, took his usual snuff, and, at the finish, stood hat in hand and called for 'Three cheers for our Gracious Lady the Queen.' Scarcely had the last sound of cheering ceased when someone called out, 'God —— the Queen.' 'Who said that?' said Sir John, and as there was no answer he ordered every tenth man out to be flogged.

For two days there was nothing but trials, solitary confinements and floggings. The men were brought in mobs to the office, crammed into the docks, tried and sentenced in a bunch. When my batch was being tried my shoe-string, very luckily for me, came undone, and as I stooped in the dock to tie it, I remained at a critical moment unnoticed from the bench. My name was not called over and I escaped without sentence, taking care after I saw that I had been overlooked to keep crouching, and rise with the greatest caution even when all were ordered on to make way for a fresh batch. After all this sentencing and flogging the real culprit was never discovered.

My last mate on the hauling team was one whom I will call B., who remained with me without once getting into disgrace till I had finished my sentence of four years in irons. I afterwards met him on the Turon Goldfield, where he married respectably, reared a large family, and is now dead. The constable who escorted me to the mines after I had sunk the whaleboat I afterward recognised acting under the orders of the Gold Commissioner on the Turon. He subsequently stole the gold chest from the Commissioner's quarters, was arrested, escaped from the lockup—it is supposed by the connivance of a comrade—and for years remained undetected in the police force of Melbourne, to which place he had fled.

CHAPTER VII

COMPARATIVE FREEDOM

In due course of time I was promoted to be putter at the mines—that is, the man standing on the hind part of the truck to prevent its tilting. But I owed my release from mine work altogether to a very strange incident. I got released because of a theft, a thing that generally ensures to people quite other consequences. The theft, however, was not mine. The cell where we slept was directly under the commissariat store. One night I had been able to turn in rather earlier than usual, and when I woke before the others I saw to my surprise a great hole in the roof. Evidently while I had been sleeping, tired out and as sound as a top, some of our men had forced up one of the great flagstones and helped themselves to all they could. When I became aware of what had happened no one had yet stirred. I secured for my share twenty figs of tobacco—a perfect fortune in the only kind of money known on the chain gangs—and then went to sleep again. When I awoke and saw the stone replaced and everything in order I thought I must have been dreaming, until I found my store of tobacco stowed away under my head. I put the whole lot in my pockets, but my great trouble was where to keep it without fear of discovery. I resolved, for one thing, that I would go to the superintendent, promise good conduct, and make an appeal to be removed from the mines. Before start-

ing to present my petition I scratched a hole near the fowlhouse and hid my treasure. I had just finished when I met the great man quite by accident. After some consideration he told me that if my conduct was reported good for three months I should be sent to the wood gang. He then sang out, 'Watchman, don't let this man out again. I don't know what he is prowling about for.'

In the morning it was our duty to carry out the night tubs and empty them outside the yard. The men who had made the raid upon the commissariat store had placed their tub in a bag in the store, and had carried out instead a load of tobacco and other things. The removal of the flagstone had not been discovered when our shift was sent below to work. But, when the rations were served out, the confusion of the store goods of course came to light. Then the row began. Our work below went on as usual. Not a whisper was heard of what had happened above. But at knock off, when we returned to the sleeping-place, it was no longer a secret. The matter had been investigated, the way the store had been entered was plain, and all in our ward were set down for trial. The trial was a very summary affair. We were all found equally guilty and sentenced, some to solitary confinement, some to the lash. I, though I had nothing to do with the robbery—for all that I had had a share of the plunder—had to undergo three dozen, as had some others. Work in the next shift was suspended for the carrying out of the sentences, and two of my team had to lay up because of lacerated backs. Work had to go on, happen what might, in the old days, and fresh hands were sent to replace

my disabled mates. I never to this day have found out who were the real perpetrators of the robbery.

I had now been three years and nine months in irons in the coal mines, when the superintendent, in accordance with his promise, removed me from the pits and sent me to help in sinking a new shaft, and here began a quite different system of treatment —milder and more human. At the shaft on which I was engaged, an engine was erected, to work by steam power, and there was no more slaving at the cranks. In sinking we used what were called curves, or circular timbers, let into the round of the shaft to prevent the sides from falling in. Another improvement was, too, introduced into our work—the use of blasting-powder. Before that all rock had to be removed by sheer hard toil—pick, sledge, and iron wedges being the only means allowed. The shaft was being sunk on the top of a hill near the semaphore for the purpose of shortening the haulage distance in the mine. A line of rails was also laid from this shaft to the jetty.

My mate in shaft-sinking was one 'Rough Robin,' a champion Lancashire up and down prizefighter. When we were about to fire a charge only one man was left below to make all ready. One day this duty fell to Robin, when the charge exploded prematurely before he could give the signal to be drawn to the surface, and, when we did get him up, he was a mangled mass and quite sightless. He was taken to the hospital, where he lingered for some time in fearful agony, and with no hopes of recovery. On one visit I made him the doctor, knowing all was nearly over, ordered him to be carried out of doors.

As it was my off shift I waited by the poor fellow's side. The minute he felt the fresh air he passed away from mines and fellow-workers and all his earthly troubles.

CHAPTER VIII

A WELCOME CHANGE

OUR tyrannical superintendent, Mr Cook, was now re-called to Hobart. He was replaced by Mr Purcelaw, whose first act was to divide the men into three classes, according to conduct. Next arrived a batch of free overseers and Cornish miners. The sub-overseers—prisoners—were removed, and free men substituted. Instead of having to rush for our loads, ironed as we were, we were now allowed to walk along in twos as quietly as at a funeral. One morning the new superintendent mustered all hands, and notified them of a thing they could scarcely believe —that any man wishing to communicate with friends outside would be allowed to do so at stated times, and supplied with pen, ink and paper. Another reform was that trade departments were organised, and each man, as nearly as possible, set to his own trade. Shoemakers were set to remedy the miners' great grievance of worn-out boots; boots could be repaired when necessary, others being supplied meanwhile, and there was no more complaining of torn and

blistered feet. Then, too, as well as the Church of England clergyman, a Catholic priest was allowed to pay regular visits to his own people.

By this time I had finished my four years in irons. I was taken away altogether from the mines, my garb changed from magpie to grey. I was placed in Class 2, and was promoted a step by being sent into the bush with two men under me to burn charcoal for the mines. Here I was quite contented, leading a steady, quiet life, and progressing toward further advancement. My new work lay in a dense scrub full of ferns. Here I felled timber and built kilns. In my spare time I used to dig kangaroo traps, which were great holes, six feet by three, sunk in the beaten tracks of the animals, and covered with grass and ferns as nearly as possible like the surrounding scrub. The kangaroos would come hopping along their usual track, and, all of a sudden, pop into the trap, from which they would be unable to escape on account of overlapping logs placed round the sides of the hole. Where I could not dig the trap deep enough, because of rock or hard ground, I used to place in the hole a stake, fastened upright and sharpened to a point, which I hardened in the fire. This stake served to impale the kangaroo directly he fell into the trap. I also hunted and caught opossums. For kangaroo carcases, sold to the convict servants or free overseers, for with servants only could I deal, I received two figs of tobacco each; for kangaroo skins one fig; and for opossum skins half a fig. All the servants dealt with me except one, whom I avoided, as I knew his master to be a rigorously strict upholder of prison discipline. This servant

spoke to me at last, saying that the others could have a kangaroo at times, but he never. Upon his asking I promised that I would let him have the first I caught. Next day, going my rounds, I discovered that in one of my traps had been caught not a kangaroo, but a soldier's kangaroo dog, a noted killer, which I had every reason to hate for disturbing and thinning my game. I knocked him on the head, stripped off his skin, buried it, cut off his tail, and fitting to the skinned body the tail of a real kangaroo that I had caught, left the made-up animal in the place at which I had appointed that my customer should look for the kangaroo meat he had wished. I got the agreed price in tobacco from the martinet's servant, but sometime after, when I had been bargaining with a hutkeeper for a cap lined with diamond sinnet which the same servant wished me to buy for him, his master pounced upon me. I saw before me the prospect of being sent back to Class 3 for trafficking, and of my removal to Hobart being long put off. I pleaded with the overseer as he was leading me away not to get me into trouble again after all I had undergone; but I could do nothing with him until I said, in despair, 'Then I'll tell that you ate the soldier's dog that a reward of six figs of tobacco has been offered for.' 'What do you say?' said he. 'The kangaroo I let your man have,' I answered, 'was nothing more nor less than the soldier's big black dog, and if I split you'll be in it.' After making sundry wry faces and spitting as though he were spitting out pieces of the dog, he agreed to let me go, seeing full well how he would be chaffed if it were once known that he had been

dining off the soldier's pet. He never troubled me again, and, of course, I kept his secret strictly.

Some time after this the Bishop of Hobart and his wife visited us. The lady during a morning ride happened to take a beaten track between the mines and Mount Stuart, and her horse stumbled into one of my kangaroo traps, she being thrown on the side, but out of the hole, more frightened than hurt. Then there arose a great stir in the camp. I, of course, did not let on that I knew anything about who had made the traps, and tried to throw suspicion upon the soldiers. The superintendent offered to get me a partial remission of sentence if I could find out the guilty parties; but, needless to say, I never did.

The next step of our humane superintendent was to lighten the men's shackles by removing the chain links connecting the basils or leg rings, and for this leniency he suffered. The men certainly were sentenced to work a fixed time in chains, and by removing these links the nature of the sentence was, strictly speaking, altered. For this slight fault the superintendent was recalled. Some time after I happened to meet him in Launceston. He said, 'Well, I got broke at the mines for relieving you men of your chains. But tyranny in this colony will die away by degrees as yonder gibbet post is decaying.' On my asking where he was then living, he told me he kept a public-house near Rat's Castle, Ellenthorpe Hall, the property of the largest squatter in the land—a Mr Clarke.

A new superintendent named Kerr, or Carr, soon arrived at the mines, who seemed to be just as humane as his predecessor.

CHAPTER IX

A CAPTURE

I STILL continued my duties as charcoal burner, and about this time an extraordinary incident happened. All kinds of vegetables were grown in abundance at Salt Water River, and I obtained half a bag of potatoes from a man there in exchange for a fig of tobacco. I used to roast these in my kiln, and what with them and my regular rations lived like a fighting cock. One day I was in the bush as usual, when I saw a man in the yellow and black clothes which I knew so well. He beckoned to me. I went up to him and asked him why he did not come out from where he was hiding to meet me. He answered, 'I daren't, they would see me from the signal staff.' He said he was a bolter from Port Arthur, and was dying of hunger. He begged me give him something to eat. I gave him plenty of potatoes, and after he had eaten what he called a 'jolly tightener,' he said, 'I am tired of lying out in the bush, and I can't get away. The look-out for me is too sharp. Everywhere they're on the wait for me, as I was thought about the worst lot at the settlement. Now you're a probationer. The best thing you can do is this: I'll give myself up to you. You take me to the soldiers at the semaphore, and say that you took me, a bolter, in the bush. You'll get a lot of credit—a new chum like you capturing an old runaway. You'll have many a favour granted you, and lead an easy life.' I gave him some tobacco which he asked for, but told him that I would not for any-

thing do as he proposed, as I had seen too many hardships myself, and, beside, should lead a dog's life among my mates. 'Well,' he said, 'you go to the signal staff and tell the soldiers that if they give you a pound of tobacco you'll put them on to the lay of a bolter planted in the bush. You can give me half. They'll jump at it, as they know there is £2 for them hanging to it. You'll be always in favour, and they'll fancy you'll always be ready to give notice of the like again. What's more, I'll give myself up to take the down off you.'

I agreed to this, saying that I would bring him some bread and meat the next day, and would then go to Mount Stuart to the soldiers. This I did. When I reached the soldiers' hut, the men knowing me rushed out saying, 'What's up?' I told them I had spotted a bolter in the bush, 'a yellow man,' and that for a pound of tobacco I would lay them on. They were perfectly delighted, and I very soon had my tobacco, they telling me that I could always secure the same for like services. A soldier was soon armed and ready. On the road he advised caution lest we should be seen by the runaway; but I, knowing how things were, told him the fellow was too much done up to give any trouble, and that, if necessary, we could easily run him down. I then said that we ought to give the poor devil some of the tobacco, but the soldier replied that he had thought of that, and had brought four figs for him, which was enough, as any more might excite suspicion. Keeping under the hill we crept on hands and knees until within range, when my companion, springing up and presenting his gun, shouted, 'Surrender, or you're a dead man.' The man, having no

intention of resisting, quietly surrendered, was handcuffed, and marched off to Mount Stuart. While at the soldiers' hut the man whom I had guided to make the capture quietly slipped out from his comrades and handed me a four-pound piece of pork.

About this time our superintendent was recalled, and was replaced by a Mr Smith. Whilst Mr Smith was at the mines we also had a clergyman, a truly Christian man, who was very kind to the prisoners, and who, when he was subsequently appointed to Norfolk Island, then ruled by John Price with a rod of iron, did much to bring about the breaking up of that atrocious penal settlement.

To return once more to my charcoal burning. As I have said, I had two men under me as barrow men. At night we brought the barrows home, placing them in the yard where the dreaded triangles stood. One morning, every object distant only a few yards being hidden by a dense fog, an idea of revenge came over me as I was passing the triangles, and I thought my opportunity good. I called one of my barrow men and placed the triangles on his barrow, giving him a fig of tobacco to wheel them away to the kiln. At the kiln we burned the horrid machine, which was the last of its kind in those parts, as after the new system introduced by the latest superintendents the use of such things was abolished.

In a day or two after this, my term of six months for improvement of character having expired, I was forwarded to headquarters at Hobart Town.

CHAPTER X

MY LAST DAYS AS PRISONER

On arrival at Hobart Town we were called up before Mr Gunn, the superintendent, inspected and despatched to other probation stations, each man, according to the length of his sentence, to serve a certain time for improvement of character. I was appointed for three months to Lovely Banks, a station on the main road from Hobart to Launceston, preparatory to my becoming assignable to a master. I found there as superintendent Mr Carr, late superintendent at the mines, who, recognising me, said, 'Why, you here again? I am going to give you a chance of improvement after all you have gone through. I shall appoint you yard constable, to see the watchmen do their duty, to keep an eye on the gates, and to look that the yard regulations are duly carried out.' I was relieved of my grey suit, and given the so-called 'free suit' in exchange. Matters went on smoothly until orders arrived, after two months of my allotted time had expired, to break up the station.

All hands were then divided between two stations, named Jerusalem and Jericho. I was sent to Jerusalem, and no longer held my office of constable, but was returned to the gang with others, and placed on the road to Brandy Bottom, where I became acquainted with a man who had lived by attending fairs and races in the old country as a thimble-rigger. He was a thorough Birmingham sharp. Our general mess was skilly and bread, but he through his wits generally

managed to have something better, and so I was in no way indisposed to chum in with him. One day he asked me whether I had ever followed any trade, and I told him I had been apprenticed to the gun-lock filing business at Darlaston. When he knew I could use a file he asked me whether, if he got a billiard ball, I could make from it two teetotums exactly alike. I said that I could, and he then explained how they could be fashioned so that the odds would be two to one in favour of the spinner, and cut me a model from a raw potato. When he had brought the billiard ball I set to work, aided by a knife made of a piece of tin. I ground six squares or faces on the sides, filed out a peg or handle on the top, and brought the bottom to a point. The corners of the squares of one teetotum were so formed that, by spinning the article with the left hand, the highest number—6—would almost certainly come uppermost, while spinning with the right hand the opposite number—1—would show. The other teetotum was made on an exactly opposite principle. Should an adversary prove to be a left-handed man he was supplied with this second teetotum, which, to all appearance, was exactly like the other.

This Birmingham man, being a thoroughbred sharper, performed a trick, while working beside me on the road, which again brought me to grief. He had a beautiful Indian silk handkerchief wrapped up tightly in a piece of rag. He also carried with him another little parcel of exactly the same shape made of rag only. He would wait until the superintendent was absent on some other part of the line, and would then show the silk handkerchief to some passer-by

whom he considered a likely customer. He would ask about double the sum he meant to accept, and, after some haggling, would strike a bargain. Then, rolling up the silk decoy, he would manage for an instant to divert the would-be purchaser's attention, and as quick as lightning substitute the roll of rag, and hand it over, saying, 'Stow it away, the overseer's coming.' The buyer, knowing that he would get into trouble for trafficking with the prisoners, would then pocket his supposed bargain, pay for it and hurry off. This was only one of many pranks that the Birmingham man played, and he was always in funds. At last, however, he tried the handkerchief trick on a man from Jericho Station, successfully at first, but with a very unfortunate result. The Jericho man, upon discovering that he had been had, reported it at the station. At night, all hands being ranged up in the yard in two ranks, the swindled one was told to inspect us carefully and pick out the cheat. I was standing next to the culprit in the fronk rank, and the accuser lingered a moment or two in front of us. But my mate, having changed his appearance as much as he could, was ultimately passed by, and no one at all was identified at the first time of asking. Meanwhile the object of the search had slipped from the front rank to the rear one, and when a second scrutiny was made the searcher halted before me, and said, 'That's the man. I can't be mistaken; I recognise his voice.' I was taken off, placed in a cell for trial, and sentenced to three months (without irons, however) at the Salt Water River, on the ill-fated peninsula. Thus I was no nearer redemption than I was when I was sent to Jerusalem.

At my old Salt Water River Station I was set to work breaking up ground for cultivation. Nothing of interest occurred for three weeks, when upon being asked my trade I said I was a nailer, and was consequently put into the blacksmith's shop. Here, being handy with the tools, I soon got quite proficient, and and so my time passed without further trouble. On Saturday afternoons, being at leisure, I used to go spearing stingarees, a large, flat fish of about 100lb. weight. The fish, as it lay basking on the sand, had to be approached from the front, the direction in which it could not see. The spear had to be used with sufficient force to go through the creature's body, about four inches thick, and pin it to the sand. Then it would spin round and round like a cockchafer, and one had to be careful to avoid its long, spiked tail.

At the end of my three months I was returned to Hobart for a further three months of probation; but, instead of being sent to a station with the other hands, I was kept in the Tench and put in the Town Surveyor's gang. One day I was getting out a very large stone, which, though loosened, it was found impossible to move, so the overseer ordered a shot to be put in it. The hole being charged and a 'devil' used, in the old style, instead of a fuse, the overseer—Griffiths—was left to fire the shot. He had, however, made his 'devil' too dry. The charge exploded at once and blew out one of his eyes, besides maiming and disfiguring him otherwise. Having finished my three months in Hobart, I was sent to Hambledon, going through New Norfolk on the Woolpack Road as an assignable servant.

PART III

AN ASSIGNED SERVANT

CHAPTER I

A FIRST MASTER

I WAS no time at Hambledon when an employer turned up, who I learned from others was a 'real nipper.' Picking me out from the rest he asked me what I could do. I told him nothing. Did I understand farm or field work? 'No.' He said, however, 'Never mind, you'll do,' though I told him at last I was a tailor—a trade I knew no more of than a cow does of a musket.

I was now dismissed with a pass on my way to the Big River, on the road to the Cellars, in the New Country. On arrival I was sent to the store to receive my week's rations, and afterward put stump-grubbing with two more men. By dinner-time on Thursday all our weekly allowance was eaten, and we had to buy a fresh lot with the money for which we had agreed with our employer. We each had £9 a year wages, or about 3s. 6d. a week. One of the men proposed getting flour, and so we bought four

pounds each at 6d. per lb. My first attempt at damper-making was a failure, but soon a neighbouring farmer on the Big River showed me that I must roll my dough out flat instead of making it up dumpling fashion. My master turned out to be a downright tyrant, and continually growling and fault-finding. At Christmas we had no better diet from him, and all our money that should have gone to buy some respectable-looking clothes having been spent to keep us from starving, we lost the liberty allowed to others to spend the day with some of the female hands in Hambledon. Some time before dinner on Christmas Day, as I was going round the back of my master's house, I smelled a delicious odour of cooking. I told my mates of it, and, while they watched, I armed myself with the iron tooth of a harrow, with which I loosened the stonework from the oven, and very soon spied a dainty I had known well as a lad—a Yorkshire pudding—bubbling under a smoking and nearly cooked bullock's heart. Slipping off my jacket, I seized the dish, and, placing it on the ground hurriedly, rebuilt the dislodged stonework. I then hastened with my prize to the hut, where I and my mates soon put out of sight the best meal we had had for years. We threw the iron dish into the pigstye. The master's table was by this time laid, and the indoor servant came to take the meat from the oven. His start when he saw that all had gone was something to be remembered. The mistress was called, but after an unavailing search she turned away, and made straight for our hut. We all pretended to be asleep. She shouted, 'Will,' meaning me, at the same time roughly shaking me about. 'What's the matter?' I said, pretending

to wake up. 'Have you been at the oven? Someone's stolen master's dinner.' 'I don't know,' I replied, 'our meat's on boiling, and we haven't had dinner yet.'

On the master's coming the storm raged in earnest. We heard him growling and swearing, 'I'll find the thief. I'll make an example of him. I've no doubt it's that Will Jones.' Meanwhile, being overgorged with the good things missing, I was in actual agony. Presently the servant was sent to summon us to the front of the house, into which we were called to enter one by one. I was the first, and was met with—'What did you have for dinner?' 'Meat and bread.' 'Nothing else?' 'No.' 'Open your mouth—wider.' The master put his finger into my mouth and began scraping my palate with his nail. I at once understood his object; he wanted to convict me by finding some of the fat of the bullock's heart. I snapped my teeth on his finger, bit it to the bone, and held on, tearing the flesh and causing him to roar and dance. On being released he at once started for Hambledon and returned with a constable, before whom I was charged with theft and injuring my master's person.

The magistrate who heard the case asked me what I had to say. I told him that my master had pushed his finger into my throat, nearly choking me and causing me to close my mouth in the struggle. On the plaintiff being asked what sort of workman I was, he replied that he had no complaint to make against me as labourer or workman. The question being put whether I was willing to return to my employer, I at once answered: 'I'd rather go back to Port

Arthur. I am working my eyes out from daylight to dark. I don't get enough rations. The money saved from wages has to be used to buy extra food instead of clothes, and I have only part of one shirt left.' I was ordered to pull off my jacket, and the magistrate saw that what I had said was true. My body was almost naked. He then turned to my master and said, 'Why, the man is in a fearful state. You have servants assigned to you, and it is your duty to see that they are reasonably looked after and properly fed. If I see fit I shall have your servants taken away from you. If this man refuses to go back to you I shall not force him, but shall send him to Hambledon as assignable.'

On my refusing to go back the master complained of my insolence, and referred again to the stolen dinner. The magistrate said that the charge could not be entertained, that there was no proof of my having stolen anything, as there was nothing found in my hut or my possession, and that people from other farms might have committed the theft. I was then returned to Hambledon to be again assigned.

I afterward heard that my two mates had bolted and taken to bushranging. No more servants were assigned to that employer.

CHAPTER II

A CHANGE

In a few days I was selected by another master, and having got my pass, was forwarded to a butcher near Oaklands and the Salt Pan Plains. I found he had three assigned servants besides myself. My rations were served out to me for the week; but, being now again in full health and strength, I soon, as before, found them not enough. However, being in a butcher's employ, there was a chance of getting hold of stray bits of meat and some of the offal. The morning after my arrival I was sent to farm work, and continued grubbing, stumping and fencing in quiet content.

After being at the farmwork some time, I, with a mate, was ordered to Kemp's Lake to erect a boundary fence and huts near the Lagoon of Islands. Our agreement with the master was to put up a 'dead wood' fence seven feet in height, four feet broad at the bottom, and two at the top, for tenpence per rod. We had a team of bullocks and dray, with rations supplied us, and I had two hanks of twine with which I made snares for kangaroos, opossums, tiger cats and devils,* and set them in the time I could spare from fencing. The 'devils' were anything but pleasant or safe to come near after they were snared. On the banks of the creek there were to be easily caught plenty of eels, and, besides, we could get any quantity of the eggs of the black swan.

* The 'Tasmanian Devil' (*Dasyurus ursinus*) is peculiar to Tasmania. It is of nocturnal habit, and extremely savage and voracious.

While erecting a hut one day I missed the bale of skins which I had collected by means of my snares. I charged my mate with the theft. He vigorously denied it; but I was thoroughly convinced, and determined to bide my time. Shortly afterwards, while splitting logs with him, he got his hand jammed and could not get it out. I saw my opportunity, and told him that if he did not say where he had planted my skins, I would not help him, but would leave him where he was. He would not say anything for some time except shout for help; but, after much useless bawling, when he saw me quietly going on with my work at a little distance, he confessed that he had pushed the bale up a hollow tree. I first secured it and then let him go. His hand was a sorry sight, having been severely crushed by the closing of the log, and the blood being forced from the finger-tips and from under the nails. I threatened that should he say anything about me I would inform upon him for stealing, which would ensure him twelve months in irons. He at once started off for the station, not even staying to eat his breakfast, and in a day or two another man named Cant, afterward a livery stable-keeper in Adelaide, was sent out to me. He turned out a first-rate worker, upright and obliging, and we worked on together until the finish of the job.

The work being done, I went for my master to inspect it, but he not being at home, I saw the mistress. Just as I was leaving her, an old sow with a litter of fair-sized pigs passed, and she said I might have one of them if I could catch it. This I did very quickly, and put it in my bag. The next day my mate and I were going to enjoy ourselves over a sucking-pig

dinner, when a pet black swan that we had reared from a cygnet set up a noise which told us that it was alarmed by the approach of a stranger. In a minute or two the master rode up, said he was very hungry, would like to have something to eat, and would look at the work afterward. There was no enticing him away so as to give my mate a chance to remove the camp oven, and we had to put the best face upon it we could. We all three ate heartily. I knew from the master's manner that we had not yet done with that pig, and so the same night, directly after he had gone, I made a round of my traps, and, finding a bandicoot, killed it and stripped it of its skin. These animals, when skinned and prepared, look not unlike sucking pigs. I placed this one in the oven with the fat and remaining stuffing from the baked pig, and after I had cooked it, cut it up exactly as the pig had been cut at my master's dinner with us. The next day at noon there came a constable from Hambledon, who asked how we were getting on, and begged for a drink of tea and something to eat. I gave him some of the meat from the supposed pig that I had prepared overnight in case of such a visit, and he then asked for some provisions to carry with him, as he had a two days' journey before him. I gave him some more bandicoot. When packing it up, he said, 'You'll have to come with me, Will. There's something wrong. I have got to bring in the remainder of the pig that the master dined off yesterday. He's taken a fancy to it.' My mate was ordered to stop and look after the bullocks and the dray, and I set off with the constable. On arriving at Oaklands I was placed in the lockup, the constable taking charge of my bale of skins for me.

Soon I was charged before the magistrates with stealing a pig. The remains that the constable had secured were produced in court, and were at once proved to be bandicoot. My master admitted that what he saw before him was not pig, and said he had most unquestionably eaten pig at our camp, and ought to have brought away the remains of his dinner at once. The case, as far as the pig was concerned, was dismissed; but the Bench, holding that I had been wasting my master's time in trapping kangaroos, etc., ordered me to give my bale of skins up to him. I was then discharged. My master made me put the skins that I had hoped to sell into his tool-house. I was very angry about the skins, and out of revenge got up during the night, took all of them, smeared the insides with fat, and threw them to the pigs, who soon tore them to pieces. The remnants were found in the morning.

While my case was going on, and even after, the mistress, being a 'government woman,' that is to say a woman from the factory married to a free man, dared not say that she had given me the pig, and I, knowing the consequences to her, would not say that I had received it from her. The condition of a woman thus placed was an unfortunate one, as on the slightest provocation, and even without any pretext at all, a free husband could, by merely lodging a complaint, have his wife returned to the factory for a term, say of three months, which she had to serve unless released on a promise of behaving better. It was the same with an assigned servant married to his free mistress. He had to go about his work like any other man, and dared not leave the premises without obtaining a pass

from his wife. If a constable caught him out without a pass after eight o'clock, even if he had been sent out by his wife, he was held guilty of a breach of the rules, and arrested. It was the duty of an assigned servant to have a pass on leaving his employer's premises after a certain hour, for however short a time he was going to be absent. Again, every assigned servant had to report to the magistrate of the district once a month, and a ticket-of-leave man once in three months. On getting a ticket-of-leave for a certain district a man had to find work in that district. If he failed to get work he could apply to the magistrate for a ticket for any district he chose, which district he was not at liberty to leave, being bound to report himself at the intervals already mentioned. If he failed to report, and therefore did not appear on the muster roll, he was considered as a defaulter and treated as such. As to alloting assignable servants, it was so arranged that small settlers in poor circumstances could go to the barracks and pick out any man they liked. If an assignable servant were in receipt of aid from home he would sometimes, after finding a hard-up master, make an arrangement with him. There would be a virtual exchange of places, the free man going to work and the assigned one taking his ease in the house, smoking cigars and having the best of everything he could buy. Such a 'servant' would sometimes buy a vehicle in the nominal master's name and go to Hobart on a pleasure trip. If he wanted an extension of leave he had only to write to the figurehead who had nominally hired him from the barracks, and whom in reality he had himself hired subsequently. Further, if such a servant wanted to see any sights, or join in any amusements,

the pass was always forthcoming, and thus he could pass his time very pleasantly until due for his ticket-of-leave.

After the destruction of the skins I fell sick, and was laid up for a fortnight. Once when the master and men were at work the mistress brought me some arrowroot and sponge cake, and told me she was sorry for my loss, and grateful to me that I had not split about the pig. She told me too that the master was sorry about the skins, and, if I would stop on the farm, would pay me for them. I answered that I would not stop if he were to offer me ten shillings a week, and that I would sham sick and stay in bed until he should be tired out and offer me a pass to Hambledon, where I could be reassigned. Shortly after, seeing he could do nothing with me, he offered me a pass in when I got well. I jumped at the offer, said I could walk into Hambledon then and there, and that the fresh air would be invigorating. At dinner-time the mistress brought me a pass, the corner of which she had secretly folded down over a sovereign. I then made my way into Hambledon to await my new employer. In Hambledon I again met my old mate who had tried to steal my skins. He still carried his hand in a sling.

CHAPTER III

BULLOCK DRIVER

My next master was a Captain Langham, who owned a station between Hambledon and Bothwell. I was to be employed as bullock driver, but for the four or five first days was sent out to cut thistles. By Wednesday night the rations which had been given me at the beginning of the week were exhausted, as they had been on the other farms, but one of the hands said to me, 'This is a "full belly" station. Go and ask the overseer for some more.' I asked and received a four-pound piece of pork and some flour and sugar. A week after this, Captain Langham told me that he had decided to send me with a dray-load of rations to an out-station in the New Country. When the dray was loaded up I started off by the Big River on my road to the Cellars. On my way I thought to have a look at the old station where had happened the affair of the stolen heart and Yorkshire pudding. When I saw my old master, however, he ordered me off the premises and threatened to set the dogs at me. At this I went off, merely saying, 'Good morning; how's your finger?'

I faced the mountains up to the Cellars and had a good deal of trouble, never having driven bullocks before, though I had led Captain Langham to believe that I was a noble hand at the work. My near side leader had been a pet on the station. When the bullocks were turned out on the run, which was

very scrubby and extended over a thousand acres, they would all go off feeding except this one, who was accustomed to have hay given him. He was useful in getting in the others in the morning when they were wanted for work. He would not, however, stand the whip. I continued my uphill journey through fallen trees, sometimes going round them, and sometimes chopping my way through. On a very steep hill I happened, when flicking my whip, to touch the pet bullock, and he instantly turned to charge me. As I had been warned of his tricks I was in a measure ready to meet him with the sharpened end of the whip handle, but he rolled me over, whip and all. After that I was careful never to touch him, and he gave me no further trouble.

I passed through the Cellars, making inquiry about the road at several huts on my way, and reached the Pine River, leading down to which were two roads. I followed the one to the left down a 'sideing' so steep that I had to fasten a tree on the upside of the dray to prevent its capsizing. At the bottom I came to a bridge of slabs raised on very high piles in the middle and with a gate at the further end. I had a careful look at the bridge, and found it would be perfectly impossible to pass through the gate with the dray, so I carefully took the gate and posts down. The bridge, which was about ten feet wide, I found slightly shook as I walked backward and forward on it. I consequently dared not venture upon it with a full dray, and I knew that when I once started, the narrowness of the way made it impossible for me to turn back. I unloaded the dray, and then with a crack of my whip forced my animals, drawing the

empty vehicle, at the crossing. Directly they were started I had to climb on the dray myself, as there was no room for me to walk. While crossing, the bullocks regularly propped against one another to avoid falling over the unprotected edges. More by good luck than good management I got safely over, and then re-loaded, carrying all my cargo over piecemeal upon my back. About a mile further on I stopped at a hut, and it being late in the afternoon, there camped. In talking with the stockman at supper I remarked on the very dangerous state of the roads. The stockman replied that that was nothing to what I should have to encounter, but upon my saying the bridge was bad enough for me, he started and asked, 'What bridge?' I soon found out that the bridge I had traversed was only for horsemen, and that I should have taken the other road over the falls. My host could hardly believe what I had done, and declared he would not attempt to cross the bridge with eight bullocks for a thousand pounds. Next morning I continued my journey, passing through an immense belt of dead timber, all of which had been killed during one very severe winter. When I camped in the evening I found an immense hollow tree, sufficiently large to have allowed the team and dray to pass through it. I camped under the trunk and drew up the dray alongside. When I woke in the morning I found it had been snowing all night, and the drift kept me where I was for three days. I had to obtain food by tunnelling through to the dray. It partially thawed the third day, and I went in search of my bullocks, which I found, all together, about fifty

yards off, in a hollow surrounded by a drift nearly shoulder high, and with only their heads uncovered. I got them yoked after digging the pole and yokes out of the snow, and heading in what I thought to be the right direction, I mounted on the top of the load, rolled myself in an opossum cloak, and guided the team as well as I could through fallen limbs and stumps until late in the afternoon. That evening I had to leave the bullocks yoked to the dray without anything to eat all night. Early in the morning I made another start, and as I had been told by the man at the station that, in the event of being lost or uncertain of my way, I must not force the cattle, but give 'Bloomer,' one of my leaders, his own way, I cared very little about driving. In the afternoon of that day I saw a column of smoke rising from the trees at the foot of the hills from which I was looking, and though it seemed a long way off, 'Bloomer,' quietly winding along, brought me to a hut and a great yard, where a number of nearly snowed-up sheep were huddled together. This being the end of my journey, I delivered my load and remained until a thaw should take place.

As soon as the weather became favourable I set out on my return to the head station, which I safely reached.

Soon after my arrival back there was a football match at our station between Hambledon and Bothwell, and my master, who took a great interest in the sport, and was going to provide the dinner, sent me into Bothwell with my dray for a barrel of ale and other things. On my way back I had to pass the house of a shoemaker, near which a fencing party

was working. While some of the party kept me yarning, the shoemaker, assisted by others, tapped my barrel with his awl and drew off a quantity of ale in a bucket. My master afterward met the shoemaker and others drunk, and as he thought I was an accomplice, this was the cause of my being sent into Hambledon to be again assigned.

CHAPTER IV

THE BUSHRANGERS

THE very next day after reaching Hambledon I was assigned to a place between Lovely Banks and Green Ponds, on the main road. My new master was a Mr B——; he was reported to be a regular Tartar. At night I found that the men in my hut were helping out their rations with a goose stolen from Lovely Banks. The next morning, before going to work, we got notice that a gang of bushrangers were camped near by in a gully leading to Jerusalem, and that they were coming to pay us a visit, to get square with our master for his harshness and tyranny to some of them when they were in his service. All hands were soon armed, and the master told me not to be led away by the bad lot in the hut, that they would corrupt me, but to keep by him and do as he bade me. He then brought me a musket, at the same time himself buckling on a cutlass, and saying that if we could capture the ruffians I should have my freedom and some money

from the Government, to which he would add more. We two then headed a party of the station hands, and, when near the gully, each found a hiding-place, and waited the time to attack. Seeing near me an old shell of a tree having a widish crack in it up the middle, I made toward it; but, as I was crawling cautiously along, I was sighted by one of the bushrangers (there were three of them) and fired at. I then fairly rushed for the tree, closely followed by the master. Three shots were fired at the tree, one piercing the shell and showing that my position was dangerous. I edged aside to keep as much out of harm's way as possible, but found that my master from behind was pushing me right in front of the crack, and that, if there was no change in the line of fire, I should infallibly be shot. I got out, and, dropping the gun, ran for my bare life just as the three bushrangers blazed away at the same time, whether at me or not I cannot say; all I know is that I ran the faster. When thoroughly out of breath I turned round and saw my master close at my heels. We made direct for the station, not being followed by the bushrangers. Upon master's asking me why I ran off, I said that there was not room for both of us in the shell, and one must assuredly have been hit. He told me I ought to be brave and never run from an enemy, but I only said, 'It's all very well; but no more bushranger-hunting for me.' The other men, when they came back to the hut, had a hearty laugh at the close race home between the boss and myself.

Being dissatisfied with my place and the bad rations, I resolved to get sent back to Hambledon as soon as possible. On the overseer coming to turn the men

out to their work next day I was in bed. I asked him to tell the master that from hard running and the excitement of the previous day I had an attack of palpitation of the heart, that I was very subject to that complaint, and sometimes, when I was much put about, was laid up for months. The master was brought, and to him I repeated my story. He told me that when I got well I should have a pass to go in. I pretended not to wish to leave, and that the place was to my liking, but he told the overseer to have a pass ready for me when I was able to go. Upon the master coming out a day after this, I told him that I felt better, that the sickness might not return before night, and I would try and walk in. I got my pass and started, much to my satisfaction.

I was only two days in Hambledon this time when I was assigned to Mr Edward Bisbey, of Lovely Banks, near Hatton Park, about a mile from my last place. It happened to be harvest time at my new master's. Mr Bisbey was a bachelor with no overseer. If a servant did not suit him he turned him back at once, and had never been known to get a man into trouble. There were no short rations on this station, but full and plenty for all. The first work I did was to help in mowing oats, being paid at the rate of 1s. 6d. an acre, besides daily rations and half a bottle of wine each day. On these terms I and a mate harvested a large field, taking turns at mowing and tieing, and working at the rate of twelve acres a week for some weeks.

The harvest being all in, Mr Bisbey put me in a hut by myself at the garden gate, and soon afterward he told me that he was going to send me into Hobart

with a letter to his butler, and that I must be very careful indeed of what was given into my charge. He brought me a bundle of clothes, Wellington boots, and a hat with a cockade, and told me to fit them on. Very proud I felt of myself when I had done so. Next morning I started in one of Cox's coaches for Hobart with ten shillings in my pocket given me by the master. On arrival I delivered the letter to the butler, who spoke to one of the grooms, and, after I had had some wine, a carriage with two horses was brought round. In the carriage were two hampers of things which, with them, had been bought at the sale of Sir John Franklin's effects on his quitting the colony. I drove off, and proceeded all right until reaching the public-house at Green Ponds, called 'The Good Woman'—on the signboard was a picture of a woman with her head under her arm. Here I met my harvest mate and another, and had a glass of wine, refusing the beer they wanted to force upon me. In spite of all I could say to them they became partly tipsy. I offered them a lift in the carriage until they got within sight of the hall. They became very noisy and boisterous, and refused to get out when I pulled up at the place where I wanted to get rid of them. At the risk of the horses bolting I had to get down and haul them out, and as fast as I hauled one out the other would jump in again. At last I had to give it up and drive on to the gates, trusting to escape the eyes of my master. The two drunkards bundled out just before the master came up, and the only thing that he had to remark upon was my livery coat, that had been ripped from tail to collar in the struggle. I told him truthfully how it had happened, and I heard no

more from him about it. This employer was one of the largest sheep owners in the colony, shearing yearly 100,000 sheep, and, through keeping no overseer, never having any trouble with his men, always treating them with consideration and kindness, but with justice and firmness. There were three other brothers in the family. One was at Hatton Park, one near Bothwell, and another at Jericho. They were all like my master in their kindly treatment of the assigned servants.

CHAPTER V

A KINDLY GOVERNOR

After I had been some time at Lovely Banks my master, tired of his bachelor life, married a young lady from a place called Shannon Lane. The arrival of a mistress in the house added greatly to the comfort of all. Soon after this I was sent to the Lagoon of Islands with a team and rations for an out-station. The first day I stayed at the station of my master's brother, and the next camped by a creek just past a station owned by Dr Officer. At night I drew the dray off the road, and after turning the bullocks on to a flat near the creek, lay down to sleep under the dray. Some time just before morning I had a fearful dream. I felt as though someone were lying on my chest and throat and squeezing the very life out of me. Do what I would, I could not remove the crushing weight. But, at last, in my struggles I

awoke, to find to my horror that, while I had slept, the dray, having been left standing loaded on a soft and boggy part of the flat, the wheels had gradually sunk into the soil, till the flooring boards had come down to where I was lying underneath, and were pressing me into the earth. By some means hardly known to myself I managed to struggle out of my living grave and lay down at some distance to recover my senses. In the morning I yoked the bullocks to the dray, and after I had prized up the wheels with some rails as well as I could, they dragged it by sheer force from where it was imbedded. After I had delivered my load and filled up with apples bought at ninepence, and pears at tenpence per bushel, I returned home and found as visitors to my master Sir John Eardley-Wilmot,* the new Governor, and his son. This Governor had at one time been chairman of Quarter Sessions in England, and was a man of truly benevolent disposition. While in his new and exalted position he would often recognise one of those on whom he had had to pass sentence in the old country, and stop and make kindly inquiries. Because of this kindness to the prisoners the free people took umbrage, and managed to get Sir John suspended. His troubles so preyed upon his mind that he soon succumbed, to the great regret of many poor fellows to whom he had showed kindness.

* Sir John C. Eardley-Wilmot was Lieutenant-Governor of Van Dieman's Land from August 21, 1843, to October 13, 1846. In his predecessor's time the convict population of the island amounted to over 18,000. Sir John died in Tasmania on February 3, 1847. Mr J. F. Hogan, M.P., in his work, *The Gladstone Colony*, says that Mr Gladstone's treatment of the kindly-hearted governor is the one ugly blot on his colonial administration.

CHAPTER VI

A CATTLE-DUFFING CASE

One day the master calling me said, 'I want you to come with me. Go and get ready at once. We shall start in half an hour.' When on the point of starting a sergeant of police and a constable joined us, and we four rode off together. Late in the evening we reached the station just above where the properties of Doctor Officer and Mr Edward Bisbey joined. The men's huts were searched and two bullock skins found. One was stretched on a frame and being used for salting meat, and the other was planted in a fence near by. The two skins were tied together and placed in the stock-keeper's hut, and the stock-keeper, when he came home, was taken in charge. After supper, when we were about to turn in, the sergeant handcuffed the prisoner to the constable and left them thus in the hut kitchen for the night, while he, the master, and myself had another room. This stockman had a great grudge against me, and we had more than once come to blows. His wife, nicknamed 'Kiss-me-Dicky,' used to wash for me, and as she was, like myself, much given to talking, her husband became jealous. I offended him further when he was arrested by saying that, if he were guilty in the matter of the hides, it served him right; but, for all that, I pitied him. It was my master's custom to count out to the stockman the number of cattle to be in his charge, including a certain number to be killed for station use. On these latter cattle were put the

stockman's brand, and if he saved any of them they became his own property—that is to say, if the muster of other cattle at the end of twelve months proved correct. As a further encouragement he was allowed an interest in any increase. The same system applied to the shepherds. After lambing season all lambs over a certain percentage became the property of the shepherd, although allowed to run with the flock.

During the night of the stockman's arrest I could not sleep because of the snoring of the sergeant, and I decided to get up and go outside. Rising quietly, I spied the bundle of skins, and softly pushed it through the window. As I passed through the room where the handcuffed pair lay, I saw that the constable was awake, so I told him I had been seized with colic and must get some pepper. He recommended hot tea and pepper. I placed the billy on the ashes, and sat down in front of the fire, groaning dismally. Presently I pretended I was much worse, and, rushing out of the hut, found the skins lying under the window. I caught them up, and putting out all my strength, hurled them as far as I could into the Shannon. I returned to the hut, drank some hot tea, told the constable I felt much better, and turned in again. That morning we saddled up for home, and the sergeant freed the prisoner's hands from that of the constable, leaving one handcuff swinging. A pack-horse was brought out, and the prisoner stood ready to mount as soon as the skins had been placed in front. The sergeant told the constable to go back to the hut and get the skins, and when none were to be found there was a regular row, I meanwhile sitting down in front of the hut holding the horses and looking the

picture of innocence. At last my master said to the sergeant, 'Are you sure they were bullock skins? Because if they were, and there are none to be found, it will look bad for you.' The sergeant, finding himself cornered, said that he could not swear they were bullock's skins, that they might have been 'forester's' skins—a large species of kangaroo—and that after doing his duty so far he would not like to suffer, and would say upon his return that he had found nothing. To this my master carelessly replied, 'That's your affair, not mine.' The prisoner's bracelets were then taken off and he was sent to his duties, being told if he found out anything about the skins to report it to the police. The hut-keeper, who had laid the information while at loggerheads with the stockman, was taken to Spring Hill and locked up on a charge of 'false reporting'; but I do not know how he was punished. I afterwards told the stockman's wife all about the matter, with the exception of my part in it. Her only remark was, 'Well, he's a lucky man to get out of it so easily.' She was not living with her husband then, but at the home station.

Concerning this occurrence about the skins, nothing was ever said between my master and me, nor did I mention a word of it among the men, though I am sure both the master and the sergeant suspected me. I had no more jealous insinuations from the stockman.

CHAPTER VII

A LOVE AFFAIR

In my leisure time I resumed my former habits of trapping game. At Sandown the wattle scrub swarmed with wild pigeons, and of these I could catch any quantity. Part of them I sold to the guard of a coach owned by a Mrs Cox. The guard was also ready to buy hindquarters of kangaroo at half-a-crown each. I, besides, made a large opossum cloak of grey and black skins, diamonded in the centre, and fringed with tails. I lined it with native cats' skins, skins of the tiger cat, and of the black swan, all trapped, not shot, which made them more valuable. The Governor one day, when on a visit to my master, saw this cloak hanging across the hawthorn hedge near the house, and asked how much I wanted for it. My master then bought it from me for my own price—£5—and presented it to his Excellency.

An incident occurred about this time which threatened to mar my future prospects. There was a family visiting at Lovely Banks who had a very pretty nursemaid. My hut being close to the garden gate, where she used to come with the children, I soon found a chance of speaking to her, and in a short time we became on quite friendly terms. Knowing the feeling my master had about any of his men interfering with members of his household, I contrived a plan whereby we might have private meetings. I invited the girl into the hut one day when she was walking with her mistress's

child. To admit her I opened the door by lifting it from the hinges instead of by undoing the padlock and chain, and thus when, on our entering, we pulled the door into place after us, it looked from outside as though the hut was locked up and no one in it. It was very lucky I had taken this precaution, as I very soon heard my master calling me, and he even tried the door. Of course we kept silence within, and we escaped discovery, though fearfully frightened that the child might cry and betray us. As soon as the master had moved off I made a bolt for the stockyard and made as much noise as I could yoking up the bullocks. While so engaged I saw my master was on the verandah, and I knew that my sweetheart had thus had a chance to escape after I had done so.

I met her again in the garden by appointment the same night, and, after we had seated ourselves with our backs to the ivy, she began to cross-question me as to all I had told her about my means when at previous meetings I had thrown out hints about marriage. She said she had a little money, but not enough to set up housekeeping on. In a spirit of boast I told her that, as she could see, my master kept no overseer, that I was his right-hand man—that, in fact, he could not get on without me. I added that I had a good bit of money in my master's hands, and other savings, besides some sheep, cattle and horses on the Shannon. When I had thus made myself out of good means, she promised to speak to her mistress and let me know the upshot the next day.

I really believed myself earnestly attached to this

girl, but what I had invented about my property was rather a weight on my mind, and with good reason. When our talk had proceeded so far, I tried to go into the house against which we had been leaning, and pushed the door, but it would not answer. I thought, what if anyone has been in there listening to my boasting; I shall be ruined for ever. In this state of mind I turned toward my hut, and hid myself under a thick currant bush near it. Soon I saw my master come from the house, the door of which I had tried, look cautiously round, and walk off. Had it not been such a comfortable place I would have bolted then and there. For some time I avoided my master as much as I could.

A few days after our unfortunate garden meeting my sweetheart came up to me and said, 'You don't know what I've got in my pocket for you.' I asked her not to speak so loud, as the master might hear, when she brought out the *Gazette*, and, pointing to a paragraph, said, 'Read that.' I had been gazetted for a ticket-of-leave.

The same evening we met again in the garden, when she asked me whether I had seen my master—presumably about getting married. I answered that I had not seen him, and did not mean to if I could help it.

Next day I was sent to Jericho with a message to my master's brothers. I stopped all night and came back the next morning. The night after my return I went to our meeting-place, but found no one there. I then whistled outside the kitchen, and one of the women-servants of the house, guessing at once what I was after, came out and said, 'Why, bless you! the

whole family went bag and baggage this morning.' 'I believe,' said I, 'that that accounts for my being sent to Jericho.' She replied, 'Not unlikely, but there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it.'

I determined after this, my master being away, to see the mistress and tell her that as I had my ticket I would go and see some relatives up the country and come back again. I had no relatives in Van Dieman's Land, but I was anxious to get away. My mistress gave me a cheque for what was due to me, and I started for Bothwell, intending to resume my snaring pursuits.

CHAPTER VIII

ON TICKET-OF-LEAVE

On my way to Bothwell I met an elderly man, apparently of the same class as myself, who told me that if I tried to live by trapping only, I should probably get into trouble with the squatters for disturbing their sheep. He persuaded me to try with him for a job on a farm. We stopped at a station a little beyond Shannon Lane. I stayed at the huts while my new mate went up to the house, he said to make inquiries. While he was away a very pretty laughing girl came to me and said her father and mother asked me to come up to the kitchen and have something to

eat. I at once agreed and went to the house, making myself as polite and agreeable as I could on the way. I had a good meal and had just returned to the huts when my mate came back too. I told him that we ought not to haggle about wages but come to terms at once, that I, for my part, said I was much struck with the daughter, and meant in time to 'hang up my hat for her.' On this he went up to the house once more, and presently a shepherd from an out-station came in for rations. The shepherd and I got quite friendly. My mate did not return that night, and, as I was talking about him next morning and saying there had been two of us looking for work, I suddenly spied him, and exclaimed,—

'That's he in the garden talking to the mistress.'

'Are you cracked?' said the shepherd. 'That's the boss just come down from the lakes; you must have come down with him.'

I at once packed my swag and made tracks for Bothwell. About half a mile on my road I heard a horse galloping behind me, and very soon was joined by the same girl that I had seen at the house. She asked me where I was going, and I told her to Bothwell. 'So am I,' she said; 'but why are you going away?' I answered that, although I had taken a fancy to the place at first, I had altered my mind. She then informed me that she had been sent by her father and mother to fetch me back, and that no notice would be taken of what had passed. Meanwhile, when she had said she was going to Bothwell, I had given her my swag, which she had offered to carry on the horse for me. When I refused to accompany her back she coolly threatened to ride away with every-

thing I possessed, and so I had to do what I was told. No sooner had I reached the huts than the master came down as though nothing had happened, and began giving me directions about my work. The old gentleman's name was Weir. He proved a very good master. I found afterwards that he was in the habit of entering into talk with trampers in search of work, and getting an insight into their characters before deciding about engaging them. At this station I was much employed about the house and had a pleasant time, often chatting with my mistress and her daughters when they were over their washtubs, and even being allowed by my master to shoot opossums of a night. Things went on well enough until another hired man and myself were set to build a large barn of slabs. He got all the credit for it when it was finished, and, having now obtained my freedom, I gave my mistress notice to leave, though a better master and mistress could not be desired.

PART IV

A FREE BUSHMAN

CHAPTER I

STRANGE ESCAPES

LEAVING my place I tramped to Launceston, where I took up my abode at a boarding-house, and soon got acquainted with the daughter of the owners, and was often in her company. This coming to the knowledge of her parents, I was forbidden to hold any communication with her, and, as I was closely watched, I for a time had no opportunity of meeting her. One night, however, I managed to take her to Ashton's Circus, and it was then arranged between us, without the slightest thought of impropriety, that I should go to her room at night and wait for her, as she would be the last of the family to go upstairs. I left my boots below, and, not being acquainted with the run of the house, I entered what I thought was the girl's room. I saw women's dresses hanging about, and so made certain that I was right, and sat down on the bed. In about an hour I heard the steps of two people on the stairs, and fearing that they might for some reason enter the room where I was, I crept underneath the

bed. To my horror the footsteps stopped at the door I had mistakenly entered, and in the next second the girl's father and mother came into the room. It was their room. They undressed. They knelt down by the bed under which I was lying, and said their prayers. They got into bed. I heard them talking about how to prevent me meeting their daughter. I lay in an agony of fear, sweating at every pore. I lay for half an hour, and then I was seized with a violent fit of hiccough. Do what I would I could not restrain it, and at last, giving one awful gasp, I rushed from my hiding-place and made for the door. The father, however, proved too quick for me. He jumped from the bed and was upon me before I could open the door. With the help of his wife, who had followed him, he held me tight and shouted for help, no doubt thinking he had caught a burglar. After much struggling I got out of the room, and to the landing at the top of the staircase, the two still clinging to me. Finding I could not get free without doing them some harm, I threw myself down, and the three of us rolled together to the bottom. When I got loose I quickly regained my feet, and rushed for the back door opening into the yard. I unlocked it, and got out, thinking that the only way of escape was a low place I knew of in the wall. I made for it, but there I found a big dog chained to his kennel. I jumped on the kennel and laid hold of the top of the wall just as the dog laid hold of the seat of my breeches. I got away by a desperate wrench, but only to fall right into the arms of a passing constable, who marched me off, barefooted as I was. Rounding a corner I gave him the leg in the true Lancashire

style, and left him rolling in the gutter; while I made down to the water's edge on the road to Port Sorrel, where I lay in hiding all that day, and at night went to a shoemaker's in Launceston, and bought myself a pair of boots. Just at this time I had obtained my certificate of freedom, without which I was liable to be at any moment apprehended.

I at once started down the coast to Port Sorrell. On the road I met with an old shipmate, named Jack Downes, who was acting as a constable, to whom I related my adventures and mishaps. I got from him a pair of trousers to replace those I had on, which had been torn in my struggles, and a cloak. Downes, moreover, told me that down the river, at Circular Head, a great deal of paling splitting was going on, and that, by applying to a Mr Gibbons, I might get into a job, and ultimately have a chance of going to Melbourne in one of Gibbon's timber ships, which would be better than going back to Launceston, where I might get into trouble. Downes said he only wished he had my chance, but he was a 'lifer.' He then gave me a billycan, tea, sugar, and bread and cheese. When I asked him how much I owed him, he said he would only charge me for the cloak, as that was not his, and he would have to pay the owner. He only asked me ten shillings, which I gave him.

Trudging along, I overtook quite a young-looking lad—about fifteen or sixteen—and found he was, like myself, on the way to Circular Head. He proposed that we should go mates. We tramped along the coast till dusk, and camped by a hollow log. I told him of my narrow escape, and that I did not wish to be seen by the police. He replied that if I would

promise not to tell he would let me into a secret. I gave him the pledge he asked, and he then told me that he was a bolter from Hobart. He implored me to assist him in getting to Circular Head, near where his family lived. He then went on that he had been about the neighbourhood where we were many times, and knew the road well; that there was a police station at the Mersey River, of which we must keep clear; and that as we were camped near the river we could start early, and wade across the bar before the police were about.

Early the next morning we sighted the station, and saw men going and coming. Upon this we went back and camped again. The following morning we started at dawn and waded into the river. I got a stout stick and went first, holding my companion's hand. After we had gone some distance I told him to get on my back, as the current was very strong and his weight would steady me somewhat. He did as I told him, and we soon got over and travelled on to the next river, the Leven, which we had to cross in the same fashion to reach Gibbon's timber yards. I found the stream very strong here also, and my mate could not stand against it. I told him the only way was to swim until we got to shallow water. I pulled off my shirt, and said that if he would give me his I would carry the things on my head, and that, if he would stick close to me, we would manage.

He hesitated, and I asked him if he were frightened of the water, and if he could swim. He did not reply for some moments, and then said he did not like to tell me before, 'but,' he said, 'I am not what I seem; I am a girl. I am bolting from the factory.' I

induced her to trust herself on my back, and by going a short distance out I managed to reach a shallow part of the bar, and soon landed safely on the other side. When out of sight of the water we had some tea, and then, as I knew her secret, she seemed anxious to be off, so we parted, she promising to come and see me again if I got work. I never, however, saw anything more of her.

I went up the river to Gibbon's saw pits, and there saw a fine, military-looking man, who engaged me to draw palings. He was to find a horse and cart, and rations, and give me half the profits. I worked steadily here for some time, sleeping at night on a stretcher in the store. The first night of my sojourn I was startled almost out of my senses by the appearance of a tall gaunt figure, holding in one hand a lighted candle, and in the other a drawn sword. The figure flourished the weapon about, and went vigorously through the broadsword exercise. It (or he) then sheathed the sword, and, drawing forth a pistol of tremendous size, advanced straight towards me, cutting all sorts of capers. Feeling certain that I was in the presence of a madman, and a dangerous one, too, I made a bolt from the store. Next morning I told the railsplitters of what had happened, and said I was so terrified that I had determined to leave. They laughed at the idea, telling me to take no notice of 'the old man,' as he was quite harmless, and interfered with no one. On this I stayed, hoping to save enough money to carry me to Adelaide, where I told my employers I had relations.

CHAPTER II

THE MAINLAND

My employers, when I announced my wish to go to Adelaide, offered to let me have a freight of palings to sell for them. The captain of a small vessel bought some of this off me, and I loaded some more on my own account, which he offered to land at Adelaide, and take as freight, half it would fetch at public sale. I agreed to this, and went on board just before the vessel weighed anchor. Ships leaving the river had, as a rule, to report at the Heads, where they were searched for prisoners. We, however, escaped this scrutiny, and, after an uneventful trip, arrived at Port Adelaide. We unloaded, and I sold the palings at 22s. per hundred. Their cost price had been 3s. 6d., so I put between £30 and £40 in my pocket.

Being now in funds and light of heart, I rode up to Adelaide, about seven miles distant, and took up my abode with a man named Bill Monks, in Light Square, near the 'Billy Barlow.' I knocked about for a fortnight, seeing all I could, and noting the difference between a penal settlement and a free colony. I then thought it time to look for work, and went off to Gawler Town, on the Burra Burra Road. I had no success there, and returned to Adelaide, where, through meeting with a young girl, I fell in for a slice of luck. I had agreed to take this girl out for a drive in the country, and for that purpose went to a livery stable to hire a trap. The man with whom

I spoke told me I could get a turnout for the day by paying a deposit of ten pounds, and to this I agreed. When I came for the trap it was a wretched ramshackle affair with a worn-out horse. I asked to see the master of the place, and, when I was shown in to him, I recognised him as C——, an old pal in Van Dieman's Land. He at once greeted me, told me that his men had taken me for a sailor, and let me a conveyance specially kept for them, but that I should at once have a better. Accordingly I was able to drive in style along the Mount Barker Road as far as Handsdorf or Germantown. Upon my return, the livery-stable keeper reminded me of the days when we had worked together at fencing at Kemp's Lakes, and how he had shared the sucking-pig with me, and helped me to pass off a bandicoot for a pig upon our master. He told me that by hard work he had risen from groom and stable-help to his present position, and had a good business with postcarts, omnibuses, funeral turnouts, and landed property besides. He declared he would never forget my many kindnesses to him, and, as he was now well off, offered me any assistance he could give, and in proof of his goodwill got me a situation as mailman with a Mr Chambers, who was a friend of his. I agreed with Mr Chambers to ride the mail from Wellington, the crossing-place on the River Murray, through a portion of the desert to Mount Gambier. I went up from Adelaide in a light spring-cart to Wellington, where, according to my instructions, I awaited the arrival of the Mount Gambier mailman. At the crossing-place a large punt was used for the conveyance of passengers, drays, and

horses, to a long jetty on the Victorian side. A passenger on that side wishing to cross used to ring a bell which served both to call the ferryman and warn the police. If the traveller were a horseman he used to be brought to the station, placed under the standard, and a description of him taken, also particulars as to whence he came and whither he was bound. Then the saddle was taken off his horse, and the maker's name or any particular marks on it noted, together with brands and a description of the horse. There were two public-houses, one on each side of the river, and a short distance down its course, nearer the lakes, was the residence of the then protector of the blacks—a Mr Mason.

The Mount Gambier mailman being ready for his journey I accompanied him. We were both mounted, and led the packhorse with the mails. We passed Lakes Albert and Alexandrina on the right. The latter is a large sheet of water, being thirty miles across from Point Malcolm to Point Sturt. At the time I saw the lake there lay in it a wrecked vessel, which had been washed or blown over the bar from Encounter Bay. We halted at Brown's Waterholes. The riding had been very heavy, and the horses were in great danger of having their fetlocks cut by the short stumps of ti-tree and saltbush. In time we arrived at the camping-ground at M'Grath's Flat, where we tethered out the horses and went to the mia-mia, or resting-place, of the mailman, formed, in true aboriginal fashion, of poles, bushes, and long grass. Here we were received by the mailman's cook, a black gin,* who had ready a quantity of fish cooked in a primitive style on the coals, and laid out

* A ABORIGINAL.

on a plate of reeds and sedges spread on the ground. Besides this we had our own rations. After eating supper we took a stroll round the blacks' camp.

These blacks had been standing round us while we had been eating, waiting for the heads and refuse of the fish. Having been warned by C—— of the nature of these fellows, I was at first rather afraid at seeing such a number of them, and almost regretted having accepted my billet as mailman. As I went among their mia-mias with my companion, I was saluted now and then with the question, 'You wantee lubra?'* I had a lot of tobacco in my swag, and was cutting the figs into quarter length pieces, and giving them away, when my mate said, 'Don't you be foolish, give me a fig and I'll show you how to deal with them.' He took a fig and began cutting thin slices, and handing a very small bit to each as they came up. Having collected all the tobacco they could they handed it to the chief, and seemed rather discontented. My mate then told me that they would give me whatever money they could scrape together, and ask me to purchase trifles at Mount Gambier. He said that he had had as much as five shillings at a time from them, and had satisfied them with a few Jews' harps or twopenny bead necklaces. Sometimes he had brought them a pannikin full of flour and sugar, but never a large quantity, as were they to get a bag of flour or a chest of tea they would still want more.

At one of our halting-places on the edge of the

* The author's sense of modesty does not permit him to explain that 'wantee lubra' was an inquiry as to his inclination to provide himself with a temporary wife.

plain two women stopped us and said to the mailman, 'Did you bring it?' 'No,' he replied, 'this man is with me and is going to ride the mail now.' On my asking what it was they wanted that there was so much secrecy about, the mailman told me that it was grog; that he had brought them a bottle now and again, and by so doing had got into trouble with their husbands; and that now he had to make all kinds of excuses to avoid doing their errands. He advised me not to fetch them any on any consideration, saying that the blacks sometimes got hold of it and became so furiously excited that they might be the means of my losing my life. We pulled up next night at Reedy Creek Station and public-house, and the next day made Mount Gambier, delivered the mails, and took up quarters at the inn, where other mailmen from Portland Bay and Glenelg lodged.

Without much delay, the next day I prepared for my return to Wellington, being now in charge of the mails. During the night my mate had given me some hints as to the treatment of the blacks should any of them molest me. I was to be armed with a carbine; and he told me that if I saw a black fellow with spears I must keep my eye upon him, always driving him on before me, and holding him at a distance of fully a hundred yards. Should he turn rusty and show fight the best thing was to shoot him down at once, and, on arrival in a town, report the matter without loss of time to the police.

On reaching Reedy Creek, on my way back, I met the same two women already spoken of on the look-out for me. On my refusing to bring them grog they showered all manner of abuse on me.

Round this place I found lots of blacks, all friendly. When my horses were attended to I took a stroll among them, examining their weapons, among which was a light reed spear that they could throw with wonderful precision to a distance of eighty or even a hundred yards. For this purpose they used a woommera, or throwing stick—a sort of notched handle fitting on to the end of the spear nearest the hand. I continued practising with this till bedtime, and continued the same exercise at Tilly's station; in fact I pushed on between stages so as to snatch an hour at this spear practice. At Salt Creek I went with the blacks spearing fish, and, after many failures, succeeded in spearing one myself. After this I got so interested in spears that I lost no opportunity of improving myself. At She Oak Wells I found all the blackfellows had left, and that there remained only a few old and decrepit gins. The men were on the warpath to meet the Tatiara tribes, but at the mailman's mia-mia I found the young woman engaged to cook waiting with a plate of fish. I made a hearty meal, and then amused myself with spear-throwing while the gin went to sleep with her head almost in the ashes of the fire. Later on I went to bring my saddle in out of the dew, and near the bush where it had been lying, I saw a snake skin. I had been eating snake, and not fish, and could not sleep all night.

The next day I reached Wellington.

CHAPTER III

A BATTLE AND A STATE FUNERAL

On my next trip from Mount Gambier, I found on coming to She Oak Wells, that the blacks of that district were that very moment in the midst of a fray with the Tatiara blacks, that my gin cook had taken the field with the others, and that there was nothing cooked in my mia-mia. I tethered my horses and took up a position on an embankment within view of the fight, but at a safe distance from a stray spear. The main bodies on each side would charge with the fury of demons, and coming to close quarters would lay on, the men with their nullah-nullahs and the women with their yam sticks. The men carried for defence wooden shields about six inches wide and sharpened at each end. They were so dexterous with these that they could ward off spears thrown from a distance. While the nullah-nullah fighting was in full swing, spear-throwers stationed somewhat in the rear were hurling their spears with, in many cases, fatal effect. Some blacks lay dying, and some were running about with their bodies transfixed. There seemed to be about 200 engaged in the fight, which lasted some hours, and ended in the defeat of the Tatiara tribe and the capture of as many of their young gins as possible; while the old crones were driven off with the rest of the fugitives, leaving the dead and wounded on the ground.

After the fight, about dusk, I went down to the camp of the conquerors. I was the only white man

for miles round. On my way I noticed a large fire near the river, and, going up to it, saw the body of a black fastened over it horizontally on a stout stick. The stick had a handle at one end and was fixed in two forks, windlass fashion. Two men were slowly turning the body over the flame. Thinking that perhaps this was the preparation for a cannibal feast, I made tracks for the mia-mia, and, with great patience and trouble, found out from the gin that this was the body of a chief killed in the fight, and that the roasting was intended to preserve his remains when he should be buried. I returned to the scene of operations and found the body of his highness as crisp as that of well-roasted pig. The fat was oozing from him in many tiny streams, and with this the attendant blacks were plenteously bedaubing their heads and breasts. The stench was so sickening that I rushed back to my hut and turned in without being able to taste a bite of supper. In the morning when I started on my way I found that the body, now sufficiently cooled and smoked for the purpose, had been fastened up in a tree. This is the blacks' manner of disposing of their dead. When the flesh has completely disappeared from the bones, and the latter are sufficiently bleached and dried, the nearest relatives of the deceased remove them, but keep the skull, which when it has been cleaned and dried they use as a drinking-vessel. Often and often have I had a drink from the 'mucka mucka,' as it is termed, never thinking of what it had once been.

Another thing about these people which much interested me was their management of the miserable apologies they had for boats, or rather canoes. These

were simply flat strips of bark rounded up at the stem and stern and tightly laced. On a thing of this sort a fisherman would stand upright, balancing himself with ease, and propelling his craft by means of a round pole held in both hands, and worked first on one side, then on the other. In smooth water these primitive canoes would go at a smartish pace.

When riding the mails I often had a young horse entrusted to me to break in. This was easily done by making him my packhorse, as travelling in the deep and heavy sands soon brought him to his bearings. In this way I added considerably to my wages, and began to put by money.

On my journeys I had often to wait for travellers to Mount Gambier, who wished to be escorted through the desert. The danger to travellers alone was interference by the blacks, who would first ask some trifle, and, if not gratified, or even if given presents, would appropriate everything, the victims being as a rule only too glad to escape with whole skins. Old hands accustomed to the blacks would stand no bounce from the marauders, but would drive them off like sheep, for they are arrant cowards when determinedly met.

CHAPTER IV

A MURDERED TRAVELLER

THE police would often make inquiries of me as to what travellers I had met or seen on the road. When

they did so, I would give a description of any of those I had encountered, with any information I had received as to whence they had come, and whither they were going. The settlers on the river were not allowed to ferry across any travellers on penalty of forfeiting their tenure licenses. Thus travellers were obliged to avail themselves of the Government punt at Wellington. If any man was reported to the police as being on the road, two of them would cross on the punt and then separate, one going up the river, the other down. In this way they could not fail to pick up the trail of anyone who had been near the water, the sandy nature of the country around making the impress of footsteps, in any place that received some of the moisture from the river, peculiarly plain. There were no steamers plying on the Murray at that time, so there was no escape for fugitives from justice.

While I was acting as mailman, two stockmen and their employer crossed by the punt with a mob of cattle from the Corong for the Adelaide markets. After the mob had been sold, only one stockman returned. Suspicion was aroused against him in consequence of nothing being seen of the master and the other stockman, who were expected to follow, and, as it was known that the suspected man had taken the road to Mount Gambier, the police determined to follow him up.

On my return journey on this occasion, Sergeant Cusick, stationed at Wellington, and a mounted trooper joined me. The former gave me instructions as to how to act on coming up with the fugitive stockman. It was expected we should overtake him about M'Grath's Flats—the general camping-ground.

On my arrival there I saw the sergeant's surmise was correct; our man was camped at the caboose. I left the police a little behind, so that they were out of sight, and camped there too. After my horses were secure for the night, I put my billy on the fire, and began to talk. Presently the trooper, who was in plain clothes, rode up, asked whether he could stay for the night, and tethering his horse, sat down so that the stockman was between us. We had just begun our supper quite comfortably when the sergeant rode up in full uniform, and hastily dismounted. So great was the shock to the stockman that the fish he had just put in his mouth dropped to the ground. He was asked where he came from last, and said Adelaide. The sergeant then questioned him, 'Didn't you help in droving a mob of cattle through some time back?' 'Where's your mate?' He replied that he had had nothing to do with any cattle, and knew nothing of any mate. After some more equally unsatisfactory answers, the sergeant said, 'I arrest you for the murder of your master.' We had a tough struggle for it; but we succeeded in handcuffing him, and then found concealed about his clothing, in notes and gold, between two and three hundred pounds. The cash was handed to me while the prisoner was still struggling to break from the two constables, as he more than once momentarily succeeded in doing. At last he was securely bound on his own horse, and led away, whilst I pursued my journey. It transpired afterward that he had murdered his master, and thrown the body into the river; but of his mate I never heard anything. The murderer was, I believe, tried at Adelaide, found guilty, and executed.

At this time there was no station within twenty miles of M'Grath's Flats, and the blacks were nearly as numerous as sheep on a run, surrounding the Flats on all sides from the Murray to the Corong. I escaped all trouble with them on my various journeys, except on one occasion. Once, when riding near She Oak Wells, a black fellow treacherously hurled two spears at me. I instantly let the packhorse go, and turned and followed him up till within shooting range. I then levelled my carbine, took good aim, and fired. He bounded like a kangaroo, and fell backward on the ground. I did not stay to see whether he was dead or alive; but only stopped to catch my packhorse again, after doing which I rode on to Wellington, where I reported what I had done. As there was no inquiry made, I heard no more of that black fellow.

Pushing on after this shooting affair, I reached M'Grath's Flats that day, and witnessed another encounter between two tribes—the M'Grath's tribe and the Tatiaras. Seeing that the M'Graths had nearly conquered, I put on an appearance of great courage, and, seizing a nullah-nullah and wooden shield, joined the stronger party. I found a place near one of the chiefs, and, rushing forward, leathered away with might and main. My opponents' heads, when they received sound whacks, would seem to ring out like iron pots when subjected to the same treatment, and the weapon would sometimes actually bounce off. In the onslaught I must have disabled a score of the enemy, when I felt a tremendous thud on the back of my neck, and tumbled over like a ninepin. I lay unconscious till after dark. On coming round I found myself hampered by the lifeless body

of a black lying across my chest. I pushed him off, and stole away to the mia-mia. There was no one there. My gin cook had doubtless been carried off by the Tatiaras. Satisfied with my warlike deeds, I soon went to bed and to sleep. Early in the morning I visited the chief, and told him that the lubra he had given us as an attendant on the mailman had disappeared. He replied in his broken English, 'Tatiara fellows man him, lookem out another one fellow lubra, and you man him.'* I went round among the mia-mias, and found several new ones, fresh and young — prisoners of war, captured from the other tribe. Among them was a half-caste.

I went up to her, and said, 'Me man him you. You come along me.'

I took her to the chief, who said, raising his hand authoritatively, 'That one coolie belong em you. You pull away.' As she seemed unwilling to be thus disposed of, the chief, barbarian fashion, knocked her off her pins by a not too gentle tap on her 'cobra.' I left her lying half insensible as the chief said to me, 'By-bye you come back him all right.' After this little incident I started again for Wellington.

CHAPTER V

A STRANGE MURDER TRIAL

By this time, my purse being pretty well lined, I grew tired of my occupation, and wanted change, and,

* Meaning that as the Tatiara blacks had taken the lubra (gin), the white man must look out for another and 'man' (take) her instead.

arriving in Adelaide, I told Mr Chambers of my wishes, saying that the continuous riding through the short stumps of ti-tree and salt-bush and the heavy sands had so shaken me that I must have a change, but that, when I felt better, I would return to his employ. To this he assented; and after we had settled up I went to my old inn—the 'Billy Barlow,' in Light Square.

Strolling through the town some days afterward I entered the court-house, and found that there was then proceeding the trial of two men, called Jakes and Smitherman, for the murder of a black gin. I knew the blacks' language, and I listened with astonishment to the way the interpreter was falsifying the evidence of the black witnesses. The case was nearly ended, and, through the treachery of the interpreter, the lives of the two prisoners were in the utmost jeopardy. The truth, as it came out after the trial, was that the half-civilised black interpreter had cruelly beaten his gin for keeping company with the two accused. She had died from the effects of this beating, and he then tried to cast the blame on them. One of the prisoners admitted that he had struck the murdered gin, but said he had done her no harm. Because of this admission the counsel for the defence found much difficulty in rebutting the evidence for the Crown. I elbowed my way up to him and told him that the black interpreter had been playing false. He made effective use of the point in his speech, and, in consequence, the jury brought in a verdict of 'not guilty.'

During the trial the judge asked me how I came to understand the blacks' language, when I told him

of how much I had had to mix with the race when lately employed by Mr Chambers, the well-known mail contractor. This trial was about 1850.

After their release the two men and their wives could not make enough of me. When I had got rid of them I called on my old friend C——, and told him all my adventures. I had a good time with him, and a number of excursions at his expense with the young girl I had known when in Adelaide before.

About this time I paid a visit to the famous Burra Burra copper mines, about a hundred miles from Adelaide, and on the very day of my arrival there a terrible waterspout devastated the place and caused the loss of a few lives. I was, therefore, unable to inspect the mines, and therefore set out on my return to Adelaide *viâ* Gawler.

When at Gawler I, however, determined to see Melbourne and the Port Phillip district. I crossed the Murray and travelled up the river to the end of the border line, near the junction of the Darling and the Murray. From there I went on to the Tatiara, through the great desert. Near an immense salt lake I fell in with a Government surveyor, a one-handed man, with whom I engaged. His work was to run the line through the mallee scrub, clearing it off for the width of one chain. I started with him the next morning. From the Murray there was a considerable extent of grazing ground up to a dense scrub of mallee, and through this scrub, looking ahead, appeared a long avenue or tunnel, as far as the eye could reach, formed of overhanging boughs. The thick undergrowth in this tunnel was what he had to clear. The salt-water lake swarmed with pelicans

and other water-fowl. Our conveyance was a spring cart, with a tarpaulin covering.

The next day we started to clear the mallee scrub along the boundary line, and at length came into another thick scrub of ti-tree, which we also dug up, erecting long poles on heaps of sand shovelled up on one side of the clearing, about a quarter of a mile apart, acting as sights and showing the line of road. Our next step was to dig out a reservoir in the sand, and, spreading the large tarpaulin over the hole, trampled it down to make a watertight bank, fixing the sides by shovelling the sand on them to keep all in place. Thus we had a safe tank to catch and hold any rainfall. I worked thus for about a month. Meantime the supply of water brought with us in the cart from the Murray was becoming very nearly exhausted, no sign of rain, and about fifty miles to the nearest point of the river. We continued the line of poles all through the desert, but found that the dry weather had set in, and at last our water was done. For two days we were without a drop for man or beast. The surveyor proposed hiding all our rations and tools in the sand, and returning to the river. Finding the party had thus resolved, I, wishing to make my way further into the Port Phillip country, so informed them, and bought a horse from one of the men. When they had planted everything not then wanted I took leave of them, and turned my face toward Port Phillip. The surveyor told me that if I intended to go by the Tatiara I should find holes or wells sunk for water along the route. Bidding them again farewell I started off in a broiling hot sun, and for the want of water both myself and

the horse suffered fearfully. On the third day, without a drop, I came to the first camping-place—a ti-tree scrub, with a few large trees here and there, and the long-looked-for hole or well, the first on the Port Phillip side. With eager haste I made for the spot, and to my horror found it nearly filled up with sand, and not the slightest sign of water.

Nothing daunted, I tethered my jaded horse, and taking off all unnecessary clothing, got into the hole, and with hands and boots began shovelling out the sand as quickly as possible, my poor horse whinnying and pawing the ground all the while. Near the edge of the hole stood a large tree, a good portion of it withered and dead. Being tired with my labour I halted for a space, and lay down, unable to eat a morsel, my mouth and throat being so parched. After a time I again tried hard to get some water, but all my efforts were in vain. I could not find even the sign of dampness. At night I had to knock off, and made a good fire. The night was very dark. I lay till about midnight, as far as I could judge, when I awoke from my state of half stupor, and looking back towards the track I had ridden over during that day I saw a glare over the scrub, and shortly after a great flame of fire shoot upwards to the sky. I at once knew that the bush was on fire. The flames rapidly approached my camping-ground. Being entirely ignorant of the extent of the scrub by which I was surrounded, I became fearful of being burnt alive. The mere idea of the dreadful danger in which I stood increased my sense of thirst tenfold. I led my horse to the edge of the hole with the intention of killing him and skinning the carcass to cover myself over in the dried-up (or,

rather, filled-up) well with the hide. I first bled him as he stood by the hole, saving as much of the blood as I could. At length he fell, and I turned to skin him as quickly as possible, for I knew I would not have much time to spare before my dreaded foe would be upon me. Having finished the skinning, with the exception of the head, I went into the hole, drawing the hide over it. I had knocked off one of the horse shoes with a piece of a rock, and with it commenced tunnelling in the side and throwing the sand out with my hands, forcing myself under the bank. By this time the flames, sweeping all before them, had reached the body of the horse, and from my place of shelter I could hear the flesh crackling and frizzling in the scorching heat, and could see the melted oil and fat trickling down the side, and quickly flowing towards me, while I squeezed myself into as small a bulk as I could to escape from it. When I thought the strength of the fire was dying away, I heard a tremendous crash directly overhead, and guessed correctly that the half-dead tree near me had been burned through and had fallen across the hole, one flaming stake pinning the roasting carcass to the ground. The stench of the roasted horseflesh, and of the oil and fat, now coming into the tunnel in a small stream, was almost suffocating and quite sickening. I had to dam the latter back with sand scooped out of my tunnel with my hands and horseshoe.

Frightened to move my hide-covering I remained there till, I think, broad daylight. When the seething carcass emitted no further sounds, I ventured to look out, and raising one corner of the covering, I was nearly smothered with bucketfuls of hot ashes and

charcoal, which had lodged on it from the burning tree, and which, dropping into the melted fat and oil mixed with sand, raised such an abominable smoke and smell that, had there been a roaring furnace before me, I must have faced it or have been stifled or scalded to death in my den. On emerging I found the grass around burnt to the roots and the hollow limbs of the trees belching forth smoke and flame. In my haste to escape into the hole I had left my boots and pannikin on top, and on looking round all I could find of them was the iron tip and the scorched leather curled up over the toes. So with the saddle; nothing remained but the gullet-plate, backplate, bars, stirrups and other ironwork, and of the bridle, the bit and buckles. My jacket and all rations were entirely consumed, as I had no room in the hole for them while at work; and as I had, in the bustle of leaving my mates, forgotten to bring with me a billycan, even had I found water, I had no means of fetching it. I thought to myself, 'Was ever man in a more miserable plight?' Now came the question of how to protect my feet, as the smoking stumps of the burnt-down ti-tree smouldered all around, with scarcely room between them whereon to step. Luckily I found the knife (a two-bladed one, horn-handled) I had used in skinning where I had left it beside the carcass. The horn part was curled up in rings, but the ironwork and blades safe. I pulled up the portion of hide over the hole which was yet unburned, and from it cut strips for lacings, and with another portion formed a pair of rough sandals, lacing them to my feet and ankles, and thus shod I thought I might manage for a time, the only thing affecting me being in the tread or bend of the foot—stiff and hard.

I moistened my lips and mouth with a few drops of what still remained in the toe of one of my boots, loathsome as it was. I then cut off a breadth of the skin, about three and a half feet long, scraped and cleaned it, intending to use it in replacing my sandals when worn out. I then turned my attention to the roasted body of my poor four-footed companion, and found that part of the rump not immediately attacked by the flames was cooked to a turn. I cut several pieces from it, and finding a nice, juicy bit, about a pound or more, I greedily devoured it, and truly enjoyed it, feeling very much refreshed. The other I wrapped up in the skin, fastening it with the unused strips of lacing. Looking now for the path or track I had to pursue, I could find not the slightest trace of it, all being alike; while ahead, in the direction of my route, was one mass of roaring, hissing, spluttering flame. At last I fancied I saw an opening in the forest, the place near where I was seeming to be a belt of timber about a mile wide. In this direction I headed, and on the edge discerned what seemed to me remarkably like the moles or heaps of sand into which we had stuck the poles in clearing, though, of course, there was now no sign of stick or pole. On looking closer there appeared to be a line of them. I followed on this line, gingerly picking my steps among the smoking stumps of ti-tree and salt-bush. I walked on all day, parched almost beyond endurance, a blazing sun beaming upon me the while, whilst with my fingers I scraped the half-baked phlegm from my blistered mouth.

CHAPTER VI

THE HORRORS OF THIRST

TOWARDS night the heat of the sun and sand had so hardened the hide on my feet and ankles that they became badly chafed and bled freely. Having the large piece in which I had wrapped my horseflesh, I cut with my knife pieces shaped like the legs of trousers, tied one end with strips of hide, and drawing the other part over this, formed a rough sort of boot or moccasin and laced up the edges with the thin strips, thus affording protection to my feet and legs nearly to the knee. That night I placed them on my feet to get them something into form, and lay with open mouth on the chance of gaining a little moisture from the night air, at times dropping off into a state of semi-forgetfulness, and again starting up as from a horrible dream. Thus I passed a considerable portion of the night. At length, with a feeling that my senses were leaving me, I resolved to walk it off, and eating a small portion of the flesh I had by me, I followed on the track marked by the sand heaps. All that morning I so continued, but about noon the rays of the sun quite overpowered me. Not a tree or a shelter of any sort to be seen, nothing but the stunted and scorched salt-bush all round, through which the fire now slowly crept, and by the intense heat adding further to my already almost unbearable sufferings. Again my mind wandered, but I still pushed on. The track now became plainer, and occasionally a pole could be seen standing in the heap where the fire had passed it by.

During the afternoon I fancied I would be better without my shirt—a mad idea—so taking it off I tore out the sleeves and made a sort of nightcap to shield my head, till now unprotected, my hat having been lost with all other things the day before at the dry well. Another misfortune now befell me. My trousers began to chafe, and off they went, and in my dazed state I recklessly cast them away, leaving myself naked, barring my leggings and nightcap. Semi-conscious and in a perfect haze I strode onwards, my only desire being water—water.

Looking ahead and straining my eyesight to the utmost in search of some indication of it I saw a bird at a long distance, seemingly approaching me in a straight line, and knowing there were none in the desert I felt certain that I must be near its edge. My spirits somewhat revived, and as it came nearer, I could see from its flight it was a pigeon. Already in anticipation I had him, I plucked him, and uncleaned and uncooked I was ready to devour him. The thought ran through me: 'What a Divine interposition! Here I am alone and naked in a broiling sun, without shade or shelter, almost perishing, body and mind, from want of water to cool my parched-up throat, when Heaven intervenes and sends me this stray bird to supply my most pressing want.' I felt certain it was sent to save my life. I actually went to meet it, holding out my hand to take hold of it, when, to my surprise and joy, within a few feet of me it dropped like a thunderbolt into a salt-bush. I sprang forward, and I instantly seized it and saw that in its fall it had got entangled by the wings in a vine loaded with small berries entwining the bush. I have

since thought that the sight of these berries was what made it suddenly pitch. However, I lost no time in securing it, wringing its neck, plucking it, I daresay not over nicely, and in less time than it takes to tell it disappeared, to the infinite relief of my thirst in body and mind. I pushed on and found I was approaching the desert's edge.

Further on, and at some distance, I espied a smoke, curling straight upwards, differing from the smoke of the bush fires. This was on the rise of a hill, away from the track I was on, and appeared to me as if from a blackfellow's fire. I went toward it and found it to be, as I had thought, a blacks' encampment, and a large one, too. I was very soon sighted, the alarm was given, and instantly all eyes were directed on me, like those of a mob of sheep suddenly rounded up. They at once seized their spears and boomerangs, the former ready-fixed in the woommeras, or throwing-sticks, for hurling at me if the devil seized them. However, knowing their customs, I went boldly forward, when one of them shouted, 'Were lum barqee?' — that is, 'Where are you from?' I answered at the top of my voice, though not very loud under my present condition, 'Borak me menaree' —'I don't know where.' They then surrounded me, staring with all their eyes at a white man dressed in Nature's garb. After a while one of the gins advanced, looked earnestly at me, eyeing me all over, and seeing my breast covered with tattoo marks, exclaimed, 'Me menaree you.' (I know you.) 'You quambee (or stop) along M'Grath's Flat.' How she came to recognise me was from my habit of bogeying (bathing) along with the blacks in the Coorong while

riding the Mount Gambier mail. Having been thus peacefully received, my first cry was for water, with which I was supplied, having sense enough not to drink too much at once. I then asked them, 'You got it cudgella?' (food). She spoke to the men, who produced some young ducks, caught in a swamp not far off. Some of these they cooked, while the gin who had identified me brought me a 'possum cloak, a very acceptable offering in my then condition, and for which I was most grateful. After a good blowout I felt very comfortable. They made up a good fire, by which, wrapped in my warm and soft cloak, I lay down, and was soon sound asleep; nor did I awake till late next morning. For breakfast I had another small duck and the leg of a 'possum, and well satisfied I was. My friend the gin and another then took me to a station situated on the track running between the Tatiara and Border Town.

It proved to be a dairy station, occupied by (I think) a Scotch family, there being sons and daughters all grown up. From one of the former I soon obtained a complete suit of clothes, which suited me to a 'T,' the overseer being of stalwart form like myself. I returned the cloak to my dusky guide, who at once decamped, carrying with her a goodly swag of tucker.

CHAPTER VII

POSING AS A NEW CHUM

I THEN related my late adventure to the head of the family, who instructed one of the sons to return on the

way I had come, and to look out for the trousers I had thrown away in my wandering moments, and which contained all my money in sovereigns and a few shillings. Saddling up, and taking some little rations with him, as I could not tell him where I had stripped off my nether garments, and he might be some time in finding them, he went off in search. I meantime made myself at home with the other members of the family. About 10 p.m. he returned, bringing with him my trousers and the remains of the shirt, saying, 'Here's the little bag you had in your pocket, but I could find no knife.' I emptied the bag on the table and displayed 31 sovereigns and 11s. in silver. The girls got hold of the shirt and the sleeves I had made into a hat, saying they would put them in again, wash and iron it, and it would be as useful as ever, which they did.

I remained one day more with this kind family, and thoroughly rested myself. Then I dressed up in my new rig, and surveying myself in the glass, I came to the conclusion that I looked a regular Methodist parson in my black cloth coat, something swallow-tail fashion, and a white handkerchief (from one of the girls) tied round my throat. Such I was actually taken for on a future occasion. In addition, I now donned a black silk hat, which I had picked up in the cow-house, it having served many purposes, among them that of a hatching-box for some one of the fowls. However, after a good deal of scraping, brushing, and other titivations, I got it to assume a somewhat decent appearance, which suited admirably the rest of my rig-out.

Thus equipped I went on my way, and shortly after

arrived at a police-station and a public-house, in the direction of the scene of my former exploits (Mount Gambier). There I remained that night. I think the place was named Mosquito Plains, in the Tatiara country. Next morning I headed off, intending to take the route for Geelong.

Two days later I reached Hassal's horse-breeding station, and here I applied for work. My appearance created a great deal of mirth, and I was assailed by such questions as—'How long have you been in the country?' 'What ship brought you?' and such like, they little dreaming of the character addressed. One of my questioners, in a jocular humour, clapped his hand on my silk hat and sent it crushing over my eyes, all of which, with their chaff, I took in good part, still keeping up the idea that I was a late arrival—a new chum. When asked what ship I came in, knowing the name of a vessel lately arrived at Port Adelaide, I gave it. Presently the overseer asked me if I could ride, as they were in want of a stockrider. I told him I had been very well accustomed to ride donkeys in the old country, and after them I thought I could manage anything, never hinting of my horsebreaking experiences when mail rider. They had been mustering horses at this station when I appeared, and the overseer said he would get me a horse, and I should yard the others standing outside the yards. Meantime, he sent a couple of hands to drive them a little further off. Mounted, supplied with spurs, but quite ignorant of stockriding, though I was as firm as a rock on horseback, I managed happily to yard all the horses but one. This one a child could drive to the yard, but once at the slip rails no further; he would at once

break away and be off at full tear. Determined not to be bested, I followed in pursuit, and as I came up to him he turned as on a pivot; but the old stock horse I was on was as quick as he, and rather quick for me, and to my discomfiture, suddenly propping and wheeling after the runaway, pitched me headlong from the saddle, when I verily believed my neck was broken. My nag continued after the other just as if he had the most skilful stockman on his back. Recovering quickly from the shock I looked round, and saw my lost horse quietly standing at the yard entrance, having, unaided by hands, run the other inside. I then made for the huts, where the men stood in roars of laughter at the odd sight I presented. My unfortunate hat, which I had put to rights after the rough treatment it had received when I first showed up, had now come to bitter grief, the crown having been entirely cut out by my fall, and hanging over the side.

I explained that if the brute had gone straight I would still have been there, which increased their merriment, and, becoming rather nettled, I offered to bet a sovereign I could ride any horse that anyone of them could. My offer was accepted, one man laying me two pounds to one I would not ride the same horse he did. He handed me a cheque, and I agreed, stipulating that the horse should be held till I got seated, when I would put up with the consequences, win or lose. The bet was made, a horse caught and brought up. He proved to be a well-known thorough buckjumper. However, he was mounted by his owner, and although I have seen many more treacherous in that line, this one could play up some. He was no sidejumper, however, his

worst trick, as I saw, being to catch the rider by the leg if he could, and as I afterwards learned, if he succeeded in thus dismounting him, would try to worry him like a dog. His owner knowing he would not stand the spur, made it one of the conditions that I should wear these appendages, thinking that I would be sticking my heels into his ribs or flanks, and thus ensure my downfall. But I had looked carefully on while he was showing off, as he no doubt thought to my amazement and terror, when in an unguarded moment, his attention being withdrawn from the animal under him, the opportunity was seized, and with one terrific bound the rider was shot like an arrow from his seat, and measured his length on the ground, thus ending the first part of the performance. Now came my part. I was told to try my hand; but instead of placing the spurs on my heels, I fastened them in front over the instep, saying that anywhere would do, but in my own mind thinking that, if he took a fancy to my leg, I would make his nose and my spur acquainted.

CHAPTER VIII

BUSH HUMOUR

THE horse, somewhat tired by his previous exertions, but having still plenty of go in him, was now held for me to get up, the bystanders quizzingly inquiring if I had any relatives in the country or elsewhere, as if

so, I had better make my will. When I was in the saddle and all ready, I cried, 'Let go.' On being freed, the horse, instead of indulging his bucking tricks, made one straightforward rush and bolted. Seeing some heavy-looking sand not far from a swamp, I headed him thither, and though he tried once or twice to do his best, I soon found that he was nothing to what I had formerly mastered, and I stuck there for about ten minutes, when, finding he had got his match, he gave in and became quieter, so I turned him towards the mob and joined the men, remarking that he was not so bad as some of the donkeys I had tackled. They began to drop down, expressing their belief that I was only putting it on, as they said, and that they believed I was no new chum but a pretty old hand in the bush. The stakeholder, being satisfied, told me to get off; and, to the great mortification of the loser, and amid the laughter of his comrades, handed me the order for two pounds. So elated was I at the overthrow of my jeerers that I offered to back any colt in the yard, for any amount they liked, if they would undertake to rope him and hold him till I got fairly seated. This they declined; so, gathering myself together, and inquiring my way to the next station, I took my leave of them. I was directed to Hirkett's station, and, leaving the Glenelg Road, I pushed on, and pulled up at the station that night. Going up to the hut, I asked if I could put up for the night; and, saying that I had come from Hassal's, I was invited in, and one of the first remarks made was as to my 'chimney-pot tile,' as the man termed it. I said I had lately come from Adelaide, and told the same yarn as at Hassal's. While talking, the hut-

keeper was preparing me something to eat, and presently set before me a good meal. After supper we got yarning, and I spun him some tough ones about the old country. Then I asked him where the rest of the men were, as it seemed a large station. He told me they had all bolted to the diggings. On my pleading ignorance of any diggings, he said, 'I'm off in the morning; this is not much of a place. They will want you to stop, but I advise you to be off, and come along with me.' Just at dark in came a mob of blacks, who, it turned out, had been engaged as shepherds after the departure of the white men. They were supplied with a large pot of tea, and immense junks of damper and meat were thrown to them as to a lot of pigs. They had a great scramble for the latter, and stuffed themselves with tea and damper to such an extent that they had to lie down where they had eaten and drunk, and went off to sleep.

My friend of the hut then launched out into the most outrageous tales of the blacks about there, fancying, I suppose, he would make my hair stand on end, and that I should not care to stop at the station. I humoured him, merely remarking at intervals, 'Good gracious!' 'You don't say so!' giving no hint of my former knowledge of these gentry. About bedtime the overseer came offering me work, and at high wages. Not feeling inclined to delay my journey to Geelong I told him I was off to the diggings, when he cursed all tramps and travellers, as, from their glowing accounts of the new wonders in the gold line, they had robbed him of all his working hands, consequently the business of the station was going to the devil.

Next morning we two (the hutkeeper and myself)

made tracks without ceremony or leave-taking. From the time I left the mallee country (Adelaide side) I had not laid out one penny of my hoard, as at the public-houses and all stopping-places I got abundance of rations free of expense, with the hint that if I wanted grog (which I did not) I would have to pay for it. I had seen too much of the effects of 'bush liquor' to have any fancy for it. However, being kindly treated at the first house my new mate and I entered on our road, I thought I would indulge for once; so I threw down a shilling and called for a glass of wine, whereon a man sitting near me cried out, 'Oh, he is in our shout!' telling me to put my shilling up —no doubt with the expectation that I would return the compliment; but one glass was enough for me.

Next morning my mate told me that all he had said about the blacks the previous night at the hut was bunkum, and that the station was one of the best in the country for wages and general comfort; that he only wanted to get me with him for company.

Well supplied with rations brought by the hut-keeper, we pursued our journey, and at noon camped for dinner. While so engaged my mate gave me a long description of the next station we should touch at. He said the owner was a first-rate old fellow, a bachelor and Scotchman, named Glendinnie, or a name very like that in sound, but commonly known as 'Jacky Jack'; that if any of his sheep or lambs got astray the blacks were so partial to him they would hunt the country round till they found them, and pass the lost property from one party to another till they reached the station they belonged

to. 'Jacky Jack' would never, however, employ any blacks at work on the run. At all his stations he had always a mob of blacks idling about, well fed and cared for, and thus depredations on his stock were avoided. My companion told me I should be quite surprised to see the number of half-castes, or piebalds, as he called them, at this station of the bachelor squatter; also that I must not be frightened at the darkies, as they would not harm me if I let them alone. He added that they were sure to offer me a wife for a time from among their gins, but I could please myself as to that—that I must not deceive them, what I promised I must do, and I'd be all right with them. To all this I listened with open mouth, gammoning 'new chum,' as on previous occasions.

On arriving at the hut we found, about fifty yards in front of it, some scores of the natives holding a corroboree—a hideous, noisy, and uncouth sort of wild dance. The master coming from the house, I asked him if he wanted any hands. 'Yes; what can you do?' 'Oh, plough, reap, thatch, or anything wanted on a farm.' 'But this is a sheep station. Can you drive bullocks?' 'Yes, thoroughly.' 'Then I agree with you as driver, at the average wages, and no scant of tucker.' My mate, however, would not accept work, as he was bent for the diggings. At the hut I found only three men and the cook. Next morning I was sent into the bush to cut wood for the cook and hut. My mate told the men he would not start till he had seen what sort of a fist the 'new chum' would make at yoking up and handling the horned horses. The stockman drove them up to the yard, while the men stood around to witness the sport with 'Johnny-

raw.' I asked the stockman to point out the near and off side leaders and polers, which made the expectant onlookers open their eyes. I laid hold of the bow and drove the leaders into the corner without a whip, then the yokes, etc., and finished off in true bushman fashion. The dray was out in front. I picked up the whip, and laying it lightly across the leaders' necks, drew the team of eight bullocks after me as quietly as with well-trained dogs. The polers happening to be very quiet, I turned them round, and without difficulty backed them on to the pole. The difference between the Tasmanian and Victorian method of bullock drivers is that in the former country, when putting the bullocks to the pole, you lift the pole into the ring, while in the latter you prop the pole up, and, stretching over their necks, put the pin in. In the former you have a whip eight or nine feet in length, while here it is about four or five feet. Having yoked up in a masterly style, without a hitch, although new to the animals, I with a crack of the whip started the leaders in the direction wanted for a few yards, stopped, and returned to the hut with the men. My mate, seeing the lark turned against himself, drew in his horns, and shortly after left for his destination, bidding a cordial farewell to the 'new chum,' while I went into the bush, and, being well up to the work, soon had a few loads for the cook.

In the huts our berths were ranged round the sides, mine being close to the fireplace, with the head towards it; one end of the hut was partitioned off for a married couple, the woman being our cook. After I had got all the wood wanted in we began shearing preparations, and in a short time we had about twenty

additional hands. I had now to assist in sheepwashing, afterwards woolpressing, etc., a 'Johnny-all-sorts' or 'rouseabout.' During this time the married woman seemed to have a great down on me, continually jacketing me to the master, and I knew not the reason why till later on. I was in the habit, after work, of going down to the blacks' camp and challenging them at spear-throwing with blunt spears and shields, at which game I had acquired much skill among the Tatiara and M'Grath's blacks during my staying in South Australia. Our cook asked me one day how I could be always messing with those dirty blacks of an evening. I answered in a tiff that they were, perhaps, better property than her, and this she never forgave me, hence the rupture.

Among the shearers there were always some larks and pranks being carried on. One night we had been about half an hour in bed when I felt something cold by my thigh, and coolly, without moving, asked the men if they had been playing tricks on me by placing a stockwhip in my bunk. 'If so,' I said, 'well and good; if not, there's a snake here.' At the word one and all sprang from their bunks, each seizing a stick or any weapon he could find, while I enjoined silence, telling some of them to catch the blankets by the corners and lift them straight up from the bed, but not to press down on them nor drag them. Thus acting, they exposed to view a snake close to my thigh, about four feet long. I had my hands luckily from under the bedclothes and raised over my head on the pillow. When the covering was removed the snake raised his head about a foot or eighteen inches, and swaying it

about sent forth a hissing sound. I lay rigid as a marble statue. Seizing the opportunity, one of the men with a stick dealt the reptile a blow across the neck which landed him clean out of the bunk and on to the floor, and in the twinkling of an eye he was cut to pieces. Next night, while lying in the bunks after supper, the men pitching yarns about snakes, snakebites and narrow escapes, I heard a rustling, creeping sound in a box under my head used to raise my pillow, and on searching we found number two, the dead one's mate, which we quickly despatched. The snakes must have been in the hollow logs on the large fireplace, and when they got too warm have crawled to my bunk, which was the nearest.

CHAPTER IX

A VERY PRACTICAL JOKE

As I have before mentioned, our cook, the married woman in our hut, had also taken offence at me, for reasons already stated, and kept laying her insinuations against me before the master. I determined to have satisfaction with her; and this I managed. Having to go in the bush every now and then for wood for the house and men's hut, I got a small tin box and a piece of soft wood split in the shape of a pair of forceps. With this latter I caught five or six

large red soldier ants,* put them into the box, and carried them home to the hut. I then took into my confidence the man who slept next to the partition in the hut, and told him what I intended to do. At first he demurred, but on my assuring him he would not be suspected, he consented. Accordingly I arranged that that night, when all were in bed, I should begin yarning about snakes, so that all might hear, and in the midst of my story he was to open the box, and, standing on the bunk, empty out the ants over the partition so that they should fall on the bed of this woman and her husband.

About half an hour after all was quiet, I began my tale about a snake I had once found coiled up in my boot at another farm, and the narrow escape I had from being bitten, with some other fictions. In the height of my story my accomplice quietly rose, and, as advised by me, threw the ants over the open top of the partition. I went on getting warmer and warmer in my tough narrative, when all at once an unearthly yell came from the partitioned-off corner, and the woman, clad only in her nightgown, rushed into our room among the men, crying out, 'Oh, my God! I'm bit by a snake!' All was instantly in confusion—one advising one remedy, another another. At last one suggested needles, and a packet having been procured from the house—the master was now aroused by the outcry—they proceeded to lay the woman on her bed face downward, and with the needles stuck in a cork

* The bite of the Australian soldier ant causes the most excruciating pain. The red-coloured species are much larger than those of the black. In 1868 a boy of seven years of age, living in the Parramatta district, New South Wales, was so severely bitten by red soldier ants that he died in half an hour.—EDITOR.

vigorously applied a series of deep punctures in the region of the wound. (Delicacy forbids me to mention the exact location.) Blood flowed copiously. Gunpowder in plenty was at the same time rubbed in. While this was going on the husband, who was assisting, suddenly let out a hideous roar of pain, swearing that he also was bitten by the snake. Some rushed to his aid; but he manfully told them not to mind him, but to attend to his wife. While her wounds were bleeding freely he had the courage to turn to and suck the blood from them, and a pretty object he presented, with his mouth and cheeks smeared with blood and begrimed with powder. In a short time the woman's pain was lessened. Some brandy was administered, and she was left in peace. Attention was then turned to the husband, who was treated in the same manner, on the calf of the leg—and, in the meantime, a doctor was sent for from Horsham. On his arrival, with all his accoutrements, he first viewed the wounds on the woman, and, finding little signs of inflammation, merely ordered some more brandy and rubbed some sort of lotion or liniment into the wound. The same was done with the husband, and directions given that should drowsiness come on, the patients were to be kept on the move. Towards morning, when the desire to sleep came naturally to the sufferers, they were not allowed to indulge, but were kept walking about till daylight, the men taking charge in turn. All this time I and my confederate lay nearly bursting in fits of smothered laughter, none knowing the secret but ourselves.

Some time after the couple's perfect recovery, I was riding from Horsham, where I had been for the

station mail, in company with my master, when I told him all. He did not seem to enter into the spirit of the joke, but remarked that I was a dangerous man to have about the place, and he would settle up with me and give me my discharge. Accordingly, I was paid in full, and at once got the 'sack.' It was a lesson to me to never again attempt to explain a joke to anyone of the name of Glendinnie. But he was a good master, though so dull.

PART V

ON THE GOLD FIELDS

CHAPTER I

A VOYAGE IN THE GOLD DAYS

At peep of day I made a start for Geelong, pushed on all day, buying some little provision at a small store on the road, and reached Geelong without further adventure that afternoon, when I found there were steamers running almost constantly between that place and Melbourne. On inquiry I found I could get to Williamstown, in Hobson's Bay, by steamer next morning, and there pick up a vessel bound for Sydney at an early date. I bought a few necessaries, went to the booking-office, and took passage for Williamstown, getting rid of all my paper money, which was of no use to me out of the Geelong district. Arrived at Williamstown with other passengers bound for Sydney, we quickly landed. The place was all alive, a perfect mass of calico tents belonging to men bound for the diggings in New South Wales. The vessel we were in search of lay about three-quarters of a mile out in the bay, and the watermen wanted to charge us £1 each to be taken on board, pleading the state of the water, and

the hard pull they would have. They were all alike. After a great deal of bantering and bargaining, they agreed to take us (ten in number) for 10s. each. The vessel proved to be the schooner *Favourite*, Captain Starkey, and alongside of her lay the *Wild Irish Girl*, from Adelaide, Captain Todd.

I was immensely startled to see standing on the poop of the latter vessel a handsome young woman I had known at Mr Glendinnie's station. Recognising me also, she shouted, 'Shall I come?' I answered, 'I've got no money, I'm cleaned out,' shaking my head. This girl was well known, I believe, in Melbourne, as Jew Lizz, the prettiest girl I had yet cast eyes on. I afterwards found she had come round from Adelaide with one Lou Monk, wife of Bill Monk, the fighting man. That night we set sail for Sydney. On the passage, one of the sailors, wishing to raise some money, intending to slope for the diggings, offered me his whole outfit, a splendid sailor's suit, cap and all, of fine blue cloth, and just my fit, which I bought at a decided bargain. One day a young man came up to me inquiring if I had ever been in Sydney before. I answered, of course, that I had not; I had lately come from Adelaide. 'Well,' he said, 'I ran away from home in Sydney, of which place I'm a native, my mother and stepfather having quarrelled, and I'm ashamed to go back. I want you so to arrange that mother shall come and fetch me home, and if you do so I'll stand "Sam" when we get there. My mother keeps the "Crispin Arms" in Clarence Street. We shall land at the Flour Mills or Flour Co.'s Wharf; you make straight up the street by the "Elephant and

Castle," and inquire for the "Crispin Arms."' The sight of the harbour after entering the Heads filled me with surprise, particularly when I noticed the many villas and seats dotting the shores, so much superior and entirely different from anything I had hitherto seen in Australia or Van Dieman's Land.

Landing at the wharf, I followed the young man's directions, found the 'Crispin Arms,' seemingly a house of call for sailors and soldiers, and from first appearances rather a rough shop, although the landlady seemed a jovial, hearty woman. I asked for a glass of ale, and then, while looking steadfastly at her, I said quietly and seriously, 'Mrs, give me your hand. I belong to the gipsies in the old country.' After a little hesitation she laughingly extended to me a hand like a small shoulder of mutton, but every finger loaded with rings. I pretended to examine the palm of the hand with great minuteness, and after a long pause I remarked, 'Mrs, you have had a great deal of trouble.' 'Yes,' she said, 'I have.' 'Of a domestic nature,' I continued, 'chiefly about a son.' Looking more closely, and with a look of great solemnity, I added, 'I can see him coming. He is not far off.' She exclaimed, 'Oh! what would I not give to see my son Henry again.' 'Well,' I said, again pretending to study my thoughts, 'he is likely to be here within the next six hours.' She would not charge for my drink, and as I turned, as if to leave, a young woman standing by with a child in arms caught me by the arm, crying, 'For God's sake, don't go away, don't go away; mother will break her heart.' After a while I told the mother to put on her bonnet and shawl and follow me. Just turning the corner we

met a crowd of women in charge of the police. They seemed to be of all classes and grades, some in tatters, some very respectably dressed, but all bearing the evident outward marks of dissipation, and followed by a motley crowd of urchins and larrikins of both sexes. I asked the landlady the meaning of this show, when she informed me they were on their way from the watchhouse to the police-court to be tried on their respective charges. I had seen many similar scenes in 'Old Brummagem,' but none to equal this. We now went on board the schooner, where the son met us, and thinking my presence was not needed I walked aside, leaving them in their joyful embrace, the mother shedding tears of gladness and overwhelming her son with the most endearing caresses. At length, on relanding, we made for their home, I, on the way, trying to get a word in here and there, but vainly, so wrapt up were they in each other. As soon as we entered orders were given to supply 'Henry' and myself with breakfast in the best parlour. The mother soon joined us at table, a good-looking servant girl laying before us a most tempting spread of eggs, ham, butter, coffee, and many other dainties, to which I did ample justice.

CHAPTER II

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

DURING the meal I had been eying the girl with some attention, and I afterwards said to Henry, 'That girl'

(she was about sixteen years old) 'shall be my wife some day soon. You keep an eye on her, as I start for the diggings to-morrow morning, and this day month I shall be down again and marry her.' This I said without once having spoken to the girl. Next day, taking leave of all, I went to the booking-office and paid my fare to Penrith, about thirty-six miles from Sydney. Talk of overcrowding vehicles! Both this coach and the opposition were so loaded I do not believe a cat could have been squeezed in between us. I took up my quarters at Kendall's public-house in Penrith, while the other coach landed its passengers at Perry's. I inquired the fare from Penrith to Hartley, and was told £1. Finding the distance to be about forty-five miles, I thought I would walk that and save the £1, so I started early, crossing the Nepean in the punt across Emu Plains, and up Lapstone Hill, passing the would-be gold-seekers on the road, like the Flying Pieman himself. I was always noted as a fast walker, and enduring to boot. The road was lined with travellers of all grades, from the wheelbarrow trundler with goods and chattels, to the common pedestrian with pick and shovel, tin dish, and blanket swag on back, and here and there a man and wife loaded to the utmost with necessaries for the venture, some of the children, and in many cases dogs, bearing their share of the burden. On top of Lapstone I pulled up at Vascoe's for a glass of ale, and trudged on. The road resembled a well-used ant track. At Blackheath I dined on biscuit and cheese brought with me; passed through Hartley, a long, scattered place of no interest then, and reached Bowenfels, where I indulged in another glass of ale at Mrs Malachi Ryan's, as she

was called. I now turned from the Bathurst Road on to the Mudgee line, crossing Middle River, and making Mother Mackay's, where I resolved to put up for the night, having, in my opinion, made a good day's work, and feeling somewhat wearied. The distance covered was, as near as I could say, about sixty miles. This to some may seem a long day's tramp, but it is a well-known fact that in after years, on more occasions than one, I have started from Sofala, on the Turon, in the morning, reached Hartley at night, and next night landed in Sydney, the whole journey accomplished on foot.

At Mother Mackay's a thought struck me, 'What a new chum I was;' I had carried my Sunday toggery all the way, but here determined to lighten my load by leaving it behind. I told Mrs Mac. that I would be coming back in a month, on my way down to Sydney, to be married, and she would oblige me by taking charge of my dress suit till my return. To this she consented. I then asked her to boil a half-dozen eggs hard, and to put up a rasher or two of bacon cooked, with some bread, to carry me on to the diggings, as I would not stop on the road. I had one glass of ale only, as I had not then got into the foolish custom of shouting for all hands because I had drunk in one round. I was very early on the move, being thoroughly provided, passed through Ben Bullen, a wild country, thence to the Crown Ridge (Keenan's), where some twenty diggers had assembled, holding high festival. I here was told of two roads to the Turon, one a marked tree line and the other the main road by the Running Stream, which I preferred, as there was less chance of being lost, although it was

the longer by miles. This I followed, easily passing the line of weary toilers footsore and overburdened, and came to a finger-board and post bearing the words 'Razorback' pointing to the left hand, and 'Turon' to the right. I selected the former, and halfway down the steep mountain track I came on to a cart completely overturned, the load underneath, a woman sitting on the side of the road, and a man unharnessing the horse. I asked if this was the road to the diggings. 'Deuce take the diggings,' said she; 'I know no more about the road than you do, but I know we're here.' With this I left them, and shortly after fetched Arthur's sheep station on the river, where, it being near night, I camped.

That night, being too tired, I did not go down among the men by the river, whose tents I could see clustered up and down, but enjoyed a hearty supper of mutton chops, prepared by the woman of the hut, who made me a bed on the sofa. After breakfast I asked her as to the cost. 'Oh, nothing; we never make a charge.' So I shunted her, promising her a nugget should I be successful. She told me about seven miles down the river I should come to the township (Sofala), at the crossing place from Mudgee to Bathurst. Accordingly I followed the course of the river to Pennyweight Flat, where, at a public-house, I fell in with a man wishing to dispose of his mining kit—picks, shovels, dish and cradles, and all other requirements. He said he was off to Sydney, as the diggings were worked out (1851, the first year of their opening). He wanted £2, and I offered him a sovereign, which he accepted. Tying the things together, I shouldered the lot and made my way up Ration Hill, across Big

Oakey Creek, and saw the banks of the river lined with diggers, as thick as they could comfortably work.

CHAPTER III

THE RUSH OF THE EARLY DAYS

THE roar of the cradles and the clamour of tongues was almost deafening. I passed over Little Oakey Creek to Erskine Flat, where I asked a man standing at his hut door to allow me leave my tools by his hut while I looked round. This being all right, I went on my rambles. On the side of a low hill, close to the river bank, I noticed an abandoned hole, or large stripping, about fifty yards from the hut, within sight of my tools, so I thought as I had no tent I would get my pick and tunnel out one side of the hole, and there take up my abode for a time. I went to work at once and drove a level about four feet for sleeping accommodation. When night came on I went to the store, bought a tomahawk (3s. 6d.), went down to the river bed, full of oak trees, and cut two forked sticks and a pole, fixed them at the hole, and partly covered the frame over with oak branches. Having made the place suitable, as I thought, I fetched the cradle and other tools from the hut, then returned to the store and bought a pair of blankets (30s.) and a counterpane, and had given to me some old sugar matting. I carried all this down to my lair, spread

out the matting on the ground in the tunnel and under the bush covering, and with my blankets and rug formed a passable bed for the night.

I then took a round of the men's huts and tents, and, looking into the hut where I had deposited my tools, saw that for sleeping-places the occupants had four forked sticks sunk in the ground, with cross pieces all round, and over this bagging nailed on. This was a new wrinkle to me. Off I went, cut the necessary sticks, and at the store bought two large bags at 2s. each, a pound of sperm candles (2s. 6d.), some tea and sugar, also a quart pot (1s.), picked up an empty bottle for a candlestick, got permission to boil my pot at the men's fire, fetched a load of firewood on my back, and was offered the use of any cooking utensils I might want, and of the fireplace. When I had supped I returned to my camping place, and shifting my bedding made a stretcher, about two feet high, a decided improvement on my ground matting, and rejoined the diggers, whose varns, well up as I was in that line, at times made me stare. In nearly all the tents or huts I visited I found card-playing going on in all earnestness, and in one the inmates were at 'three up' or heads and tails. After knocking about a bit, I turned in.

About midnight I was aroused by a rush of water entering on all sides. It was dripping through the oak branch covering, and making everything around wringing wet. That part of my body and bedding inside the tunnel alone escaped drenching. Seizing pick and shovel I hastily cut a drain round the hole to carry off the water, and covering the bushes on top with one blanket, with the corners tied down to

the uprights, I again turned in, thus in a measure sheltered from the heavy downpour.

Very early next morning, on getting up, I found about a foot of water in my dwelling-place, which I scooped out with a shovel. Hearing a loud shouting some distance below where I stood, and towards the river bank, over which I could see a large body of water, I looked over, and in the midst of the stream saw about twenty or thirty men perched up in the branches of the oak trees, shouting at the top of their voices to those on the banks. They had been camped on an island, the river here having a channel on each side. In the sudden flood they had been surrounded, the water now rushing over the whole, and had sought safety in the tree tops.

Being of no service to them then, I strolled towards Little Oakey Creek, and had a look about, when I found everything moveable had been carried off, and the workings in and by the creek completely submerged. This time endeavours were being made to cast a line across to the men on the trees. After breakfast I looked about among a number of shallow holes, sunk in a rise off the creek, some of them having tools in them, and others seemingly deserted. I threw down my tools by the side of one of these, and went down to the creek to see how they got the gold by means of a dish, in the absence of the cradles which had been carried away, and received all instruction and information from the men. I then went down one of the deserted shallow holes, and picking some dirt, as I had been shown, carried it down to the water in a dish and handkerchief, washed it as directed, but got nothing. Returning to fetch my tools, I fancied I

saw on a small heap of gravel, which had been thrown out of another hole, what seemed to me gold, and looking nearer found a coarse bit washed clear by the rain of the previous night. On closer examination I found the heap was spangled with glittering specks and pieces, and turning to with a will, in less than an hour I must have had about three ounces. I then commenced scraping all round where I got this, put the dirt in my handkerchief as before—having no bucket or other means of carrying it but my dish—took it to the creek, washed it out, and obtained a fair quantity of finer gold, all of which I tied up in a rag, securing it with a bit of bootlace, while the coarser bits I had put loose in my pocket, dirt and all.

After I had had some dinner, on seeking the spot where I had left my tools and jacket, I found them thrown away, and a man in the hole whence the dirt I had washed had been thrown. I ordered him out, as he was in my claim. 'Be off,' he shouted, 'or I'll give you a claim.' On his refusing to vacate I told him boldly if he did not, I would go down and give him as sound a walloping as he ever had in his life. With this he jumped out. A number of the men, hearing the squabbling, instantly surrounded us, and there was my trespasser in fighting attitude, capering about like a bantam cock, crying out, 'Come on here; I'll soon settle you.' Waiting my chance I got one swinging hit at him, which, taking effect behind the ear, sent the blood spouting from it. The force of the blow sent him over the bank and into another hole below, where I thought he must have broken his neck; but some of the men going down found that

he had luckily fallen on his side, and thus escaped serious injury. The ground here being much deeper, they got a rope, and, passing it under his arms and round his body, hauled him to the top and carried him to his tent. I quietly walked off to my work in the recovered hole. I took some dirt from it, and, as before, carried it down to the creek, where I found the water had considerably gone down during the dinner-hour and the time occupied in the fight, exposing the dirt I had brought down previously, which my late opponent had washed, being thus induced to take possession of my ground. I found he had left by the hole a pannikin, minus the handle, containing about 2dwt of gold, also a pick, shovel, and dish, all of which, as he never returned to claim them, I took.

CHAPTER IV

ON THE TURON

HAVING prepared all for next day, as far as the hole was concerned, I went to supper, and afterwards strolled down to the township, or The Flat, as it was then called, where I bought a bucket (5s.) and a bag (2s.) to carry my dirt to the water, as I had observed the system of using the cradle. This was as follows: The cradle having been pitched at the proper incline, and close to the edge of the river, a shallow hole was dug alongside, into which the dirt brought down was emptied; water was thrown over it, and with a

shovel it was stirred and knocked about, as in mixing mortar. One man then stood at the cradle, handle in hand, while the others shovelled the dirt into the hopper, pouring water over it, as the first rocked away, the gold being caught on an inclined board, or slide, between the hopper and the bottom of the cradle. Such was the primitive method in the first days of the diggings. The next day, before breakfast, the fever being strong upon me, I fetched my tools and cradle on to the scene of operations. But, when all was fixed to my satisfaction, I was at a loss for a man to pour the water on, so I went up the creek in search of someone, when I came across a pump, lying by the side, much battered in the late flood. However, having something in view, I bought the head, with spout and first joint for a trifle, and fetched it down. I plugged up the chamber, and filling it with water, I so rigged it over the hopper that, by removing a small peg, I could have a constant flow of water for a time on the dirt, while I rocked, thus saving the work of a second man. Instead of carrying my one shovel backwards and forwards, between the cradle and the hole, I got out my antagonist's shovel, and made use of it. I then carried down four bags of dirt, and put them through, my water-conductor acting admirably. During the remainder of the day I got through more than twenty times the quantity I had done on the first day, with fair results, though not up to the get of the previous day. Being now quite at ease, and feeling the real stuff in my pocket, I enjoyed my supper, and retired for the night. At peep-of-day I was at it again, cradling as usual, when, looking about, I could see no one astir. This I could not make

out, as it was so different from ordinary. A man passing by, I asked if it was a holiday. 'It does not look like a holiday with you,' he said; 'aren't you satisfied to work six days in the week without breaking the Sabbath?' I was stunned, and ashamed to think that the fever had got such firm hold of me as to cause me to forget the day. Hastily securing what gold I had got, I slunk away to my underground lodging, and lolled about till after ten o'clock, when the crowd began to muster on the flat at the foot of the creek. About an hour after a preacher took up his position on a stump, and in earnest terms addressed the diggers, numbering some thousands; while on the outskirts of the throng some were busy at 'three up,' 'heading them,' and 'prick in the garter,' or some other gambling transaction, carried on with much wrangling and scuffling, ending in a regular stand-up fight near the butcher's shop of the late Mr John Gate, who carried on a prosperous trade there for years after. After dinner I waded the river to Golden Point, taking with me an old knife and spoon, as I was told that after a heavy rain, such as we just had had, gold could be freely picked up in the creeks running from the mountains to the river. Out of the crevices I 'fossicked' some dwts of gold, pocketing the roughest pieces, and stowing the rest away with the dirt in my handkerchief. I so worked as long as I could see, and on washing out next day I found I had about one ounce for the afternoon's crevicing, as the diggers termed it. As I was still getting good gold and small nuggets, washing the gravel thrown out of the holes, the scene of my former dispute, I continued at it, throwing the stones back into the hole, for a purpose

to be hereafter explained. At breakfast-time requiring some bread, not to be got on the ground, I wended my way to The Flat, about a mile down the river. On returning, and opposite Golden Point, I saw a man rocking a cradle with one hand, and with the other, with a quart pot stuck in the fork of a short stick, baling the water on to the dirt as he rocked. I at once went back to The Flat and bought a saucepan. In the handle I inserted a piece of round wood, and although at first I found it rather awkward to rock and bale water at the same time, I by patience and practice got into the swing of it, and could do half as much more than by the former system. Others seeing this improvement followed my example, utilising old lobster tins, and such like, in one instance a long-handled fryingpan being pressed into the service, as also old boots nailed to a stick. These were the rude expedients in vogue at the onset of the rush on the Turon. Having washed up my heap, for the remainder of the week I prospected other deserted holes, never sinking one myself, taking out dirt from one or another by driving or tunnelling, and shifting about according to success or failure.

On the Saturday afternoon I resolved to have a look at the township (Sofala). On reaching it, opposite the church and parsonage, I went over to three men, sitting by their tent, who asked me what I was after. I told them I had been working at Little Oakey; but I had a mind to try my luck down where they were. They said I could not do better in their opinion. As I had no tent, one of them said that if I had bedding and blankets I could 'pig in' with them. I gladly accepted the offer, and went back to fetch my tools.

On my way back I went to the man from whom I had got the idea of the dipper (Charlie Wilson), thinking I might pick up some further wrinkles, and discovered that under the hopper in his cradle he had fixed a slide to intercept the gold in washing. As this was the first I had seen close I took particular notice of the make, intending to supply myself with one. I then fetched all my things to the new place, named 'Church Hill.' Wilson, luckily, lived with his wife and children in the next tent to the one at which I was invited to stop; and as he carried his cradle home every Saturday night, I had a good opportunity of seeing how the slide was made. On the other side of us, in a covered van, lived a man named Heath, now an extensive farmer on the Crudine Creek, about twenty miles from Sofala. On Sunday I fixed up my bed on a spare bunk in the tent of my new friends, and it looked a deal more comfortable than my former quarters in the pit. I then went up Spring Creek fossicking, as the public-houses and shanties had no attraction for me.

CHAPTER V

A GIRL MATE AND A WIFE

On Monday morning I took a tramp, and went up Church Hill Creek, where I saw about twenty women and children working with all the energy of the men. I followed the creek about a half-mile, and on returning stopped where a young, tall and slender girl (Rose

Hinton by name) was working by herself. She was afterwards, and is now, Mrs Pressick, mother of a large grown-up family, and living still on the same creek running through the township. I asked her if she had any objection to my setting into work near her. On her replying 'No,' I pitched my cradle and began on what is called a 'top vein,' about three feet from the rocks, from which we both obtained fair results. I followed her lead in the method of getting the dirt. One day an individual of the larrikin type began insulting her at work, and on my interfering became bounceable, 'talking fight.' But I very soon had him in trouble, to the amusement of some of the occupants of the canvas and calico tents, with which the banks of the creek were thickly studded.

I here worked till I found I would have just time to fulfil my promise of being in Sydney within a month of my departure thence. So one day I told Miss Hinton I was off in the morning to the 'Big Smoke' (Sydney) to get married. She seemed thunderstruck, but promised to look after my tools and other interests until my return. Accordingly I made tracks as proposed. Going up the river about fourteen miles, and seeing men at work all the way, I passed Palmer's Oakey Creek, and by Keenan's marked tree line, and came out on the Sydney Road from Mudgee, at Capertee. I walked that day from the Turon to Mother Mackay's, where I had left my last suit, and showed the landlady my bag of gold, containing many ounces and a quantity of nuggets of various weights, at which she was surprised, saying I had done better in the month than many others who had been there for a much longer time. I made an early start, meet-

ing many coming to, and passing others going from, the goldfield. That day I made Penrith, and booked for Sydney by the coach leaving at daylight. On the road between Penrith and Parramatta we were often hailed with, 'Jack, will you sell your cradle?' But there was no time for reply, as the opposition coach was bearing along behind us at full stretch. On the coach I got acquainted with a young man connected with Peter Hanslow, of the 'Dog and Duck,' in the Haymarket, Sydney, where I stayed till night, being the last night of my promised month.

I then proceeded up Brickfield Hill, and on to King Street, and seeing a large confectioner's shop, I entered and inquired if they had any wedding cakes. None; but they could soon make me one, and a good one for £3, if I left a deposit. I handed in £2 and took my way to Mrs Marley's 'Crispin Arms,' to my intended, to whom be it remembered I had not as yet spoken a dozen words. Avoiding the bar, I went along a passage towards the kitchen, and overheard a few words which at once drew my attention. 'To-day is the day he was to be here,' I heard. 'The month's up to-night.' To their surprise I made my entrance, saying, 'I'm here,' and then and there entered into business. In the presence of the girl's mistress I said, 'Are you quite ready?' Without further hum or hah, she said, 'Yes.' 'Get ready quick then,' I said; 'I am in a hurry to return to the diggings, as I left my claim in charge of a party up there, and I might lose it. I want to go to-morrow morning to the priest or parson and get it over. Make up your mind, so that there will be no shuffling out of it.' She answered she was content and agree-

able to what I wished, but she wished to know about my religion, as she was a Catholic. 'Oh,' I said, 'you can be married in any church you like. I'm a sort of a Protestant, or, in truth, a Ranter, but I'm not particular, and if we get married, and have any family, the boys shall be Protestants, and you can bring the girls up in your own persuasion.' I told her I had ordered the wedding cake, etc., and to everything I proposed she consented. Next morning we both went to St Mary's Cathedral, saw the priest, whom I told that I wished to get married at once, as I had come down from the diggings on purpose, and I was in a hurry to return, at the same time presenting my intended, saying she was of his religion. 'But,' said he, 'you must know we don't marry in Lent!' I pushed the matter with all the fervour I could; but no, the rules of the church forbade it. I then said to my companion: 'Well, if you have no objections, we'll seek the Church of England parson.' She being willing, off we went. Next day I made inquiries for Dean Cowper and was directed to his residence. On ringing the bell the door was opened by a young woman, of whom I asked if the Dean was in, and would she tell him he was wanted, as I was in haste to get married. I promised her a shilling if she were quick in getting me an audience. Presently the Dean came, and learning my object, and the priest's refusal, I was invited to come in. The Dean conversed for some time, asking about the diggings, when I showed him the gold and a number of nuggets. He looked at them, passing them to the young woman standing by. I expressed our wish to have the marriage celebrated without delay, present-

ing him with a nugget, and turning to the woman said, 'Here, I promised you a shilling to fetch the Dean quick. Here's a nugget for you too,' remarking also that I knew, on visiting the big bugs, unless you greased the hand of the attendant you would have to wait, or perhaps be denied admission. On this the Dean, turning to me, said, 'I think you are labouring under a mistake, the girl you are talking of is my wife.' Astounded, I begged their pardons, as I was an ignorant blockhead and a big fool of a digger. The Dean then instructed me to go up to the church on Church Hill, inquire for so-and-so, naming him, tell him my business, and I would get all necessary information how to act. 'Good-day, and good luck to your digging,' said the Dean, and we parted.

I went as directed, found the clerk of the church, and told him all the particulars of my visit. He asked me if I was a parishioner, or how long I had resided in the parish, etc. 'How old my intended wife was?' 'Fifteen or sixteen,' I said. 'She must have the consent of her parents,' he replied. I told him that they were in Ireland, and how could I get their consent. He then informed me she must make a proved statement of her residence, guardianship, etc., as everything must be straightforward to prevent future liability. I then said, 'I want the marriage to be performed as quickly and cheaply as possible. This is Saturday; can't we have it off to-morrow?' He said, 'You'll have to be called three times in church, and we can only call twice in one day.' In a case of emergency, such as in that of a soldier or sailor, he thought it might be managed, but as I was neither the rules must be conformed to. 'Well, then,' I said, 'let us be called twice

and I will give you £5 for a license.' This suited. I paid him, and, leaving names, I promised to be at church next night with my witnesses, etc.

CHAPTER VI

THE WEDDING

NEXT evening, in company of Mr and Mrs Marley, the master and mistress of the girl, I went to the church, and after service the ceremony was performed, and we returned home to the 'Crispin Arms.' At my suggestion, the landlord agreed to have a night license for next night, when we might enjoy ourselves to our hearts' content, and I would get one or two friends to join in. Accordingly, during the day, I went to Ashton's Circus, the clown at which was an old acquaintance of mine. I invited him, and he promised to bring some of the band to supply us with dance music. After making sundry other preparations, I instructed the landlord to furnish a good supply of liquors, to place them in a room by themselves, and let me know the amount, as to prevent any disputes I would not have any bar shouting. After the circus performance, my friend, with his companions and instruments, arrived, and the dancing, mirth and fun soon became fast and furious. I ordered a bicker of she-oak (ale) for the bar customers, and about 2 a.m. retired, leaving the company to enjoy themselves as they saw fit, leaving ample

store of cake and drinkables for their consumption. The next day the landlady twitted me with my rashness in making preparations before I had got the girl's consent. I coolly answered that I was aware of all this; but I was determined to have a wife, and at first sight took a fancy to this one. Had I been refused, I would have gone to the Registry Office, and, the girls being assembled, would have declared myself in want of a wife, showing plenty of gold and notes; so that I never dreamt of failure; and besides, being quite respectably togged out in my newly-purchased sailor's garb, and with my expectations, did she think for a moment I would long be without a wife? 'Why,' I said, 'since I left your son here in this house a month ago for the Turon I have got 20 oz. 9 dwt. gold, which I sold to Bill Nash at £3, 3s. 6d. per ounce, who gave me an introduction to his son-in-law on the Turon—Mr Forbes, the banker. So you see I was not such a big fool after all.' I told her I wanted to go up again, build a house, and send for my wife, whom I would leave in her care till I did so. She willingly undertook the charge, and leaving ample means for her use I took leave of my wife two days after, and made off for Sofala once more. On my arrival I rejoined my former comrade, with whom I had left my tools, and again set to work beside her in my old claim. Near the tent where I had been stopping there was a spare bit of ground next to Mr Heath's van, sufficient for the erection of a hut, and here I began to build a solid log hut, the ends notched and overlapping, as I had been used to in Van Dieman's Land. The chimney I built of stout logs, with a dry cask on top, clayed round and firmly

secured by cross sticks. The dimensions of the hut were ten feet by twelve feet. As I was then as strong as a horse, the logs I carried singly were nearly enough for two ordinary men. The door I erected with leather hinges, and worked in an inverted bottle bottom. I then fixed a cupboard up against the logs near my bed, with a lid in front on hinges, which, when opened, formed a table.

CHAPTER VII

TREACHEROUS FRIENDS

My house being complete, I resumed work a little higher up the creek, and was again successful in dropping on a crevice rich in fine gold and small nuggets. Often when at work I bought little nuggets from the other miners, which, with my own, I used to place in a tin sunk in the ground under the head of my bed in the men's tent, where I slept. These men were now at work on a point further up the river, just opposite the tents. Having worked out the ground lower down, I fetched all my tools up beside them, together with a puddling tub, or half ale cask, and began working near them, somewhat, I thought, to their dissatisfaction. Next me, on the other hand, were a woman and her two daughters, who showed me the extent of their claim, and I started between the two parties. Picking some dirt close to the edge of the creek, I filled the tub,

and proceeded to cradle it off. On removing the hopper, and examining the slide, to my great joy I beheld it covered with nuggets and finer gold, and a quantity of the latter in the bottom. I fancied my fortune made at a stroke. I now panned it out into the tub and refilled with water, so as to save all. Looking closely at some of the nuggets, I fancied the appearance was somewhat familiar; in size and shape nearly resembling several I had planted in the tin under my bed. I showed my find to the woman near me, who was surprised, being so much superior to any she had hitherto seen, and she shifted closer to my working. I put my gold into a small bag carried for the purpose, and got another tubful of dirt, turning over in my mind the chances of my securing enough to prevent the necessity of my sending for my wife from Sydney. Having cradled the second tub and looked at the slide, to my mortification I found only about 1 dwt. of gold. Trying again, I carefully selected the dirt round where I had obtained the first; but with no better result. I then became suspicious of some underhand game. At knock off time I shouldered a load of wood and went home to the tent. I watched my opportunity to get to my plant, and when I did I found to my horror that it was gone. After searching carefully round, I called the two occupants of the tent and stated my loss, seemingly to their great wonder. I told them the gold I had that day got was identical with that I had planted away, as I could tell by one nugget I had recently purchased, and I accused them of concealing it where I had found it, near their work. I said I could now account for the unwillingness they had

shown to let me work alongside them, and after some hot words I ended by knocking one of them down.

They shifted their tent up to their work, and I took possession of my own hut, and thought it was high time to send for my wife. Accordingly I enclosed the amount of coach fare, then about £7 for the trip, and a sum sufficient for other requirements. After this squabble I again rejoined my old comrade down the creek, as the ground was still payable. When the time drew near for the arrival of my wife I kept a daily look-out for her, and she made her appearance on the first opportunity after receiving my letter.

She soon got acquainted with a Miss Hollindale, whose family were at Sofala; and one day, while I was at work, I began telling my female companion (Miss Hinton) about my curious wedding and other things, and not being over-industrious that afternoon was seated in my cradle, which she was gently rocking, when my wife and her friend appeared on the bank above and stood surveying us, they having come over to see the working for gold. Looks none of the brightest were cast upon me. Going home at night things looked rather gloomy, and comparative silence was maintained for a time, my wife merely remarking, 'It does not look well of you working in company of an unmarried girl.' I said there was no harm, but to please her I would set in close at hand, near Moogee and Dunbar's, who were doing very well, then she could see me at any time. I did this for several days, near the river adjoining Mr Heath's claim.

At that time, the river being often in flood, a miner

could hole a river-bed claim, extending also to a claim on the bank, so as to allow work to go on in case of a rise in the water. For this reason I took possession of this ground, with my hut on it on the bank. There I worked for three days, no one objecting. To save carrying the dirt across the river-bed to where the stream ran, a considerable distance, I began a hole for water at the junction of the bed and bank. After two days more a man passing asked me what I was doing there. I told him he could see. He ordered me out, as he and his mates had purchased that ground for £40. I asked him where his mates were, when he showed me some men working a Californian pump, above the brewery, and, having no wish to bandy words with him, I left the ground with my tools, and, changing my clothes, sauntered down to the post-office, where I expected to find a letter from Sydney. While waiting for the names of letter recipients to be called out, I overheard one man close by me telling another that he had found a bloke in their grounds who was at first rather bounceable, but that he had soon made him walk. 'Well,' I thought, 'that's not amiss.' So, hurrying home, I put on my mining clothes again, and, taking some tools, again possessed myself of the hole referred to, and on the man coming up with his mate I told him I had overheard his boast at the post-office, and dared him to remove me. He then threatened me with the commissioner. I told him to go and bring him. The commissioner, on his arrival on the ground, asked me how I became possessed. I told him I had worked there five days without hindrance, and that I knew the men claiming were working elsewhere. They

said that I had been also working about the hut on the bank, that they had seen me two or three times a day. The commissioner said, 'So much the worse for you. By his five days' unmolested occupation he has acquired a right to both bank and river claim,' and warned them not to interfere.

The hole I here sank was very shallow, and, finding payable dirt, I pitched my cradle, and worked away with success. Old Moogee, having great faith in the river-bed, formed a party to cut a tail race for the purpose of draining off the surplus water. When they had finished three men came to me asking if I would sell the bed claim. After a little a bargain was struck for £20; they being restricted from interfering with the hole I had sunk or with the bank claim.

Presently the bellman came round calling an auction sale, so I went off. A little up the creek, close to where I had been working before, there stood a large tent of tanned duck in form of a circus tent, used by the Presbyterians for divine worship. This was for sale, together with a kit of blacksmith's tools. The large tent I bought for £10, 5s., and the tools, with a large vice, for £13, also a cart resembling the go-carts I had seen so frequently in the prisoners' hands of former days. In the centre of the tent stood a very long, stout, pine pole, supporting the walls. This I pulled down, and fixed it over the end of my hut. I then removed the tools, and following my apprentice occupation at Darlaston, England, I erected a sign-board—'Guns and pistols repaired here.' I very soon had any amount of such articles to repair, and found it more profitable and easier

employment than gold-digging, as if I had no smithing work to do I could go at the gold at any time.

CHAPTER VIII

A RICH FIND

In front of the hut a hole had been sunk by Moogee and Dunbar twelve feet in depth, which I made up my mind to try; but having no mate (always as yet working by myself, or being, in digging phrase, 'a hatter'), I was puzzled how to get my wash dirt out of the hole. I went into the bush, and cutting down a large limb of a tree lopped the branches off three or four inches from the barrel, thus forming a rough and strong ladder, up which I could carry four buckets of dirt in a bag. This hole I worked at nights after supper, instead of going down town, and, as opportunity offered, washed the dirt raised. One night while having a spell in the hole I examined the face of the work in tunnel by the light of a candle. I thought it advisable to drive out a pillar, or small block, between Moogee and Dunbar's claim over a high bar of rock, and on raising the candle close to the work I saw a piece of gold, about half the size of a bean, sticking in the dirt. I pulled it out, and in so doing discovered another and another piece, and following on disclosed a series of nuggets like a string of beads. As I picked them out I placed them in a matchbox, and the loose dirt in a bag, the gold still showing freely at the end of the drive.

I next proceeded to break through into Dunbar's drive. I took out the whole pillar or ground between the drives, having a space below about twelve feet square without any support. Whilst thus engaged, my wife came to the top of the shaft and called me. Thinking it might be some repairs wanted to be done in the blacksmithing line, I went up and asked for what I was wanted. She seemed like one bewildered, and stammering and stuttering had only time to say 'I'—when the whole ground under which I had been working sank bodily down, burying tools and everything I had below under hundreds of tons of dirt.

After realising my narrow escape, I asked my wife what she had called me for. She said she had no particular object in going to the shaft, and she knew not what possessed her to call me. Thus, again, had Providence cast a protecting arm around me, as on several occasions before. I had now to go to town for the purchase of new tools, and passing the Gas Hotel, kept by Davis and Spiers, the former man said to me, 'As your workshop is in an out-of-the-way place why not remove down here where there is a better stand close by, with a commodious building, now for sale?' I at once saw the owner of the building and purchased it. I then shifted from Church Hill, and, having plenty accommodation in the new place, could dispense with the large tent I had lately bought. I now added to my former signboard—'Tools bought and sold here,' opening, as it were, a 'Johnny-all-sorts' establishment. I next built an addition as 'Carpenter and Blacksmith's' shop, and engaged an elderly carpenter named Job Webb, a good workman, though somewhat given to take a drop, on

the conditions that if ever I found the signs of intoxicating drink upon him he should receive only £3 per week, while if he refrained from liquor I would pay him £4 per week.

CHAPTER IX

GOLDFIELDS' UNDERTAKER

When busy at work one evening, Dr Bell, resident in Sofala, came to the shop saying, 'Our undertaker, Rogers, has gone to Tambaroora. Would you mind acting for him, as one of my patients has just died?' I answered that I would rather not have anything to do with funerals or buryings, and I would be almost ashamed to go to a funeral, 'barring my own.' Job, my man, spoke up, saying, 'By all means take the job, it's in our line; and I'll act as undertaker.' The doctor then told us we should find the body at the hospital on the race-course. I asked the doctor, to save time and trouble in taking measurement, if he (the corpse) was a big or small man. He replied, 'About the average height—five feet seven or eight.' Old Job then had tea, and began on the coffin, and slept at my place that night to be up early. I then engaged a man to sink a grave for £1, telling him to start early and pick out what he thought the softest place in the churchyard near the entrance gate. Long before daylight I had Job up to finish the coffin, which, being done, I placed it on a wood-barrow

without sides and wheeled it up to the hospital, where neither of us had been before. We had no matches, and it being only now daybreak we had little light for our work, but on opening a door we could see a body lying on a bed. We carried the coffin in and stood it by the side. Then Job said, 'I fear we have made a misfit; he seems longer than our coffin. When we lift the body, take hold of the covering, turn him a little on his side, place him in, and pull off the covering; as I am more used to this work than you, I'll take the head and you the feet.' The moment I laid hold of the feet up sprang the corpse to a sitting posture, and in the dim light I could just see the face pale enough, with eyes wide staring at me, and rolling about, very unlike those of a dead man. After one hasty and terrified look at the resurrection, I sprang for the door, falling heels over head, capsizing the coffin, and rushing down the hill to the town as fast as my legs could carry me. I went to Dr Bell, kicked at the door, and sang out to him. He quickly opened the door, saying, 'What's the matter?' 'Why, doctor,' I said, 'that man you sent me to bury is alive.' 'Pooh, pooh,' said he, 'you don't know what you are talking about'—thinking from my excited appearance that I had been drinking. I said, 'It's a fact. When I laid hold of the feet to lift him into the coffin, dang my eyes if he didn't sit straight up in the bed and stare at me.' 'Stuff, nonsense,' said the doctor; 'there are only two men in the hospital, the corpse and old Smith, the wardsman, who is himself very sick. I suppose you have frightened the life out of him, taking the wrong man.' I being more intent on gold-getting than in

looking after sick people, of course knew nothing about the hospital inmates. On my return to the cause of my scare I heard him say to old Job, 'You old wretch, you ought to be ashamed, frightening a poor fellow out of his sleep like this.'

'Don't you crow,' replied my man, 'I'll have you before long,' and with that comforting observation he seized the coffin, replaced it on the barrow, wheeled it to the front door, and entering, discovered the real defunct. We placed him in the coffin and brought him across Church Hill Creek to the burial-ground, and there left him a little to the left of the entrance, Job and I going home for a wash and breakfast. About 3 p.m. I went up and found the coffin had been lowered down and covered in, and in the evening the gravedigger came for his money; and as I paid him he told me there was no ceremony over the grave and no one in attendance. During the four years I acted as undertaker, I kept no sort of record of burials, nor was I ever asked for any. I merely placed the bodies in different burying-places, in the respective cemeteries, about a mile apart. In cases where the friends of the deceased attended the funeral, the officiating priest or clergyman, as the case might be, of course performed the funeral rites, but in other cases, as was inevitable with such an immense population on such a limited space, the bodies were huddled into the graves and covered up without further ceremony. The man I buried from the hospital had been wounded by a blow of a spade on the head, inflicted in a moment of jealousy by the husband of a woman with whom he was suspected of being too intimate. About a fortnight after the first funeral

the man Smith, whom we had attempted to put in the shell while yet alive, died, and my man Job having given orders for the grave to be sunk close to the church door by the vestry, I carried the coffin up and left everything in his hands. Years after (about thirty), all signs of the grave having been meanwhile obliterated, I found that during my absence in England there had been erected a neat fence, enclosing a handsome headstone, with an inscription in gilt letters, '—— Smith, born 31st October 1819, died 12th January 1852, son of the Rev. —— Smith.'

One day looking at my old workings, which had entirely collapsed, I determined to sink as near as possible in the solid to where I had left off when crushed out, and luckily dropped on the same rich streak of gold I had left, and continued my night workings. About now it was reported that Governor Fitzroy was going to pay a visit to the Turon Goldfields, and it was unanimously agreed among the diggers that he should be received by them in the red overshirts common among them. On the night of his arrival a grand dinner was provided, at a guinea a head, in the billiard-room of Captain Broomfield's hotel. The tables were packed. After an enjoyable evening the Governor resolved to depart, but when he wanted to look at his watch he found that with the flight of time his timepiece had flown also. The alarm having been sounded, there was a general rush to the room to learn particulars. Among others came the cook of the establishment, who, on returning to his kitchen, discovered that every article of plate used at the dinner had been taken in his temporary absence. On his journey the Governor had stopped at Roberts's

Hotel, Green Swamp, about thirty miles from Bathurst, where his presence caused great excitement, a visit in the district from Her Majesty's representative being an event so unusual. I have no doubt his Excellency considered that in losing his watch only he had escaped cheaply from a crowd of such rough-looking customers as the Turon miners then were.

CHAPTER X

FORTY POUNDS A NIGHT, AND TRACKED BY THIEVES

At this time I was so much hampered with my ever-increasing riches, and overworked, that I became a little addleheaded. At the finish of my night's work in the tunnel I was in the habit of building up the face of my work with stones or boulders, like a wall in worked out ground, as a blind to any prying eyes, and bringing out my tools to another part of the drive. One night on going down the shaft as usual, I saw that some one had been in my drive, and had fossicked out a full bag of the rich wash dirt, and carried it away. I was puzzled, the shaft being so close to the hut that I must have heard anyone at work below. I told my wife only about my loss, but we could not fathom the mystery. A day or two after she happened to enter a lumber-room, where I was in the habit of putting the wash dirt got during night work in the tunnel, and drew my attention to a bag of dirt in one corner, saying, 'What bag is this?' On looking I at

once recognised my own bag, quite full, and could come to no other conclusion than that in my sleep, harassed as I was in mind and body, I had gone through the whole mining operation myself, carried the bag up the ladder, and deposited it, as wont, in the room. I was then picking out coarse gold from the dirt to the amount of about five ounces nightly, the loose dirt borne up the ladder and afterwards washed, realising about the same quantity per night, so that I was really making between £30 and £40 a night of a few hours' labour. Upon its being known that I was lucky, some of my gossiping neighbours, getting on the vain side of my wife, persuaded her to employ a girl-help to look after the two children and assist in the house affairs. I tried all I knew to dissuade her, but, as all the world may guess, without effect. The more I argued and remonstrated the more bent she became on accomplishing her desire. Having to go to Sydney to purchase timber and coffin furniture, she begged me to bring a servant-girl up with me. I left old Job in charge, to act in my absence. I had at this time saved up, in nuggets and fine gold, about 200 oz., and with this I started on my way to Sydney. In the coach I met a young chap from Bathurst, who would persistently force his acquaintance on me. My whole wardrobe on my back, with the exception of my boots (Wellingtons), would not have fetched two shillings, and in this guise I journeyed onwards, my new friend, against my wish, 'shouting' at every public-house where the coach stopped—though I only drank 'soft tack.'

At Hartley we pulled up at the house of the proprietor and driver of our coaches, Mr Kendall, where

this newly-acquired friend of mine engaged a double-bedded room for the accommodation of himself and me. I had my gold in two stout chamois-leather bags, tied together, and under my waistcoat a belt with which to secure the bags. On turning in I had some doubts as to the obtrusive attentions of my friend, and fearful of his attempting any raid on my property during the night, I formed a scheme for its security. As I pulled off one boot, sitting on the side of my bed, I asked him to lock the door, as we did not know what characters might be prowling about, and as he shot the bolt in the lock, with a clang I dropped my boot loudly on the floor and slung my gold-bags under his bed. I had also some ten or twelve shillings loose in my pocket, with some notes. The latter I removed, and getting into bed, turned up the wristbands of my shirt and placed the notes inside. Before we turned in he wished me to drink a glass with him, as, he said, was his usual custom, and he fetched the two drinks. After drinking we talked together for some time, and I gradually found myself dropping asleep. Do as I might I could not keep awake. In the morning my companion awoke me after sundry violent shakings and haulings. When I got up, dressed, and we both went downstairs, I said to him, 'Hold hard, I've forgotten my knife; I'll go back and get it.' Upstairs again I went, and straight to his bed, pulled my gold-bags from under, and secured them out of sight, with my belt. Descending to the bar I called for drinks, and putting my hand in my pocket for the loose silver, found only two shillings. I said nothing, but took opportunity to take the notes from my shirt-sleeves, regulate my bags of gold, one on each side, and securely

fastened them round my body. I changed a note in the man's presence to pay my bill, and soon after started with the coach for Penrith, where I stopped at my old quarters. There I called for a glass of ale for myself, shunning my companion's offer after the experience of the previous night; and I asked the landlady to show me a room where I could rest for a time, as I felt rather dosy. She led me into one having three beds. I selected one, and, after firmly closing the door, I tore a silk handkerchief into strips, and lashed my bags to the cross-bands under the mattress, and left them so. I came down later in the evening, and when it came time to turn in for the night, I heard the stranger saying, 'Mistress, I and my friend will occupy the same room.' Two of the beds stood opposite each other and one in a corner. I took one of them 'where my gold was not,' leaving the others to his choice, when, as it happened, he selected the one where the gold was. He then, as before, proposed his customary nightcaps, and, in spite of my refusals, brought them. When he returned I was in bed. I still declined the drink, and as he persisted in my taking it from his hand (as a matter of friendship), I told him I had had more than was good for me, just put it to my lips, and threw all but a sip away. I rolled my notes in my shirt-sleeve again, bade him good-night, and very soon was forgetful of all around me.

At 3 A.M. the coach had to leave for Sydney, and, as before, I returned to the room and secured my treasure. On the road between Parramatta and Sydney the conversation turned on bushranging. One of the passengers remarked that we were lucky in escaping the bushrangers, and looking at my worthless

toggery, said that had he been one of the ranging fraternity I should have been the first one he would have attended to, as my attire would at once have aroused his suspicions that I was not what I seemed—a poverty-struck and disappointed miner. I then, knowing that all danger was past, as we were nearing our journey's end, said, 'It was lucky for me that we had not had a call from the forest rovers. Look here,' I added, 'they would have had a fine haul.' At the same time I unbuckled my bags and displayed them, greatly to the chagrin of my quondam friend, of whom, after leaving the coach, I saw no more. On reaching my old friends of the 'Crispin Arms' I warned them of such a customer, giving a minute description of him.

CHAPTER XI

A REGISTRY OFFICE IN THE GOLD DAYS

NEXT morning I went to the registry office and told the lady in charge I wanted a servant-girl for Sofala, in the Turon goldfields, to look after a child and be generally useful. I told her my position and occupation, and that I wanted a decent, good-looking girl, as in my business I had plenty of young men customers who liked good looks, and I was not particular as to wages. I stipulated that I should require an agreement to the following effect: That as the girl's fare to the diggings (140 miles) would cost me £7, and her wages would be good, should she slip off my hands by marriage her husband would have to return me her

fare. I said whoever thought of coming need not look hard at my outlandish figure in a blue serge shirt, etc., as if I could not afford to keep a girl, as I had a wife and two children, plenty of money, and more to come. The registry-office keeper laughed and booked my application, saying she had several suitable girls on her list, and if I called next morning I might be served. I then went to the sawmills to order some timber, and to Iredale's ironmongery for coffin furniture. At the hour appointed I returned in quest of my maid; but in the interim I had opened one of my bags, and had exhibited at different places quite a handful of nuggets, of all shapes and sizes, making presents of some. At the registry office I had a great number loose in my pocket. As I went in the assembled girls, looking at my uncivilised attire, made way for me, giving me ample room for my passage past them, as they might have done had I been a full-fledged chimney-sweep. I walked up to the registrar's desk, who told me she had got a young woman for me. She called out the name, when, lo and behold! the best-dressed and best-looking of the bevy stepped forward. I expressed my opinion that the one presented would suit admirably. The lady asked her if she thought she could agree to my offer of engagement. The look of scorn the girl cast on me is now fresh in my memory. She replied she did not care about going up the country, she had changed her mind. I turned round and asked if any of those then present would like to go to the Turon Goldfields, but received no reply. I then faced them, saying, 'You should not buy a book by its binding. You think from my outward appearance I couldn't pay your wages—look at these old duds, and then

look at the linings. You'd find I'd be a good master. I haven't had time to get a Sunday suit.' I began to feel nettled and sheepish, and asked the lady superintendent to hand me the sheet of foolscap on which she was writing, saying that I wouldn't dirty it. I placed it on the table, and pulled from my pocket a half-handful of nuggets, and laid them on it. The eyes of the would-be waiting-maids almost started from their sockets, and rushing forward some attempted to lay hold on the gold. I said, 'Hands off, they might bite!' Slipping the nuggets back to my pocket I reserved one for the keeper of the office, and immediately every one of the girls was ready and willing to come with me, foremost in the van being the first pointed out to me, who had had such strong objections to go up country. I told the chief I would try another office, and if I met with no success would return and have an agreement drawn up by her. I then marched off in hot haste, followed for a distance by the astounded servant-girls; but I outstripped them and turned up Pitt Street. I at length got a girl from some private friends and took her to the registry office to have a proper agreement drawn up. On my entrance in the good clothes which I had had time to buy, some of the same girls as on my former visit were present; and despite my transformation outwardly, I was recognised, loud whisperings going round, such as 'Look, look, that's the man who had the pocketful of gold nuggets! What fools we were to refuse his offer.'

CHAPTER XII

A FAMILY RUPTURE

In a day or two I called for my new servant at her lodging, and for another girl engaged to be married to a friend of mine whom I had to convoy up country, and we took coach by the mail, bearing the return escort. While at the 'Crispin Arms' I had met an old digger from the Turon down on a fortnight's spree, of which I got a full account. On our way over the mountains a good deal of blowing and 'gassing' was going on among the passengers, and to make mysel. as good as my fellow-travellers in that line, and to avoid the penalty of 'shouting' for all hands failing a yarn, I, taking my cue from the adventures of my spreeing friend, described his gallantries as my own, and spun out a wonderful story which lasted for two long stages. My servant, on arrival at the diggings, seemed to be pleased with her new position, and gave every satisfaction. But while I was absent in Bathurst, my wife wormed out of her quite innocently all particulars of my proceedings in Sydney, and getting on the soft side of her, heard of all my boastings in the coach on our passage over the Blue Mountains. On my return with a lot of presents from Bathurst, I was sitting as merry as a cricket, displaying to my wife a real 'darling of a £2 bonnet,' when, all in a moment, she sprang from her seat with the fury of a tiger cat, snatched the millinery from my hands, gathered up all the other presents and toys without a word, and bundled them into the flames on the hearth. She then

began rampaging about the floor like one demented. While I gazed on open-mouthed and all in the dark as to the reason of these mad capers, she turned on me like a fury, and ordered me off to Sydney again to my female friends in Woolloomooloo or elsewhere. She said that she was done with me and this world, and would go drown herself. I really thought her mind was gone. At length, from some hints she dropped, a light broke over my brain. When I tried to persuade her that all the yarns I had spun coming over the mountains were borrowed, and not my own actions, I could not impress the truth on her mind, nor did she ever after forget it, my foolish boasting ever proving a thorn in my side.

Being by this time a miner of considerable experience, and having seen a great deal of the world, miners often came to me for advice on various matters. One day a man named T——, a boarding-house keeper, came to me, and said, 'There's a man living next to me in a house of yours, a Dr Lipsome, I think, from Adelaide—a splendid clarionet player, but continually at it; and my wife, being so very fond of music, keeps dancing and capering about the house, and neglecting her duties. I can get no good of her when he begins. I wish you would try and get him to leave the house.'

I told him he must find a remedy for himself, as I wasn't going to lose a good tenant. He said he had tried every means he could think of to get him away, but could not. Thinking over the matter, I at length told him, 'Your best plan is to lodge a complaint at the court-house, and charge him with being out of his mind—have him arrested on that

charge. There are five doctors here, and, I daresay, they'll be glad to lessen the number of rivals, and if one of them is called upon he may find something to support your case. I don't say any of them would wilfully go against him, but things may turn out in your favour. If he is not mad, he'll soon be very near it. At all events, you'll get rid of him.' Next day the police came to the doctor, and telling him the charge, made to arrest him, when he became so excited, and conducted himself in such a manner as to bear out the belief that he was a shingle short, and might be dangerous. After some resistance he was conveyed by two members of the force to the lockup. Next day he appeared at court before Mr D——, the police magistrate, and among the witnesses subpœnaed was myself. On being asked what I knew of the accused, I said, 'All I know of him is that he is a splendid clarionet player, as to aught else I know nothing.' Several of the boarders, however, supported the accuser's evidence. I heard all the evidence against him, which seemed so straightforward, I began to think the man was in reality insane. One doctor was called in, and having carefully examined the then state of the excited patient, gave it as his opinion that he was suffering from temporary aberration of intellect, and would be better for medical observation and treatment. The upshot of all was that he was ordered to Bathurst Gaol for (I think) two months for medical surveillance, and next day he was forwarded, and T—— was relieved of his grievance.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW MONEY USED TO BE MADE

At night I still continued my operations in the shaft on Church Hill, with no falling off in the general yield of gold, and I had plenty of leisure time to look after other affairs, and began to make money rapidly. During this time a man named Tottle, a storekeeper at the head of Golden Gully, Tambaroora, offered to buy all the mining tools of every description I had on hand. I sold him nearly two drayloads of things. Carriage from Sofala to Tambaroora (30 miles) was then £1 per cwt.—over two fearful roads, one by Pyramid Hill, and the other by Monkey Hill. The purchaser got a bullock dray to remove part of his purchase, leaving the rest with me till a future opportunity. He paid me for the tools, but the drayman, not knowing him, refused to move unless I became responsible for payment of carriage on thirty hundredweight—that is £30. He delivered his loading and returned to me, when I paid him.

One day an auction sale of store goods was announced in the town. I went down and found the auctioneer could not dispose of all the goods. I offered to inspect the lot on condition that if I made a bid and it was accepted, everyone should clear out, leaving me in sole possession of my purchase. After overhauling everything moveable from basement to roof, I said to the auctioneer, 'I'll give you £150 cash down, but you must give me possession at once.' The shopkeeper and auctioneer looked at me.

I continued, 'If I leave this store now, I will not offer you the same amount if you call me back. You can take your bedding, or anything in that line, but if you like to leave everything as it is, I'll give you £5 more for the lot.' The bargain was made, and I took possession, locking up the place. There was a good collection of picks and shovels, and a great variety of mining tools. When in the bedroom the storekeeper laid hold of his cash-box to remove it, I interfered, telling him he might take out his cash, but everything moveable was included in my purchase. He laughingly agreed, and I went with him and paid over the cash. On taking stock I found that I had made a bargain. The mining tools alone would cover a considerable portion of my outlay, while the stock of odds and ends and minor articles most profitable on the goldfields promised an enormous return, as indeed proved to be the case.

At this time anything I handled or took in hand turned out gold, and I was rapidly laying down the substantial foundation of a respectable fortune. Having a good stock of cradles on hand, I thought that with the goods left in my charge, which I had sold to Mr Tottle of Golden Gully, and a supply from my stock, I would make up two drayloads, and take a turn at Tambaroora, then in the height of its prosperity. I agreed with the owners of two bullock teams to shift the goods. I had made up my mind to take up my abode at Tambaroora while selling my goods, and to open my own trade of gunsmith the same time, leaving Job, as usual, in charge of my Sofala business.

Next morning we made a start across the river, and

after a terrible journey over the mountainous country between Sofala and Tambaroora, we reached Golden Gully, and I fixed my camp in a patch of stringy bark timber.

Here we unloaded one dray containing my property, and I told the drayman, named Godwin, how to act in delivering the goods he had for Tottle, the storekeeper, which he had bought from and left with me at Sofala. He was to spread his tarpaulin on the ground and place his loading on it; and, if the carriage was not then and there paid, to keep the things till I came up. About an hour after I followed, and, nearing the place, saw a crowd collected round the dray, and a fight going on. Hurrying up, I found one of my drivers in the clutches of a woman, her husband (as I afterwards found) hammering him, while his partner was performing the same play on my second driver. They had tried to take the tarpaulin by force, a number of tools for sale to the miners, as there was a great scarcity of mining tools at the time—hence the row. I strode up to the woman, and seizing her by the shoulder, sent her toppling backwards over a log, dealt the other assailant, Morgan, a lunger, putting the quietus on him, and then tackled his mate Tottle, serving him in like manner, to the infinite enjoyment of the onlookers.

Suddenly someone called out, 'Look out, he's gone in for his gun.' I made for the door of the store, and standing behind the doorpost, waited for him to return. As he came out, the barrel of the gun showing first and protruding from the door, I caught hold of it and pulled him out, and, whether intentionally or by accident I cannot say, the gun was discharged, the contents

partially lodging in the arm of a bystander. Wrenching the gun from his grasp, with the butt I floored him by a blow on the neck and shoulder, breaking the stock of the gun. His partner I met with the barrel, and so belaboured him as to somewhat alter the shape of the weapon from a straight line to a curve, meantime warding off the attacks of the woman by sundry backward kicks.

The blacksmith, who was working near by, in the midst of the row, had run off to the police-station, and given the information that some bullock-drivers were trying to murder his employers. Up came the police, and the charge of intended murder being given against us, we three were marched off to the lockup, whence I sent for a publican of my acquaintance, Johnnie M'Cann, to bail us out, which he succeeded in doing. Next day we appeared at court before Mr Broughton, P.M., and Dr Cutting, the witnesses against us being the two storekeepers and the wife of one of them. The two bullock-drivers were fined two pounds each for assault, and I had to pay one pound, and, being a gunsmith, was ordered to repair the broken weapon. The court over, I went back to our camping-ground, and placing the twisted barrel on the anvil, brought it to its shape, and lashing a bit of wood along the stock, and firmly binding them together with the inner rind of stringy bark, took the gun up to the store. Acceptance of it was refused in that state. I left it there, and demanded payment of my carriage money. The storekeeper, being short of cash, and having two good claims at the head of the gully, called an impromptu auction sale, at which these claims were knocked down for £24 and £26 respectively,

I myself being the purchaser. The balance or the carriage money was then paid to me. I then erected the large tanned tent I had bought at Sofala, where I bivouacked until we had put up our huts. I stuck up my sign as usual, 'Gunsmithing and Blacksmithing Done Here.' In this gully the mining element numbered some hundreds, and I had not been long at work in my new claims when I was offered a price for them, and disposed of them for £61.

Going towards the head of the gully, where the ground falls off towards where is now the famous Hill End, I began prospecting, sinking a hole in the side of the hill, in which I found a small leader of quartz and gold, which, on trying, I found to contain a goodly show of loose gold, and several small bits of quartz impregnated with gold. I followed this vein, as the metal seemed to cling to it in the alluvial—tunnelling it out for some distance.

After being a week at this, two men passed by, and seeing me cracking specimens to obtain the gold (I as yet having no knowledge of quartz reefs), offered me £5 for my claim. I demanded £10, which, after a slight demur, they paid me. On the line of this vein which I had discovered and sold, some time after a quartz claim was taken up, and subsequently successfully opened up towards Specimen Hill, being the first reef ever worked on Tambaroora.

CHAPTER XIV

BACK TO SOFALA

I NOW set to work repairing guns, pistols, etc., and executing all orders left with my wife, while I worked at the claims. Presently I found a purchaser—the manager of a travelling circus company. I pulled it down, and sold off all my tools, and stock of cradles, etc., with the intention of returning to Sofala. Looking round for a purchaser of my hut, whom should I meet but the identical Dr Lipsome whom we had banished from the Turon as of unsound mind. 'Ah!' he exclaimed, 'I heard of your being in this quarter. Where do you live?' Then referring to the Turon affair, he said, 'By G—— it was a well-got-up dodge. I actually believed that I was something gone from what transpired in court.'

I then told him all, saying that I was the party to be blamed, but if I could do anything to forward his interests in the shape of money he need not be backward. He informed me that he was in the receipt of remittances from home, but would remember my offer if required. I told him that my hut was next to Turner's, Turner having also moved up to Tambaroora. 'I'll buy it,' he excitedly replied, and I knew he had something in view. I told my wife and Turner that I had sold my hut, and would start in the morning. It was proposed, as a send-off, to have a bit of jollification at night. I agreed, and handed Mrs Turner a couple of pounds towards it. The feasting and dancing was in merry swing in Turner's, when

about ten o'clock, in my hut adjoining, were heard the melodious sounds of a clarionet, in skilled hands. All was stopped to listen, and going to discover the unknown performer, Turner, foremost among us, fixed his horrified gaze on the countenance of his old tormentor, the doctor. The shock was too much for him, and he tremblingly asked me, 'In the name of all that's holy, how comes he there?' 'Oh,' I said, 'I've sold him my place,' and leaving them to become reconciled or not, as it might please them, I went to prepare for my return. In due time, with my wife and two children, I regained my quarters on the Turon, and found everything to my satisfaction. I was informed at the camp that a man named 'Scottie' had been drowned in attempting to swim the river, and that his share of a bed claim at the back of the township was up for sale. This I bought for £11, the claim averaging 30 oz. per week for four men. Having a heavy body of water to contend with, it could only be worked by a California pump, which I supplied at a rental of £1 per day, to be deducted from the gold got. We carried our gold every night to Forbes Bank, got a receipt, and on Saturday were paid cash for the lot. Next claim to ours was the property of a gentleman who hired men to work it, and instead of banking each day's proceeds he, professing some knowledge of phrenology, selected one of his men, by feeling his bumps, to act as gold receiver for the week. But, alas for the ingratitude of the human kind! on Saturday night receiver, bumps and gold had disappeared together.

We worked our claim till one Saturday night a heavy flood came suddenly down the river, sweeping

away all floatable tools not secured, burying all others, and rendering the river bed level as a threshing-floor. Next morning I went out and repegged our ground, when a dispute arose as to the correctness of my pegging. The commissioner was sent for. On his coming on the ground, some claims were pegged out and some not, when he ordered all parties to measure and mark out their several claims, and on a certain day he would be there to settle disputes. This was accordingly done; but, unfortunately for us, we had made a mistake in the day appointed, and on his arranging all matters in dispute, were deprived of our claim through non-attendance. I was considerably nettled, and went to the acting commissioner to explain, when he merely told me it was my own fault and I must put up with the consequences. He was in the habit of wearing a gold-rimmed eyeglass attached to a broad black ribbon, and carried in the pocket of his vest. Just then a publican was selling off, and I got a tinsmith to make me a tin rimmed eyeglass, the facsimile of the commissioner's gold one. Thus armed I attended the sale, and found in a group the commissioner and the other local officials. This gentleman had lately arrived on the Turon, without his family, and intended to lay in a stock of furniture. On any suitable article being exposed for sale he, drawing out his eyeglass, would closely inspect it, while I, drawing out my tin ogler, would follow suit. For everything he bid I bid above him, running it to almost its full value. Next day the Louisa Company sold off their store building. My friend the P.M.'s first bid of £20 I immediately raised to £40, dangling my glass and inspecting the house; then

£45 and £50 (mine). Standing with hands behind my back I felt something gently pushed into my grasp, and on examination found myself the richer by a £5 note. In consideration of this I was heedless of the auctioneer's query as to whose was the last bid, but thinking I had in some mysterious manner made a good day's work, and not over anxious to become the owner of the stone mansion, I pocketed the note and left.

CHAPTER XV

THE SEARCH FOR LICENSES

I THEN returned to Erskine Flat to work at the scene of my first venture on the goldfield, and sank a hole near the first quarters I occupied when flooded out in the thunderstorm. My mates in this new venture were quite strangers to me. On bottoming we got a good show, and commenced breaking down and washing. The gold-bearing dirt here was of such a thickness that in tunnelling it out we had to lengthen our pick handles. I was at the cradle one day, and had just come up for a barrow of stuff, when who should suddenly ride up over the rise, followed by a trooper and a chain of handcuffed men, but Mr I——, clerk of the court, acting as I found for the Commissioner. His first words were, 'Have you a miner's right?' (then 30s. per month). I answered, 'Yes.' 'Show it me.' 'It's down the hole in my waistcoat pocket.' 'Go and fetch it.' So, fastening the rope

to the windlass-stand, I descended, crept into the tunnel, and whispered to my mate, 'Lend me your miner's right.' I got it and was ascending when a thought struck me—'If he asks my name, as I can't read and don't know my mate's name, I'll be in a fix.' I made up my mind not to tell him my name, nor show him the right. The first salute on top was, 'What's your name?' I answered, 'I sha'n't tell you my name, nor show my right; I don't believe from your dress you're a Commissioner, nor that you have any authority.'

I was handcuffed and ordered on the chain, and after it had received a few additions we were marched back to the camp, about a mile and a-half off. There we were ranked up in front of the office, and out came the Commissioners, Messrs Johnstone and Maclean. Some were fined and had to pay the right, and others sent to the lockup. When my turn came Mr I—— said, 'This man refused to give his name, or show his right.' The Commissioner then repeated the question, and to get out of the trap, and avoid giving a direct answer, I said, 'He doesn't look like a Commissioner, look at his hat' (not the uniform). 'Hat or no hat,' said Mr Maclean, 'if I send anyone round with authority to inspect rights, and I find you or anyone defy him, I'll give you the chain to some purpose, my bold "Bill Day."' I thus, by the Commissioner's own words, found out my mate's name on the borrowed right, and wriggled out of the scrape. After that for many years I went by that name.

About this time great agitation was being carried on among the miners, relative to the grievous imposition of what they considered a direct tax on a class.

The licenses or rights to mine then were thirty shillings per month for British subjects, and three pounds for aliens. Things rose to such a pitch of excitement that riots and bloodshed were imminent, and a company of the military from Sydney was despatched to the Turon to preserve order. A public open-air meeting was convened, the principals who addressed the vast crowd being Captain Harris, of Californian note, and Mr Jos. Williamson, a connection of Dr Cutting, of Tambaroora. A deputation was formed, and proceeded to the Commissioner's camp to explain the grievances of the miners. Because of the violent declamations and peremptory manner of the delegates, the Commissioner thought it his best policy to lodge them one and all in the lockup, which was done. The report of his action coming to the ears of the meeting, the leader, Captain H——, proposed in excited language a rush in the camp and a rescue of the prisoners, crying out, 'Follow me.'

Before he had time to descend from the platform, the mob, further influenced by the frantic gesticulations and inflammatory language of a gigantic woman —Large by name and large by nature—who, pistol in hand, urged them on, tore pell-mell across the river, firing shots in the air as they went.

I, like many more fools, followed in the wake, but on nearing the place for an assault I thought prudence the better part of valour, and slipped into a tunnel which I thought was empty, to await results. On creeping a little further in, to my utter astonishment, I found the two bombastic agitators, H—— and W——, safely ensconced out of the impending danger, having left their forces to carry on the siege without

officers. The Commissioner, nothing daunted, met the rabble horde with the utmost coolness, and ordered the arrest of the ringleaders, when the crestfallen champions of liberty and right ignominiously dispersed.

The Sal Large here mentioned some time after left this world of toil and trouble; and the rival undertakers D—— and R——, having each received an order for burial, prepared for action. D——, being first on the scene, placed the body in the coffin furnished by him, and left. R—— next put in an appearance on the same errand, and seeing the position of affairs, not to be beat, unceremoniously removed the defunct, and deposited it in the box of his own manufacture, and carried it off.

CHAPTER XVI

THREE YANKEES MAKE A FIND—A GREAT NUGGET

One day three Yankees came to me, saying, 'As you keep a Johnny-all-sorts, we want a kit of second-hand tools. All the money we've got in the world is a "doubloon," therefore we must make it spin out.' I agreed to supply them with tools and keep them in repair while they prospected, saying they could pay me what they could afford then; and if not successful return me the tools. As Yankees are persevering prospectors, I stipulated that if they should strike anything good I should expect them to mark me out

the ground next them, and let me know at once. They handed me the coin, telling me to keep £2 on account. After working some time, one of them asked me how much they owed, saying he would pay me. I referred him to my ledger in chalk on the bellows handle, as I was busy. He reckoned it up, and handed me a note, which I carelessly thrust into my pocket. At night, counting over my day's takings, I found a ten-pound note. Surprised, I pondered for a while, when it occurred to me that the Yankee was the donor. I looked at my 'ledger' and saw that the £10 covered the debt, less a few shillings, and at once jumped to the conclusion that my cute friends had dropped on something handsome, and were keeping it dark. Under pretence of looking at my horse, I went next morning to where they were working, and found they had opened some new ground near the camp. Having sunk a hole in front of their tent, and covered it over with a fly, I took the bearings of the hole, and at night while they were sound asleep I went down and saw where they were driving. Next day I went to them and said I heard they were in rich ground, and asked them to mark out such a quantity of claim as they wished, and I would take up next to them. They said 'all right,' but instead of altering their pegs in the direction the lead was actually running, they, to deceive me, placed them in a totally opposite direction. I, being too experienced in underground workings, pegged out six claims in a block in the direction I knew the lead would make, and put down four large iron pegs I had brought with me. I then went to Mr Cloete, then commissioner, and paid the clerk £9—six men's rights for the month at 30s. each. I had a

general useful man at my place (Bob Wilson), whom I showed where to sink on the ground taken up. We bottomed at a depth of twenty-two feet on a cement with little wash, and I took a dish of dirt off the rock to the river. A number of 'shepherds' or watchers waited to see the result. As I panned out I saw the bottom of the dish seemingly covered with gold, and as they were making towards me I panned the gold out into the water, covering it up, and showed them a few specks in the dish. Disgusted at this 'rank duffer,' as they termed it, they went off home. It was now raining very heavily, so I returned to the hole, and cut a large drain to carry the water into the hole in order to bar would-be prospectors, and I too went home. Next morning I rescued my prospect, three-quarters of an ounce to the dish. We sunk another hole, and bottomed with a first-class prospect. I then told a man named Sam Denner, who took up a claim adjoining mine, and commenced a hole on my boundary line. After sinking fourteen feet he left it, when another miner, 'Dick Skewes,' whom I told of it, on my advice took up the ground, and at three feet from the rock got a good prospect, when his mates began cradling till bottomed, the dirt running from ¼ oz. to ½ oz. to the barrow. In my ground, till worked out, with four hired men at four pounds per week, and a watchman in the tent on the spot, I averaged 100 oz. per week during four months, a picked or selected dish often yielding a half-pound (troy) of gold. Skewes's was the same. While wheeling the dirt to the river, down a steep incline, some boys used to follow me, sweeping up what was spilled from the barrow, and at times slyly dropping a stone or other obstacle in

my way to cause an extra jolt and increase their sweepings.

One day about noon I happened to be going up towards the racecourse, when I met a man running down the hill to the town, holding his hand tightly pressed over his chest, and on his side under his shirt, as if suffering great pain. I followed him, till on arriving at Roger's public-house, where he boarded, he pulled out from under his shirt a lump of pure gold, in shape of a bullock's heart, weighing 9 lb., or 108 oz. troy, which he had picked up off a heap of rubbish cast from a stripping in Spring Creek, about a mile from Sofala, in which he and three others were working on wages for this Rogers. The latter became so excited over this grand find that, seizing the lump in his hands, he sprang on the long dining-table, now all ready laid for the hungry miners' mid-day repast, kicking dishes of roast and boiled meats, and all the adjuncts of the meal, in every direction, scattering them in a thousand fragments round the room, to be trampled under the feet of the sightseers as matters of no consequence. Then followed the customary imbibing among the visitors. The traffic done in liquids, and the profits therefrom accruing for days and weeks, was simply immense.

One day, riding from Wattle Flat to the town, I was overtaken by a man lately from Sydney, who, entering into conversation, asked me of the general success of the miners about, and especially of one Bill Day (myself), who, he had heard, was obtaining gold in almost fabulous quantity, adding that he understood this Day was a great blower, and inquiring as to the accuracy of the reports. 'Oh, yes,' said I, 'Day is

doing very well, but there's not much notice to be taken of his sayings, he's such a gasser.' When we got to Davis's pub. he asked me to have a drink, and while so doing a gold-buyer, Mr T——d, coming in, said to me, 'I'll give you the 3d.' 'Very well,' said I, 'how much will you take?' 'I'll go down and get the money first.'

This being Greek to my companion, I explained that I had a quantity of gold for sale, and the party just gone out had offered me 3d. per oz. more than the general price. He then said that as he had not seen any of the Turon gold he should like to buy a sample, and had I any objections to his going with this purchaser to have a look at it. 'Of course not,' I answered. On T——d's return we went to my house, when I reached down from a shelf a large pair of gold scales and a water jug, in which I had the results of a fortnight's working—8½lb. weight per week, or 17lb. in all. I began to pour some into the scales, when the two, in utter unbelief of the genuineness of so much gold, took their departure, but on being convinced, through inquiries made, that the metal was pure, T——d returned and bought the lot, while the other man, on learning that I was the Bill Day whom he had characterised as a great blower, put in an appearance no more.

I went on saving up all my gold, intending to take it to Bathurst, where I could get a higher price for it.

CHAPTER XVII

GAMBLING LOSSES

I FINALLY took what gold I had hoarded up, and taking passage with Jem West, driver of the Bathurst mail, sold it satisfactorily at Bathurst, and getting in tow with some card-sharpers (as I found too late) in my first gambling transactions on the western gold-fields, I lost about three hundred pounds. I now stuck closely to gold digging, the yield from my claims still keeping up the usual average; so also in the claim adjoining. Having once launched out in the alluring vice of gambling, I now nightly followed it up, although never neglecting my regular work by day, nor did I ever indulge in strong drink while at play. One night in a certain pub., the landlord going, or pretending to, halves with me, I engaged pretty deeply at 'all fours,' and lost nearly every game. Night after night found me in the same way. I could not fathom the mystery of such adverse luck. After losing some hundreds in this way I accidentally met a man in Davis's pub., where I had gone for change of £20, who asked me if I was going 'schooling' again that night. I said I was. 'Well,' said he, 'you are a fool; they've got you down there.' 'How?' 'Why,' he says, 'you leave £5 in Davis's hands, and if I show you how you are had it becomes mine.' To this I agreed. 'Now,' he continued, 'did you notice me the other night when you were playing, sitting with my head on the edge of the table so that I could see under? I could not make out

how a player like you, and holding good cards as I saw, was continually losing. I looked out for the cause. Now, when you play to-night, don't let the landlord, going you halves, see your hand. The way he acts is this. He places his toe on that of your opponent, and, knowing your hand, by preconcerted signals telegraphs to him, "What are your cards?"' According to these instructions, that night we commenced at £5 per game, the publican giving his share, £2, 10s. I now objected to his looking in my hand, remarking that he seemed to bring one bad luck, and he sat aside. That night, so acting, I won back over £100 of my money. This continued in more or less degree every time we played. I gladly paid my informant the £5 lodged with Davis, as previous to this I had been fleeced out of about £1000. I had not the chance of recovering much more from my smart friend, as on being found out he levanted to Sydney, with the remainder of his ill-gotten gains, on the spree, and afterwards, I believe, went to the dogs.

I now started at billiards, though I knew very little about that game, but got gradually drawn into it, at times winning small stakes, but anything of consequence leaving me in the lurch. The last game I ever played at this was for £50 a-side, against a marker from Mudgee, named Martin, a looker-on named G——d betting me £10 further on the game. During the play, or rather, near the finish of the game, G——d took up a position with his back to the scoring board. I wanted but two to win, my opponent 25. I cannoned and called game, but on looking at the board found I still wanted one point. The marker for the game declared the points correctly

taken, and I had to put up with being beaten by my antagonist running the game out. I protested amid some excitement, but there was the board against me. After I had paid over the money, Sergeant Green, who witnessed the affair, told me outside the room that G——d, who bet £10 against me, to secure his own, had altered the marking one back. I finished up by smashing the cue across my knee, and made a vow never to handle a cue or play a card while on the Turon, and from that day to this I never have.

Fearing I might be induced to break my pledge, I determined to leave the Turon, and great news coming from Stony Creek near the Ironbark diggings, I determined to proceed thither. About this time, our commissioner, Mr William Johnston, was called on to fill the office of Chief Gold Commissioner in Bathurst, and a grand dinner at a guinea a ticket was got up to celebrate his approaching departure. Among the principal guests were Messrs Walford, J.P.; Maclean, commissioner; Mr Whittingdale Johnstone, since a P.M. of Sydney; and Mr Innes, clerk of the court, now one of our judges. I was present, and had the honour of having my health proposed. I now called an auction sale, having a load of cedar and one of iron on the way up from Sydney, and arranged with Mr C. Blakefield as to the disposal of my property, barring anvil, bellows and a few tools I intended to take with me, the claim in my opinion being about worked out. The last week realising only about £50, I made a present of it to my old watchman. Wilson, who had charge of the underground workings, with all his shortcomings and little outbreaks, started off to Sydney

with about £500 savings in four months. Before leaving the Turon I bethought me I had never written to any of my family in the old country, and as I now had a tolerable competence I would send them something as a reminder of their long-lost relative. Accordingly I made up and sent to each of my six brothers and sisters about 3 oz. of gold, and £50 worth to my mother, father being long dead.

CHAPTER XVIII

OPENING A NEW FIELD

Upon my removal to the Stony Creek diggings I found that Mr Whittingdale Johnstone and Mr Maclean were commissioners, the former resident and the other occasionally visiting. Still carrying on my trucking, buying and selling one way or another, I kept adding to my store. One day I came on a party of three brothers in a bush gunyah, hard up, and without tools. I supplied them on terms, and put them on a 'bit of gold,' as the miners' phrase goes. Up Burrendong (or Spring) Creek I one day rambled with pick and dish, getting some good shows of gold, and no one to interfere with me, as it was as yet undiscovered. I planted my tools, and only went back at intervals, thinking to come on something really good. After a time I let the secret out to the three brothers of the bush gunyah, whom I found to be honest and industrious men. I showed what gold

I had got, and offered to supply them with tent, tools and rations on the condition that should they find the creek to be as I anticipated it would be, they should mark me out some ground next their own. This was about twenty miles from the Ironbarks. One night, a fortnight after they had left, a loud kicking at my door awoke me, and on opening one of the brothers excitedly pushed in, crying out, 'My word, mate, we have struck it in earnest; just look at the gold I've brought in. Come and take your pick of the ground. I'm only going to leave this gold at the camp and go back in the morning.' I picked out one piece from his gold, which I afterwards sold for £11, 10s. He then gave me another nugget, saying that ought to square their debt to me, with which I was perfectly satisfied. I went back with him and took up the ground they had pegged out for me, and started at once stripping on the side of the creek. Now and then, for a spell, I took a stroll on to the hill, or Burrendong Mountain, as it was sometimes called, and became again fortune's favourite, having in one of my rambles discovered some good quartz, as also alluvial veins. In a short time the whole hill was rushed, and the outcome was some marvellous finds. The Burrendong nuggets soon became famous.

On Saturday night I went home to Ironbarks as usual, and when I returned on the Monday after, about dinner-time, I found my ground in the possession of three 'jumpers,' hard at work sinking. They had just reached the wash dirt, and had got good shows. In spite of the warnings of my friends, the brothers, and other miners, that the ground belonged

to me, they refused to leave it, on the foolish plea that as I was not a permanent resident I could not hold it. I at once returned to the camp at Ironbarks and saw Mr Johnstone, paid the usual deposit of £1, and laid down my case to him. He promised to attend to it, in which he lost no time, for, in company with Mr Maclean, he was on the ground as soon as myself. When he had heard the particulars of my claim to the ground and the jumpers' plea of non-residence, he, without hesitation, gave a decision in my favour, the invaders being ordered to refund me the deposit. After a time I asked for it, and being refused, took satisfaction out of their hides, for they were a craven lot.

Stores and a public-house (one only being allowed at that time) soon sprang up, and the field was in full prosperity. Getting tired of travelling to and from my home (twenty miles) every Saturday, and having an accumulation of work on hand at the shop, I sold out my claim, contrary to the advice of my neighbours, for £50. They proved right in the end, for hundreds upon hundreds were obtained from it. However, I again settled down to hammer and anvil, and was content at home.

PART VI

BUSHRANGING DAYS

CHAPTER I

THE CURSE OF DRINK

I NOW received a letter from my former manager on the Turon (R. Wilson), informing me that he had lost all his savings in a fishery speculation, and asking me to provide him with funds for his return to the goldfields. I sent him £20, on the understanding that when he arrived he was to work for me at £3 per week, and repay me £1 per week, in liquidation of the loan. I had built another house on the opposite side of the road from my first one, the latter being too small for my family, and this I arranged to let Wilson have on his arrival, which shortly took place. To my surprise I found he had brought a young wife with him, so I furnished his new abode, and made it comfortable for him. Wilson had not been long located with me when it turned out that his young wife was in the habit of visiting M. Kilreavy's public-house, close at hand, for drink, and bringing it home. After a time I found my wife had been induced to join her in her cups; indeed, on one occasion I found

the two on the floor dancing 'Jack's the Lad' to their own music, and no dinner cooked. Before the advent of Wilson's wife my old woman was noted as a hard-working woman, attentive to her household duties, and a kind and affectionate mother; but now these orgies were of daily occurrence, and how to mend matters puzzled me. At length I proposed to give Wilson the same wages, and forgive him the balance of his debt, provided he removed his wife to a safe distance. He was agreeable, but the wife would not stir, and the discrepancy in their ages, he being on the shady side of forty, gave her the supremacy over him, and he was helpless in controlling her. At last I called on Mr Johnstone, and stated all the circumstances of my unhappy condition, adding that there was another woman cohabiting with a man some distance off who was as bad as Wilson's wife, and I wanted to try and shift them. Mr Johnstone told me there must be some distinct charge laid against them, otherwise he could not interfere. I got maddened to such a pitch at their increasing drunken fits that I was almost tempted to bundle both of them down a hole. One day I went down to the Court, leaving Wilson at work, and on his inquiring on my return where I had been all day, I told him I had been to the Court as bondsman for Kilreavy and O'Brien, the publicans. He asked me when the publicans had to forward the £30 for their licenses to Sydney. I told him by the 1st of July. 'My word, Bill,' he said, 'what a swag of money there must be in the mail about the end of June. I see how we are hampered with these drunken women. I want to get away, but I have not the means of

shifting. I'll make a proposal to you. I have been considering. You know I'm an "old hand," and understand the tactics of the game I intend, and you don't. Now if you'll find me in arms and rations, and go with me, I'll stick up the mail between Bathurst and Orange. I only want you to be with me to carry off the plunder, which we will share. I'll make off to England after the affair, and you, not being openly in it, can come back here.'

I thought over the matter, and replied, 'You see, you have nothing to lose if you are caught, and I have everything.' 'But look at the state you are in now,' he urged. 'You cannot be much worse off than you are now, with these drunken women about you.'

His arguments overcame my scruples, and I consented to join him. We calculated to make our arrangements so as to bring us to the scene of action about the 25th of June. I told him, however, that as we were going in this line (bushranging) we might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, and that we ought to go further down on the Sydney Road, so as to intercept the Mudgee as well as the Bathurst mail on the Sydney side of Mount Victoria, past Hartley. Such was our plan of campaign. We were not to let the women have the least inkling of our designs; but inform them that we were going down to Sydney on business, and would be as expeditious as possible. We concealed away from the house the arms, consisting of a double-barrelled gun, a horse pistol, and a dagger pistol, with some rations, and had about £1 in silver, with a change of clothes. All being prepared, we started on foot early in the morning, and made Suttor's station (Triamble) with our swags, in

which the weapons were safely stowed out of sight, and wherever we stopped we told the same tale—that we were on our way to Sydney.

We tramped through the Dirt Holes to a relative of Mrs Beard's, a publican, where I was known, and where we stopped, then across Green Valley, past Keefe's and near the Two-mile Creek Station, camped in the bush. Next day we passed Keenan's old public-house on the Mudgee Road, and on to Brown's mill at Bowenfells, where we camped till night, keeping out of the way of all observation. About ten o'clock that night we passed through Bowenfells and Hartley to Mount Victoria, a half-mile from Shepherd's Toll-bar. On the Lithgow side of the Sydney Road we found a cave about 100 yards from the road.

CHAPTER II

THE CRIME

At daylight we made everything ready, and took a survey of our surroundings. Standing on Mount Victoria we could see across the Grose Valley, where the railway now runs, at a distance of about seven miles in a straight line. On a bare hill we noticed a tree of peculiar shape, which we fixed on as a land-mark. We followed on, on this line till we reached the hill and tree, and took a backward survey of the line. Being pretty well sure of the proper direction, we returned in our tracks, breaking down small branches for future guidance.

On our way we had come to a very steep and almost inaccessible gully, deep and narrow. This we spanned by placing one end of a large stout sapling in the fork of a tree, resting the other end in the face of the precipice opposite, in such a manner that in case of being hard pressed we could withdraw this temporary bridge, and so impede the further progress of our pursuers. Near the top of the precipice, which it was impossible to ascend in a straight line, we found a hole through which we could just crawl by putting aside some stones. These stones we could use to block the passage up again with. We now made for our cave near the road, and lit a charcoal fire, made some tea, and had something to eat after our exertions. We then went close to the road and lay in quiet behind some bushes, within earshot of anyone passing. While there two troopers passed from Blackheath to Hartley, chatting away in right merry mood, so, without gaining any information, we went back to the cave to wait for the coming of the coach, about 7 a.m., its usual time of passing the spot.

Dressed in as good guise as possible, with a red comforter pulled over his face, having eye-holes cut out, Wilson got the double gun, and with pistol in belt was prepared for action. While lying in wait we could see the coach, heavily laden with passengers, slowly winding up the foot of the hill about a mile distant. On reaching the steeper part the passengers were seen to dismount, and came straggling up in the wake of the coach. My instructions were to stand aloof, and only appear in case of Wilson seeming to be overpowered. As the coach came up I waited, nervously expecting each moment to hear it stop.

But no. It went smoothly and leisurely by, followed by its former occupants. Presently Wilson appeared, shivering from the cold, for the top of Mount Victoria in June is not a very pleasant place in which to remain inactive; but, in my opinion, a modicum of fear had some part in his tremblings. He said it was of no use trying it on this time, as he would have no chance with such a mob of stragglers behind the coach; it was not as if he had them all collected together. A little damped in our expectations, but not defeated, we retired to await the next opportunity; but at the critical moment something of the same sort occurred. We were again baulked, and I began to rail at him for his apparent want of pluck, saying, 'You have run me all this distance on a dangerous errand, and now your heart fails you. Had I known this would be the upshot, I would not have left the Ironbarks; the truth is, you haven't the spirit of a cur, you're only a skulk.'

I loaded him with every abuse, and could almost have felled him to the ground on the spot for running me into such a game. I taunted him with his bravado of being an 'old hand,' boasting of his courage and skill in such matters as the present. 'Here we are,' I said, 'with only rations enough for a day, and dare not show ourselves to procure more. Now, to-morrow morning, on the arrival of the mail, I'll go and stop it, if there are fifty passengers. You go about a half-mile on the road we have marked out for our escape, and wait there, for you will be no good to me should they prove too much for me, and if I did right I would put a ball through you, and leave you to rot here.'

At six o'clock next morning, when we had eaten

the last of our food, I began to disguise myself. Taking the empty flour bag I shook it out and drew it over me, so as to have my head in one corner, where I cut two eye-holes, with two arm-holes in the sides. I drew the charges of both barrels of the gun, saw that my powder was perfectly dry, and reloaded. The same with the pistols. I put slugs in one gun barrel and three pistol balls in the other, put a strap round the flour bag on my body, and stuck in the pistols one on each side. The gun I held in my hand. On looking through the eye-holes I could see Wilson's teeth chattering in his head, and his whole frame in a shake. My anger was roused, and between rage and contempt I said, 'Before going out I have a mind to knock your brains out with the butt of my gun. What good are you to me? If I had been inclined for this sort of work, could I not have done it on my own account? But you have led me into it, and now leave me in the lurch.'

So saying, I started for the road, and he went on the track of our intended retreat. Crossing the road I got into a drain in the shape of a horseshoe, about six feet deep in the centre. I had been thus ensconced about a quarter of an hour when I heard a creaking, shuffling noise in the road below me; and, peeping over the bank in front, I saw about sixteen of the road party from Hartley preparing with their overseer to commence work at this identical spot. Here was a dilemma. Could I have got out without being seen, I would have gone further, either up or down the road; but this could not be.

While considering my hazardous situation, I heard the sound of approaching wheels, and knew there was

no time to be lost. I must be prompt and cool; after all my bragging it would not do now to show the white feather. At the moment the leaders of the team came opposite my lurking-place I sprang on the bank, and in a voice of thunder shouted, 'Stop! Anyone that stirs I'll put a ball through.'

The roadmen, hearing this peremptory order, were stupefied, and dropping their tools, stood open-mouthed, and seemingly petrified. The coachman instantly pulled up, and the passengers on foot, straggling up round the elbow of the hill, collected in a group close by. Casting my eye for a moment to my left, but with gun still presented, I spied within twenty feet of me in the drain one of the road party, who had entered it for some purpose of his own, and who, as will be afterwards seen, paid dearly for having so done, but who now, like the rest, seemed paralysed.

Among the passengers was a man of commanding stature and gentlemanly appearance. On the coachman calling to him, 'Look here, sir!' he turned back and went to the leaders' heads.

I sang out to the driver, 'Chuck out these mail bags, and look sharp about it, or I will very quick fetch you off your perch.' He threw out ten bags. Meantime, a batch of newly-arrived Chinamen from Sydney, on their way to the diggings, came up. I ordered them to stand back and not to move. They crowded together in a mob, right in front of the horses, and the way was effectually blocked with their bamboos, baskets, and broad-brimmed hats. They looked like a flock of bewildered sheep.

I then ordered the driver to sound the bottom of the boot with the butt of the whip, and in so doing

he touched something, producing no sound. I instantly ordered him, on peril of his life, to throw them out. It proved to be the Mudgee mail bag, most precious of all. Addressing the tall gentleman, I said, 'How now, my long slab, you bundle into the coach and keep yourself quiet, and look sharp or I'll hasten your movements.' He did as told, muttering. The other passengers stood a little distance off, mute as mice, not daring to move, no doubt fearing for their money and valuables, with which I had no intention of interfering. Among them was my old bullock-driver from the Turon, Jem Goodwin, on his way to get married in Sydney. My tall friend being seated, I told the driver to move on and pick up his passengers, and turning to the roadmen ordered them back ten paces from the bags lying on the ground, and surrounded by the Chinamen, who had to make way for the coach.

Shouldering the eleven bags, nearly as much as I could carry, I made for our marked tree line. I afterwards learned that at the toll-bar the tall man stuck up a bill or placard, offering a reward of £100 on behalf of the Government for the capture of the robber. This he had power to do, being no less than Holyoake Bailey, Esq., the Attorney-General, on his return from the Mudgee election. The roadmen I had ordered back, fearing a rush as I picked up the bags. As for the Chinamen, I passed through among them as a shepherd through his flock, pushing them aside to make a passage for the bulky load of bags on my shoulders, and made along the line we had marked out.

On coming to the deep gully that I had bridged

over, I dropped the mail bags down, straddled across my sapling bridge, and gaining the opposite bank, drew it after me, and launched it into the depths.

CHAPTER III

THE SPOIL

I THEN picked up my bags again and made for the hole in the ascent, which, had I missed, I could not have got up the steep bank. At the top at last, I retreated two or three hundred yards into a thick scrub, cut the bags open, and bundled the contents out in a heap. I selected all the letters and everything I thought of value, depositing them in one bag, and leaving behind all newspapers and bulky articles seemingly worthless. My load was now necessarily greatly lightened, and even up to now I wonder how I managed to get along so well under such a weight of leather and paper (11 heavy mail bags). I now marched off briskly, and about a mile and a half further on I heard the sound of footsteps in the bush, and, looking round, as I expected, I spied the craven I had so unceremoniously dismissed. Coming up, his eyes glaring, and his hair bristling on his head, he said, 'It's all right, the road's clear, and nothing to fear. Come on, I'll give you a lift; let me carry the swag.' Glad of the relief, throwing animosity aside, I yielded up the spoil to his care. Sitting down, I

said, 'You go on, I'll have a spell for a bit, and soon overtake you.'

From the bush I sat in I had a clear view of about three miles of the road from Hartley towards the toll-bar, and past the scene of my late adventure. The first thing I noticed was a long string of men about two hundred yards from that scene, going on the Sydney road from Hartley. This was a gang of prisoners from Bathurst Gaol for Parramatta, guarded by a body of mounted troopers. At the time of my sticking up the mail five or six of these troopers, with the prisoners, were standing in front of the public-house at foot of the hill, about a mile distant.

From my point of observation I could see a trooper tearing along the road from the direction of the police station at Blackheath, where he had learnt all on the arrival of the coach, and started off in pursuit. Coming to the scene of the disaster he seemed to search carefully around and for some yards into the bush on both sides in quest of the desperado's tracks, but without avail, as he galloped off towards Hartley to raise the hue and cry. The devil was clearly on my side in this transaction, as had it not been for the chain of prisoners requiring the attention of the troopers two of them would have been on the road that morning to meet the mail on Mount Victoria and escort it to the station at Blackheath, and thus instead of the tall unobtrusive passenger, I should have had to encounter two armed troopers. Their absence providentially prevented bloodshed.

I must have rested over a quarter of an hour while considering these proceedings, when I started after my mate. In about half a mile further I found, from

his tracks in the sandy soil, that he had turned off the track we intended to keep, but being a good hand, from old experience, in running a trail, I easily followed him, and in about a mile more overtook him. 'You're off the track,' I said; 'how's that? You're not on our agreed route. You're making on for Bell's line, on the road for Windsor, and a mile off our line.' I did not dream at that time that the diversion had been made with any treacherous motive. We then partially retraced our steps, heading in the direction of the peculiar tree, on the bare hill, as seen from Mount Victoria previously, crossed Bell's line, where some men were engaged clearing off the scrub for the present line of railway, but gave them a wide berth, and reached the hollow at the base of the hill we were making for. I walked up to a large, smooth-barrelled gumtree, and, with my dagger, cut a half-moon brand right through the bark into the sap for future guidance. I carried the bag into the centre of a dense thicket, clearing a small space in which to sit down, secure from any espial.

We there emptied the bag, picked out all registered letters and official documents in red tape. We commenced opening them and laying them aside, according to their contents. Among the first I opened was one containing a publican's cash in three ten-pound notes. Going on with our work Wilson said, 'Look out particularly for those police letters, there might be something in them that might afterwards seal our doom.' Opening one, we found a marked cheque for (I think) £70, drawn by Mr Rouse of Wantagang in favour of one 'S——n.' 'Why,' I said, 'this is the forged cheque for which "S——n" is now awaiting

his trial in Bathurst gaol. I know him well; he's not a bad sort of a chap. We'll do him a turn now.' So, after taking out what we thought safe, we burned all the depositions, registered letters, and the cheque; in fact everything connected with the Bathurst cases.

In our search we found a miscellaneous collection of rings, watches, brooches and chains, slices of wedding cake, and a host of (to us) useless articles. Our search over, we found we had about a bucketful of notes, some in halves and some whole. These we separated and took particular care of. We did not find any corresponding halves, so we put them away with a number of postage stamp sheets, deeming them not negotiable. Gathering up all things we deemed serviceable, we returned them to the mailbag, burying it in a hollow log, and carefully concealing all arms and anything bearing a suspicious look or in any way connected with the robbery. We had now upon us only about a pound's worth of silver, brought from Ironbarks. We made tracks for Bell's line, which joins the Mudgee Road near Brown's mills, by Bowenfells.

CHAPTER IV

FLIGHT AND CAPTURE

It was just dark as we went down Brown's Lane on to the Mudgee Road, and this we followed. Having had nothing to eat all day I felt almost knocked up, and proposed making Walton's pub., at the Middle

River. I told Wilson we must give our right names to prevent mistakes in future, and pretend that we were just up from Sydney on our way back to the diggings, and that he had been, and was still, working for me. Before reaching Walton's we came to a small store by the wayside, where I overheard some people talking, and, going to the window, listened. I heard these words, 'What a pity the police have got him arrested, and on his way to Bathurst, on a charge of mail robbery.' This gave me a clue to work on, although I knew nothing of the party alluded to as the culprit. We shortly after pulled up at the public-house. Going in I found that Walton had given up the house and gone to Davy (now Rylstone), and that his successor was a retired sergeant of police from Hartley. This looked like running into the lion's mouth, but I trusted to luck and my own ingenuity. I remarked to the new landlord that Walton had the house on my last trip to the Turon, that I had been down to Sydney, and that my name was Bill Day, a gunsmith at Sofala. I added that he might have heard of me. He thought he had. I told him we would have stopped at Bowenfels, but knowing Walton kept a good house, and as I liked a place where I was well treated, I had pushed on, which accounted for my being so late. A Mr Collis, a squatter, was there at the time, and we each had a drink, and shortly after the landlady came out and sat on a chair near us, sewing.

On the landlord asking me if we came through Hartley, I answered we had. 'Did you hear of the mail robbery?' 'Yes,' said I. 'It was a fearful thing. They have arrested a man at Bowenfells, but I did not hear who he was. It's awful times when a

man can't travel the public roads in safety.' 'It's a great loss to me,' said he. 'My £30 for license is gone.'

At this my mate gave me a nudge, which the landlady, I saw, noticed, and a cold shiver ran through me. I knew I must have given him a look like a thundercloud. However, I said to the publican, 'You sort of men ought to keep a good look-out for suspicious-looking tramps, and give all the assistance you can to the police, as no man's life or pocket is safe with such ruffians prowling around.' 'I intend to do so,' he replied; and supper being announced, we went in and sat down, his wife attending on us the while. Nothing could be said between Wilson and myself, but we heartily enjoyed our meal after our long fast.

After supper we re-entered the bar and listened to the general talk, and went early to bed. The landlord asked us if we would breakfast before starting, to which we replied we would, as we were in no hurry. He showed us into the same room I had occupied in my former trips in Walton's time, having a sash window or door opening into the yard.

When I heard his footsteps die away, I turned to my mate and said, 'You foolish wretch, you have done for us by that nudge of yours about the £30. The woman twigged you, as I could tell by her looks that she suspected something.' The night was bitterly cold, with a hard frost. I said, 'I must not go to sleep; I'll go and lie near the fence, on the watch. He's sure to send information about us if she gives him a hint.' I lay there till all in the house was in darkness, and hearing or seeing no one on the move, I went back to bed.

We slept in one bed, and Wilson was sound asleep when I came in. We slept till getting on for daybreak, when a tremendous rattling at the bolted door aroused us. 'Who's there?' I cried. 'Police. Open the door.' A constable at once entered and took up his station, pistol in hand, in one corner. Others followed. When all had entered I was asked, 'Where from?' 'Sydney, but belong to Sofala.' 'Did you come through Hartley, and did you hear of the mail robbery?' 'Yes,' to both. 'Any objection to be searched?' 'No.' On being searched nothing was found on us but a few shillings in silver. Then the first constable said, 'I saw the little man put something under the bedtick while his mate was being searched.' On looking under the mattress, lo and behold! they produced a letter.

I was thunderstruck and gazed on in a daze. They examined the post-office dates, and found them to correspond with the date of the robbery. It was only a business letter, of no use to us, and what induced Wilson to keep it I could not then understand; but it was done for a purpose, as will be seen. Oh! the treachery of the black-hearted villain. My blood boils now to think of it, after the kindness and favours I had done him. Being satisfied with the letter, the leader of the police said, 'That is all right; we've got them safe now.' We were handcuffed and marched off to Hartley. On the road one constable said to the other beside him, 'It's the little fellow did it; he had the letter.' Wilson heard him.

At Hartley the canvassing for the election was being carried on, and as we arrived a Mr Denis Gaynor, formerly in the police and a publican on the Turon,

though at this time a Bathurst innkeeper, coming forward, said, 'Hilloa! how's this?' Before I could answer the sergeant cried out, 'Let those fifteen go; we've got the right ones this time.' The fifteen roadmen were released, no doubt praying in their hearts for me. 'Let go No. 16,' came next. The cell door opened, and my companion of the drain on Mount Victoria came forth without any boots on, and loading me with abuse. They had seen the imprints of footmarks in the wet drain, and on examination they tallied with the boots he wore. He had remained in the drain through fright after his companions had gone off, and his not returning with them cast further suspicion on him. In fact, he was adjudged to be the perpetrator of the robbery. Nothing, apparently, would have saved him, provided we had not been captured. The driver of the mail had also been detained to identify and prosecute him.

After the release of this gang, we were placed in separate cells, and next day Captain Battye came from Bathurst.

Being the first called out, I was taken to the courthouse and examined verbally, and bodily for marks (there were plenty of them), and sent back.

Wilson was next called, but what took place I know not. Even then I had but faint suspicion against him; but I did not hear him re-enter his cell. Nothing further occurred for a day or two. One morning I shouted from my cell to my mate; but, receiving no answer, I was puzzled, and my trust in his honesty began to waver. That evening Mr Brown, the police magistrate, and some other gentlemen, came to see me, as a sort of wild beast from a menagerie. On going

out, Mr B., being last, placed his hand to the side of his mouth, and said to me, 'He has slewed,' giving me to understand that my mate had turned informer.

I was transfixed with horror. Wilson was led next day to the spot whence we had taken a bird's-eye view of our situation on the first morning of our foray, and pointed out the tree on the hill as being close to the plant of the stolen goods, whither, I suppose, they took him as a guide.

Two days after I was brought for examination, and placed in the dock, before an immense crowd. Seeing my mate coming towards the dock, I made to open the door for him, when Captain Battye said curtly, 'Save yourself the trouble.' Battye prosecuted, saying that Wilson had turned Queen's evidence, and had clearly explained all. He certainly adhered in his evidence strictly to the truth as to our proceedings from the first move. I will give him credit for this much. Mr Brown, P.M., then asked me if I had any questions to put to the witness, when I replied, 'No, I think not.' Thereupon I was committed to Bathurst to await my trial, being meantime placed in another cell, and on a chain.

CHAPTER V

PRISON ONCE MORE

NEXT morning I was marched off, mounted on a horse (decidedly not a bolter), handcuffed and guarded by two troopers, with the redoubtable captain in true military form in command. In company with us was

my recreant mate, also in charge of a constable. I appeared as we passed along like a wild bullock just run in from some outlandish place in the far-away bush. At every public-house on the way our chief and the informers might regale themselves as they listed, but there was no thought for the sufferings of the parched and ferocious bandit, the troopers telling me that they would like to get me a drink, but they dared not. At one place I did get a drink of water. On my telling the captain that some of my own money had been taken from me, and asking if I might not have a glass of ale, he replied, 'Mail money, mail money,' and I went without. That night we reached the Frying Pans, about halfway to Bathurst, where we camped for the night, I being placed in safe keeping, while the informer ate and drank at his ease. The next day was a repetition of the same, and on arrival in Bathurst, the wonder of the day, I was conveyed to the gaol, while Wilson was accommodated in the watchhouse.

For a day or two I was kept on prison rations, and this, with the short allowance daily doled out to me at Hartley, reduced me almost to a state of starvation. In my despair, having dealt largely in my business with Mr Webb, the storekeeper (now the Hon. E. Webb, M.L.C.), I applied to him by letter for some assistance in the shape of food, giving him my name as Bill Day, and saying that I had to wait three months for trial, and if I never paid him God would. To my great joy next day I received a dinner sufficient for two men, with tea and sugar tied up in a cloth. This continued—thanks to his considerate benevolence—till the day of trial.

Years after, going to Bathurst, I met at Cheshire Creek the identical constable who had charge of Wilson on our way from Hartley. I asked him if my mate made any remarks about the affair on the way. 'Oh, yes,' he said, 'he let out that his motive in keeping back the letter was to get you in his power, saying that when he had got you to do the job, he had kept the letter with the intention of hiding it in your place at the Ironbacks, and then telling the police that he and you had been travelling together, that you had given him the slip, and that from your actions he suspected you of having been the party who stuck up the mail. Of course on this information your place would have been overhauled, the letter found, and you lagged. Then he in his own good time would have gone and sprung the plant, and have lived in ease and plenty ever after.'

While I was living at Ironbarks, a trooper who used to ride from Cheshire Creek to meet the gold escort on Wyagdon Hill, between Sofala and Bathurst, was shot dead, and it was supposed that while the murderer was disposing of the body, the escort had passed, and thus escaped being robbed. When I had been a week in gaol awaiting my trial, Detective Harrison, with Captain Battye and Mr Chippendale, the gaoler, came to my cell, and, calling me by name, coolly said, 'I charge you with the murder of Trooper Codrington, on Wyagdon,' on such a date. 'Prepare yourself.' And without another word, or giving me time to reply, as coolly departed. I was all aghast, troubles heaping upon troubles. Still hope did not fail me, and I determined to meet them all with a stout heart. While revolving in my mind the serious

position in which I was now placed, I began to consider in what possible way I could be connected with so hideous a crime, and to find the best way of extricating myself from the peril. I learned from one of the gaolers the date of the murder of Codrington, and became more reconciled to the state of affairs, as I knew that I could call the evidence of Mr E. Coombes, manager of the Wentworth Company, for whom I was working at that time, to show that I could not have been implicated; also the evidence of a man named Charles Wilson, who had been working for me close to my house at the same date; and, moreover, that it could be easily found from the books of the company, kept by Mr Coombes, that I had rendered a daily account of the work done by me. I resolved to address Mr Coombes by letter. The man S——n, of the forged £70 cheque on Rouse, found in the mail robbery and burnt by me, was lying in the same gaol, also for trial; and as he was a good penman, I got him to write a letter for me to Mr C., stating my position, and saying that my life was in danger, a reward of £500 being offered for the capture of the murderer, and that his evidence in support of an alibi would be sufficient to clear me from the charge. I then sent for the governor of the gaol, and told him that I was anxious to see Dr Palmer, the police magistrate, in reference to this murder case. The governor, thinking no doubt that I was about to make a confession, speedily sent my message, telling Dr Palmer what I was charged with. I said to the doctor, 'I give you a letter for Mr Coombes, who can clear me. You can read it, see it safely posted, and should it miscarry, I can call on you at the trial to

depose as to its contents.' Whether the letter was sent or not I heard no more of the charge, and was never indicted.

Some days after, a report was spread in the gaol that Wilson, the informer in the other charge against me, had made his escape from the watchhouse, where he was under surveillance. The lockup keeper had to attend suddenly on his sick child, and left the door unlocked. Wilson then walked out and was off.

On several occasions I had told S——n that he need not be frightened, as he was sure to be discharged at his trial; but I never told him of my having burnt the cheque and the depositions against him. He had stated on being arrested, that the cheque had been tendered to him by a man not in custody. But he told me that he had managed to conceal some blank cheques on his person, and that when brought into gaol he had forged three of these for various amounts, and had taken the opportunity of prisoners being discharged and going out to pass them into circulation at different times, arranging that the bearer, if successful, should share the spoil. He was thus actually making money while lying in gaol.

Shortly before my trial came on, I was sent for to the lodge. A man there had brought me some tea, sugar and other articles in a handkerchief. Speaking through the window in the corridor he said, 'I've come to see you, Bill. Haven't you got a brother?' I said, 'Yes.' While we were talking on different matters, he pretending to be my brother, a prisoner sweeping up the corridor, catching my eye, tipped me the wink, and pointing with his thumb towards the bearer of good things gave me to understand there was some-

thing crooked about him. Taking the hint I said, 'I don't believe you're any brother of mine, I don't want to have anything to do with you,' and walked away. I went to the man who had given me the hint, when he said, 'Didn't you know that cove?' 'No.' 'Why, that's the sergeant of police at Mudgee. I knew him at once; he's only come to pump you.'

Next day the door leading into the prisoners' yard was opened, and a very tall, gentlemanly-looking man, dressed in tip-top fashion, entered. Immediately the usual cry at the admission of a new inmate, 'Fish, oh! fish, oh!' was raised by the prisoners, and he was surrounded. Looking at him, I said in his presence, 'Look here, lads, depend on it, this here fellow, I know by his step, is either a policeman or a soldier, or something under Government, sent to pick up what he can see and hear to use against you. Be on your guard.' Consequently he was shunned by all. Seeing this, after a while I thought, 'This man may not be what I take him for, and it is hard to blame him wrongfully.' So I went to him and said that I might be wrong, and if he could clear himself from the suspicion I had cast upon him I should be glad. He told me he was a military man going under the name of Whittaker, and so far I was right. He had been in the army in India, lately he had been in charge of a detachment of Black Police in Queensland, but, being a harum-scarum sort of a fellow, he had come to Sydney, and was on his way up to the diggings. He continued that on coming to Penrith, Kendall's coach was full. 'But,' he said, 'Kendall lent me a horse to take me to Hartley, where I was to leave it. Instead of so doing I brought it on to Bath-

urst, put it in the poundyard, and had it sold by auction. I was in the act of spending the money when I was arrested on a charge of horse-stealing, and here I am.' As the scale of rations in his class was scanty, and he complained of hunger, I shared my more plentiful store with him then and after.

Waiting for trial the time hung heavy on our hands, and to relieve the monotony we instituted a Judge and Jury court, tried one another, and passed sentences, according to statements elicited, which sentences, strange to say, came very near the actual results at the legitimate trials, mine being an exception, as I was awarded at the mock trial fifteen years.

CHAPTER VI

TRIED FOR BUSHRANGING

NEXT day the Assizes were opened, under Judge Dickenson. The Attorney-General (my friend of the mail attack) prosecuted, with Mr Lee, Clerk of Arraigns. Whittaker and I were placed in the dock, when I was ordered to sit down, and Whittaker's trial proceeded. The indictment being read, he pleaded 'Guilty.' The judge said, addressing the prisoner, 'You have had whiskers and moustache shaved, and you believe I do not know you.' Then turning to the Attorney-General he said, 'You, I think, defended this prisoner at Newcastle, in a charge that was dismissed?' But the learned gentleman did not wish any reference to be made to that. On being asked if he had anything to say in defence, Whittaker replied,

'I pleaded guilty to save exposure. I want no sympathy from you. Do your duty, and give me the full extent of the law if you see fit.' He was then sentenced to seven years' hard labour.

I was then ordered to stand up, and the charge being read, I pleaded 'Not Guilty.' The indictment was, 'Stealing from the Postmaster-General a quantity of money and papers, etc.' The Attorney-General then stripped off wig and gown, and stepped into the witness-box, not appearing again in the case, another barrister taking his place. He (the Attorney-General), having been a passenger by the despoiled coach, swore to my voice, as did also the coachman. The other witnesses against me were Captain Battye and the apprehending constables. The evidence went to show that I was the companion of the 'escaped' informer—who had disclosed the plunder, and who had concealed the Bathurst letter at the inn. This letter was identified by the writer.

The captain had produced the arms with the charges drawn, and was detailing the monies, etc., when the judge requested a statement of the whole amount and not a detailed list. It was given as in gold, money, etc., the amount of £4800. This evidence was quite sufficient to convict me.

It appeared in the course of investigation that the landlord at Middle River, after turning out the lights, had slipped off unseen by me and given the information leading to our arrest, for which he received the £100 reward.

I was then called on for my defence, but having no witnesses I produced certificates of character from the highest and most influential men on the western

goldfields, including the Commissioner and J.Ps. I addressed the jury for about an hour and a half. I injured myself, although it may not have had any effect on the result. When the acting Attorney-General rose to reply I appealed to the judge as to whether it was usual when a prisoner was undefended for the Attorney-General to use his right of reply. On this knowing hit the acting Attorney-General resumed his seat, and the jury retired.

In the absence of the jury, the court being quite quiet, the judge went to his room. There was a man standing by my wife, who was present in the body of the court, who asked me how I thought to get on. I replied, 'Sure to be found guilty, and likely to receive ten years, with about three years in irons.'

The Attorney-General himself, who was sitting close in front of me, cast an eye of wonder on me, but did not speak. After about an hour the jury returned into court with a verdict of 'Guilty.' I made a long appeal to the judge on behalf of my wife and family; but a deaf ear was turned to me.

The judge, in passing sentence, remarked that as the robbery had not been committed through want, his determination was to give me the utmost penalty the law provided. In the course of his speech, knowing I could not make matters worse, I frequently interrupted him, but was met with a stern, 'Silence, prisoner.' 'There was one thing,' he said, 'instead of being indicted for stealing you ought to have been arraigned on a charge of highway robbery under arms, and the Attorney-General might now withdraw the one and substitute the other charge.' To this the Attorney-General did not assent. The judge con-

tinued, 'Under the latter charge it would have lain in my power to give you imprisonment for life, while the highest sentence on the former is seven years, which I now inflict on you, with hard labour on the public works of the colony.'

I was then removed, and S——n took my place, for forgery, receiving a penalty of five years.

CHAPTER VII

AGAIN A CONVICT

ALL the time of my lying in Bathurst Gaol I was confined in one of the condemned cells at nights, where was a large loose chain which I used to drag slowly across the floor, to the terror of the inmates of the adjoining cells, who would call out to me several times. At length I would ask, 'What's the matter?' 'Did you hear that chain?' 'What chain?' pretending ignorance. If I did not go off to sleep I would resume the dragging, giving rise to the belief that the cell was haunted, as it might well have been, if possible, as the names of all the men executed in the gaol were cut deeply in the stone walls.

About eight or nine o'clock one night the door of the condemned cell next to the one I occupied was opened, and a man placed in it who had been condemned to death for murdering and burning a shepherd near Dubbo. When all was quiet I hailed him, and learned his fate. On my expressing my sorrow for him, he said it did not matter to him, he was tired of life, and would as soon be hanged as not,

as it would save him the trouble of being his own executioner at a future date. I asked him how he came to feel so. He replied, 'I am suffering from a cancer in the palate; I am a nuisance to, and shunned by everyone; my life is a burden to me, and I would not exchange places with you at the present time.'

Each prisoner on conviction donned the Government suit, his own he could dispose of as he liked. A man from the Turon, awaiting his trial, by name S—— D——, I introduced to Whittaker, telling him (Whittaker) that as he was not likely to want the togs in which he entered the gaol-yard for some time to come —top boots and breeches, Newmarket-cut coat, and other parts of a sporting fit out—he might give them to this S—— D——, an acquaintance of mine on the Turon. Instead of putting on this suit at his trial D—— went up in his own clothes, and was acquitted as he expected. The arrangement was that if he got off he was to send us in some things for the clothes. When discharged, however, he went to a public-house and put on this sporting costume, and then at another represented himself as a squatter in the back country just arrived. The landlord of this latter house had a family of daughters, into the good graces of one of whom D—— ingratiated himself, and without much ado got married to her. A good while after this event it was rumoured that D—— had already a wife and family on the Turon, and he was arrested on a charge of bigamy. So, instead of sending any things into us, he came in person, wearing his newly-acquired garments, strutting about the gaol-yard in full feather. His first wife was brought up to prosecute as a witness.

PART VII

THE PRISON ON COCKATOO ISLAND

CHAPTER I

DESPERATE CHARACTERS

THE next proceeding as regarded us was the production of a long chain, to which we, long-sentence and hard-labour men, were attached in pairs. I being the last in a gang of nineteen or twenty, was hand-cuffed to it singly. We marched in this way from station to station till reaching Parramatta, where we were examined, and our description taken previous to our dispatch to Darlinghurst, Sydney, where we underwent a still more rigorous inspection, every particular being noted down. We were then removed to the cells, some singly, some in parties, and I was among the former. After one day's detention here my cell door was opened, and there entered Mr L——, Clerk of Arraigns, and a Mr C——r. We had a long confab, when L—— said, 'Well, you made a very good defence, but cheer up; you're young yet, and good conduct will carry you through comfortably.' At the same time he asked me if there was anything he could do for or get me. Thanking him, I replied no, and saying

'Good-bye, take care of yourself,' they left me. Just as the door was locked I went to turn my bed, on which L—— had been sitting during the talk, and found lying on the bed a silver-mounted meerschaum pipe and a sovereign, which, no doubt, had fallen 'accidentally' from his pockets, and for which I thanked him many years after.

We were next sent over to 'the island' (Cockatoo).* The overseers addressed us, saying: 'If you have any money about you you had better give it up. It will be returned to you again; but if any is found after this warning, it will be confiscated to the Government, and the owner will be allotted punishment in addition.' After a short conference there was an amusing scene. Some were cutting out their stores from coat collars, some from trousers or boots, some from one place, and some from another, anxious to render up all, in dread of the consequences of concealment. Several prisoners standing by at a distance and looking on at this scene were laughing to themselves, thinking, I daresay, what fools the new chums were. After all was tendered and the donors' names booked with the respective amounts, the overseer told them that all the money would be returned 'on completion of sentences.' This was an unexpected blow. I, not quite so soft as the others, seeing the older hands giggling, jumped at the thought of the old dodge of swallowing my cash. I had altogether £1, 15s.—a sovereign and fifteen shillings in various coins. Keeping a sharp look-out and watching my opportunity while the others were being searched, I commenced operations by first bolting a half-crown

* Cockatoo Island, in the Parramatta River, now known as Biloela.

—a rather difficult and painful process at first attempt. Having got over the first difficulty, the rest followed easily, and in quick succession, till all was disposed of, and a curious sensation I felt. After a thorough overhauling each man had supplied to him a dish, spoon, two blankets, and a rug, but no bed or bed-tick. By the appearance of the things I fancied that soap must be a scarce commodity on the island. We were then told off to different wards. At night, going into my ward, I found our sleeping quarters were bunks (or cages), in tiers three deep, exactly resembling battened-up hen coops. Into these we had to crawl. With my clothes for a bed, and my shoes for a pillow, I made the best of it for a week, when I managed to get from a man in the carpenter's shop a tick, full of shavings, and this was a much-envied luxury. The occupants of our bunks previous to our taking possession, seemed to have been kept on very short commons; and I really thought the first night, that by morning I should be found a shrivelled and bloodless skeleton of skin and bones. At bell ring in the morning, rousing up I proceeded to don my grey trousers, but could find nothing whereby to secure them in the way of buttons, although all had been in shipshape order the previous night. One of the older hands, seeing my vain search, said, 'It's no use looking, mate, the rats have made a supper of your horn buttons, and you'll have to get metals,' and such I found to be the case.

We were then taken to the Engineering Departments, under Mr Broderick, where the different gangs were regulated, each man being asked his trade, or what he could do. I gave my trade as a gunsmith and vice man. Mr Duff, the clerk, was sent for, the

engineer-overseer, and I was placed with him, where I got a thorough insight into planing, slotting, drilling, etc.

When in the yard next day the various messes were formed, six in a mess. There happened to be collected in one, six of the most inveterate scoundrels and bullies on the island, on whom we 'crawlers,' as we were termed, dared not look. The leader or captain of the mess, Swan, had been transported for a term of thirty years, for killing a man up country, and burning the body between two logs. He was a powerful man of most desperate character, well up in fisticuffs, and partial to the use of the knife. The free officers of the island, as well as the prisoners, stood in awe of him, and notwithstanding his smooth talk at times, and his plausible manner, he was a black-hearted villain. At first I was, of course, ignorant of the nature of the beast, but it soon shone out, and his time had to come to be tamed down. Walking up and down the yard he got from me all my pedigree, which I innocently told him. Turning to his well-fitted mates he sneeringly said, 'My God, they must be a chicken-hearted lot up Bathurst way. Just fancy, a raw flat like this cowing a score of road men and coach passengers who could have eaten him. Why, I believe a man with a candle in hand could frighten such a cowardly crowd of country louts.' Every time I met him he hurled his jeers and taunts at me.

The ward I slept in contained among others Jack P——y—[Jack Peisley, a murderer, and Gardiner's confederate, hanged, Bathurst, April 1862?]—the noted bushranger, afterwards hanged in Bathurst; and next to me on one side was the celebrated Gardiner, doing

a sentence under the 'Ticket-of-Leave' system.* Our wardsman was one Billy Mundy, night patrol and ward-cleaner. This man was in for life for killing and disembowelling a man up-country; but afterwards, on 'ticket-of-leave,' got a situation with a family near Bathurst, almost every member of which he subsequently murdered. He was hanged in Bathurst also. A night-lamp hung in the ward for the convenience of the wardsman's inspection, and at one end there was a window, through which the sentry on duty outside commanded a full view of the interior of the whole extent of the three wards, which communicated by heavy, open-barred iron doors. During the day the whole island was surrounded by armed sentries, who were withdrawn at night and posted closely round the gaol, which was in form of a square, the mess-house forming one side, the cook-house another, the hospital a third, with the assistant superintendent's dormitory the fourth.

* Frank Gardiner's first New South Wales conviction was on March 17, 1854, at Goulburn. He obtained a ticket-of-leave in 1859, but it was cancelled in 1861, when it must have been that the writer met him. After this, aided by Gilbert, O'Malley, Hall and Dunn, he kept the country in terror. He is credited with six mail robberies, besides scores of robberies of travellers. The most memorable exploit of his band was the robbery at Eugowra of the gold escort from the Lachlan in 1862. Several thousand ounces of gold were stolen, and two troopers wounded. Gardiner was only captured in 1864. He then was tried before Sir Alfred Stephen, and received sentences of 32 years' hard labour; but was suffered to leave the colony in 1874. Gilbert was shot by the police when resisting capture in 1865. Dunn, who was wounded at the same time, was soon afterwards hanged in Darlinghurst. Hall was betrayed to the police in 1865, and his body riddled with 34 wounds.

CHAPTER II

HARD WORK

Dr West was our visiting surgeon and doctor, with his assistant, Mr M'Donald. The first piece of work I had in hand was repairing one of the force pumps, two of which were used in pumping out the dock (the Fitzroy), worked in what is called a 'Sump,' twenty-two feet in depth. From the chamber of this pump a large piece had been broken out, about two feet square, in which I had to put a patch with half-inch boiler plate, felted with red lead, and cramped and bolted. When it was finished the assistant engineer, Mr Doran, first inspected my work. I assured him the pump was all right, as I had taken great pains with it, being my first job. It had, by the way, occupied an entire week. Then another engineer, Mr Jones, had an inspection of it, and seemed also satisfied. At that time a vessel entered the dock for repairs, under the supervision of Mr Johnson, of Balmain. All being ready, Mr Broderick, the chief engineer, came down. Round the pump was a stage or platform for the use of the workmen, and ladders to the bottom of the well. Steam was got up, and I, anxious to see the working of the pump, descended the ladder to watch if it leaked. Lantern in hand I was gazing on—the engine started, the pump sucked—when from each side of my boasted patch tons of water were forced out by the enormous pressure of the 'plunge.' I was knocked senseless, and had not the engine been stopped my career would have then and there ended.

Getting to the top again, Mr Broderick laughingly praised my skill in the very efficient patch I had placed on the pump, while I, having changed my wet clothes and donned a dock suit, stood by rather crestfallen. I was then sent to fit up brackets at the vice, and to work at the drilling machine. At nine o'clock breakfast I saw a long string of the men one after another drawn up, and on asking the meaning of this, was told, 'That's shop, oh!' A storekeeper from Sydney came over, and we were allowed to purchase tobacco, tea, sugar, and coffee, pepper, and white bread, but no other article. I fell in with the others, almost last in the string, when my old chum, Whittaker, came up crying, 'You've got some money—you did not give up; but I, like the other fools, gave up every penny. I'll have plenty of the rhino by-and-by,' mentioning his connection with some of the highest people in England, among them a certain ducal family, and particularly his own sister—a leader of the aristocracy—from whom he had great expectations, although in his own right he would be independent. He added that through the influence of his friends he should only be here about eighteen months, or two years at most, and all he might save up here should be mine, with other (as I thought at the time) high-flown pledges of gratitude. He finished by informing me that his father had been Lord Mayor of London, and had lost about a quarter of a million in a late dock fire in London. I said to him after listening, 'Hold on, young 'un; you must think I'm a soft one to believe all this rigmarole about your family. But here, you've been kind enough in writing for me and in other ways, if you want a few shillings you can have

them, but don't fancy, because I'm an ignorant ass and you're well up, that I'm going to be fooled by your boasting.' 'All right,' said he, 'you'll see.' I told him all I wanted from him was this: 'In about three months we'll be allowed to write and receive letters to and from our friends, and I want you to act for me. Here's five shillings for you; but as to your dukes and all that, it's only in my eye, "bunkum"; fall in, and follow me.' The other men that came with me from Bathurst were in a great stew at having delivered over their cash, which they would not again handle till their time was up. The overseer had great difficulty in getting men to do the dirty work in the well, sound the pumps, among the slush and slimy weeds ever collecting. The majority of the men, sooner than stand below, almost up to the neck in dirty, stinking water, would prefer running the risk of punishment for refusal, which the overseer was generally unwilling to inflict. On applying to me, I at once willingly (as it seemed) undertook the office, and never refusing was frequently sent for, and thus I got into his good graces. Christmas had now come round, and I was told that if I had any friends in Sydney they would be allowed to send me a dinner. I had a letter written and despatched to my old friend, Mrs Marley, of the 'Crispin Arms,' who promptly furnished me with most enjoyable food, sufficient to last me a fortnight, with two silk handkerchiefs, which we were permitted to wear. After dinner I got my noble friend to indite a letter to the kind friend who had taken charge of my children in my trouble, receiving, in due time, a favourable and most consolatory answer.

CHAPTER III

TAMING A BULLY

MATTERS were now going on smoothly with me, when all was for a time upset by the blustering interference of the bully Swan. He again began annoying me in the yard before the other men, but I determined to bide my time. I was strong as a bullock, and had made up my mind to fix him somehow. But how? One eventful morning a dense fog overspread the island, rendering it unsafe for the prisoners to be employed in their usual outside work; so we were all kept in the yard. Round the walls of this yard were several stone troughs for washing. This particular day the men were allowed to occupy their time reading, etc. One man was surrounded by a group of eager auditors while he read aloud some interesting work. I went to one of the troughs to have a wash, and as I passed I saw Swan sitting in a recess. I pulled off my jacket, washed, and dried myself, and as no one was about but we two, and the sentry could not well see into this portion of the yard, I thought it a grand opportunity for settling scores with my tormentor. Walking quickly to where he was I sprang at him, seized him by the two ears, and in a death-like grasp, with the full strength of my powerful arms, dashed his head against the stone wall. The blood spouted in torrents from his mouth and nostrils. I dragged him forward, and, as a finisher, dealt him an upper cut under the chin,

almost breaking his jaw. At the same time I cried, 'You'll strike me again, will you.'

My cries, being overheard in the messroom, brought one of the men to the scene of strife. He, seeing my antagonist prostrate on the ground, and me bespattered with blood standing over him, ran back into the yard among the prisoners, shouting at the top of his voice, 'That new chum from Bathurst has killed Swan.'

Swan's five flash messmates soon gathered around him, but finding very little sign of life, informed Dr M'D——, who ordered him to be carried to the hospital on a stretcher. I then washed the blood from my hands, face and shirt, and rejoined the men, who stood by in a body, muttering each to himself, 'I hope to the Lord he has killed him; it will be a good riddance.' I heard scarcely anything of the affair after, as one and all, free and bond, inwardly rejoiced at the discomfiture and permanent downfall of the tyrannical and overbearing bully. The fog about now cleared off, and work was resumed as usual. In all Swan remained at the hospital nine months, but in about six months after this occurrence, while I was doing duty as gatekeeper, he, being out for fresh air, came up and asked me, 'How I could take such a cowardly advantage of him?' Evading a direct reply, I said, with a good deal of warmth, 'You just go away from me, or if you aggravate me I'll not leave a breath nor a sound bone in your ugly carcass. If ever you interfere with me after this warning I'll not hesitate a moment to kill you outright.'

CHAPTER IV

PROMOTION

FROM this time out everything went quietly. About this time the sub-overseer in the engineering department had about completed his time and was to get his 'ticket.' Great speculation arose among the men as to who would be his successor. When a man was due for his 'ticket,' got by good conduct, the superintendent asked him for what district he wanted the 'ticket.' This overseer on being asked replied 'Scone,' and to Scone he went. The superintendent, Captain Mann, one day sent the office messenger for me, and on my going up he said, 'I am going to make you sub-overseer in this department. Conduct yourself well and you will be recommended for a remission of sentence.' I told him from what I had seen in the working of the shop I had only one objection to the billet. I said that if a man were placed over others he ought to have some power in the regulation of their conduct, so far, that if any subordinate refused to obey orders, the overseer should have the right forthwith to remove him from the shop and have him sent to the quarries. I said that if I were given such power I would undertake the duty. The superintendent fell in with my suggestion, and I was appointed to the post. I did not then tell the men of this, but informed the other subs—Mr Doran and Mr Jones. The men were conjecturing one with another as to who would succeed, thinking that someone among them who had been

six or eight years in the prison would be the man, never dreaming that the new chum would walk over their heads and slip into the empty shoes.

The free men always stood at the gates as the gangs were counted out to the respective men in charge. At last, on the day after I was appointed, 'Engineers' was called (about sixty of them). Mr Byron, assistant superintendent, then called out, 'William Day.' I stepped out, and he continued, 'Take charge of these men.' I then walked out among the free men at the gate, and the sixty were counted out to me, to be recounted in at night, I, like the other overseers, being held responsible for the full number to be returned. I marched off with my complement of hands to the shop, where my appointment formed the subject of discussion the livelong day through. At ring of bell in the evening, I shouted out, 'Fall in!' and said to the men in my charge, plainly and boldly, 'Now, men, I've not taken this billet to be a tyrant over you, as I know from experience many subs are, but to act to you as I would wish you to act to me, to be fair and just, and favour no one above another. Now, the first man who disobeys a just order goes straight from the shop to the quarry, so don't be deceived. I'll ill-treat no one, but give every man his deserts. And one thing more, I mean to throw away no chance of bettering myself, and anything that I may see in any way likely to affect me to the contrary I will in no way countenance to please any one. March!'

Next morning the dock had to be pumped out for the ship's carpenters. A lot of weeds and slime had gathered round the pumps in the well, which had to

be cleared away. Now, I thought, will be an opportunity to test the effect of my words to the men. I selected the 'flashest bounce' in the gang, and quietly though firmly told him to do this work.

He said, 'Are there not plenty of labourers round you can send to do it in place of me, who have been so long in the shop? Send one of them.'

Without a moment's hesitation I answered, 'You have your orders; go and do them, or come round to the office with me.' 'I'll go with you,' he said, 'but I won't do that work.'

I took him to Mr B.'s, the head office, and when I had told Mr B. the instructions I had received from Captain Mann, the superintendent, he (Mr B.), addressing the man, said, 'I'm determined to have no more complaints of disobedience to orders. If you do not like the work you will be sent straight away to the quarries. Take your choice.' The man, muttering and growling, returned to his duty, and completed his work.

The 'crawlers' looked wonderstruck, saying, 'That's the talk; that's fairplay,' and henceforward I had very little trouble and no refusals.

We wanted another hand to clean the machinery and do odd jobs, so I went to Mr Broderick and told him, and he consented. I then informed him there was a quiet, hardworking man up in the quarry, a well-educated man and first-class penman, who would be very handy in the shop. He took down the name, 'Whittaker,' my old chum, and sent the office messenger to Mr Keiller, overseer at the quarry, with an order to send Whittaker to the office. When he came down Mr Broderick sent him to the overseer

in the engine-room (myself). I had mentioned that as this Whittaker was a good penman and accountant, and as I was unable to write, he would be of great use in keeping an account of all work done in the shop. Mr Broderick consented, and Whittaker thankfully accepted the office as being a welcome change from the quarry work under a broiling sun. I used to give an account of all the work done, which Whittaker entered.

All the engineers received ninepence each per week to buy tobacco or sugar, and the labourers sixpence, except on wet days, when, there being no work, pay was stopped. On the Saturday we had to stop in to get shaved, washed, and prepared for Sunday. I was served with a blue jacket and long watchman's coat, in contradistinction to the grey garb of the ordinary prisoners. On Saturday I was placed at the gate as watchman. Alongside the guardroom, and between it and the gate, was a blind corner, as it was called, where the superintendent from his dormitory could not see a prisoner. In this corner some of the men one day began playing three-up on their knees. I shouted out to them, 'Drop that gambling'—it was against all rules—'I can't allow any of that right under my nose. Drop it, or come with me to the office.' They had to knock off, though they abused me fiercely; but I was not going to throw away a chance, as, had they been caught, and I proved cognisant of it, I should have suffered both disgrace and punishment.

On Sunday two overseers at a time did duty in two-hour spells at the gate and on the walls, no man being allowed to pass the gates without an order from the head warder.

CHAPTER V

LAID UP

On the Monday I was ordered to have some of the machinery scraped, cleaned and painted, and for this purpose I fetched from one of the other gangs a man in cross irons. There was a very large wheel weighing about fifteen hundredweight leaning against the wall of the shop, and, in painting this, the man, hampered with his shackles, got entangled with the prop supporting it, and in endeavouring to extricate himself brought the wheel down with a crash. The boss, penetrating the inner side of his thigh, pinned him to the floor. He shouted out, 'For God's sake, Bill, help.' The men were all in the casting-room, in a distant part of the building, and no one in sight, so I left my post and ran to his aid. Thanks to my enormous strength, which was made greater by excitement, I managed to relieve him of the pressure. He crawled from under, and the heavy mass fell to the ground. I had sense enough left to feel that, from the over-exertion, something had given way internally, although I felt no pain at the time. An instant after I felt a choking sensation in my throat, and a stream of blood burst from my mouth. I can recollect no more till on recovering my senses I found myself in the hospital, with the wounded man by my side. He lay lingering — one day better, another worse, for nearly two years, when he was allowed his liberty. Having no hard work to do, I soon got round, and as soon as convalescent, I expressed my wish to

leave the hospital. Low diet and no money earned went across the grain with me, so I got back to the shop as soon as I had permission. My eagerness and impatience told against me, as for three years after I suffered from intermittent blood-spitting. The first night of my re-entering the ward, I slept in a cage in the corner next the hospital. I was awakened by a terrific thunderstorm. In the height of the uproar the two sentries stationed outside the ward had sought shelter under the lee of the angle of the walls. A streak of lightning, probably attracted by the fixed bayonet of one, passed through his body, leaving a blackened and lifeless corpse, while the watch of the other was picked up as if from a smelting furnace. The steel and iron was torn from this man's boots, and shortly after, I believe, he followed his comrade. Looking through the iron barred gates, I saw Inspector Lane give orders, and Constable Bonyen, now stationed at Hill End, with the rank of corporal, was placed on guard in room of the deceased. In the morning the men were mustered for work, but through the excitement caused by the effects of the storm, and my own bodily weakness, I was returned to the hospital for a couple of days.

CHAPTER VI

A PRISON MUTINY

GREAT dissatisfaction at this time existed among the prisoners, no hope being held out to them of any

remission of sentences through good conduct. Sentences, long or short, had to be completed to the day. Nothing was deducted on any plea whatever, but additions were made, ofttimes unscrupulously, to the original terms. Agitation rose to such a pitch that one night, in the adjoining ward to ours, there was almost a mutiny. Fired by the thoughts of their wrongs, and goaded on by the more demoniacal of the gang, the prisoners rose up as one man, and began howling, screeching and blaspheming, vainly beating against the walls, dashing against the iron gates, and in their fury damaging their own bodies. Inspector Lane, with a cool determination, appeared amongst them, entreating and threatening, all to no purpose. As a last resource, with the object of intimidating them, he discharged one barrel of his revolver among, or rather over, the rioters, but they were unquelled, and kept up the hellish din late into the night. In the morning, while they were at comparative liberty to receive their rations, the store-cart arrived, and was immediately rushed by the frantic mob. Everything was carried away or ruthlessly destroyed, despite the cool and humane conduct of the superintendent (Captain Mann), who did all in mortal power short of bloodshed to pacify the mutineers. In the midst of this riot aid arrived in the form of an additional police force, under Captain MacLerie. I was on duty at the gates one day after when another row sprang up, and Mr Keillor, a free officer and manager at the quarries, went in to endeavour to quell it. He was thereupon surrounded, mobbed and knocked about, to the imminent danger of his life. Seeing this, enfeebled as I was, though still retaining much of my natural

vigour, I threw myself among the prisoners, and forced my way through, seized the now insensible officer, flung him across my shoulders, made my exit by the gate, and slammed it, leaving all vowing all sorts of vengeance on the convict dog who rescued the free man. Keillor was carried bleeding and unconscious to his own quarters. At the expiration of my two hours on guard, I expected to be relieved, but an order was passed for me to stay on duty at my post for the remainder of the day. At night-muster all the men re-entered the ward by roll call, I, of course, being last. On my name being called, I refused to enter, telling the superintendent that my life was in danger after the occurrence of the morning. I was ordered to the cells for disobedience. Next morning I was brought up before the Water Police Magistrate on the island, Mr Cloete, formerly commissioner at Sofala, who on my appearance instantly recognised me, said he was very sorry to see me there, and asked as to my conduct since my arrival. The officers, one and all, spoke in the highest terms of my character. Mr Cloete then asked me to explain my disobedience. I plainly told him of the riot and its attendant circumstances, and of the violent threats thrown at me, and said that, knowing the class of men under me, I had not the slightest doubt but that they would wreak their vengeance on me, and fulfil their vows.

'Have you any proof of your statements?' inquired the magistrate. 'Yes, Mr Wilson, one of the free warders, was present all the time.' On being called, Mr Wilson expressed his firm belief that were I put in the ward with those infuriated brutes I should be murdered.

Mr Cloete then said he would go down and see the injured officer. He learned from him that had it not been for Day's interference, at risk of his own life, he would have been a murdered man, and that to him he was deeply thankful for his life. On returning to the office, Mr Cloete gave orders that I should not be placed in the yard among the other men, but be kept apart until he had interviewed the Colonial Secretary, when orders would be issued as to further proceedings. I was then ordered to be quartered with Mr Taylor, the identifying clerk, where I remained about three months, when another order came, appointing me a constable, and to be placed in a situation unconnected with the other men. I was then placed on guard at different places round the island, but in foggy weather I was stationed at the gates. During this time I received payment. When placed at the semaphore I was supplied with a first-class telescope for surveying the island and all approaching boats, and I had to hoist the necessary signals. On one occasion, when stationed at the gate, I saw one of the leading desperadoes, holding up his leg-irons in front, so as to prevent their clinking on the ground, and sneaking towards the dormitory where Mr Byron, the assistant superintendent, was writing. I knew from the man's actions that he had some evil in view. Keeping my eye on him I saw him pick up a piece of stone in the yard, and approaching Mr Byron, stone in hand, hit him a violent blow about the head, knocking him down, and pounding him till insensible. I gave the alarm, and calling the sentry, ran to the assistance of the superintendent. Seizing the assailant by his irons I hauled him off and held him till aid arrived,

when he was secured, carried off, tried and punished, but how I am not certain. The excitement and over-exertion brought on blood-spitting in redoubled force. Feeling my senses leaving me, I just managed to reach Dr M'D.'s at the hospital, coughing and retching so violently as to bring up to my throat, almost choking me, a large piece of some substance (6 in. by 7 in.) resembling flesh, the blood at the same time gushing in torrents from my mouth. I was carried into the ward and put to bed, Dr M'D. placing the matter in spirits of wine. On the arrival of Dr West, who was sent for, I was cupped in two places on the left breast, as also on the right, afterwards blistered on both, and ordered infusion of roses and tincture of iron. After a considerable time the blood-spitting was checked, and I was placed under a course of quinine and kept perfectly quiet, no one being allowed to speak with me. Becoming convalescent, I was allowed more liberty.

CHAPTER VII

GOVERNOR AND BUSHRANGER

One day Governor Young, soon after his arrival in the colony, paid a visit to the island, and to the hospital. He was brought to my bed and informed of the meritorious acts I had performed, in saving the lives of two free officers and a prisoner. 'By-the-bye,' said the governor, 'I am reminded there is a prisoner here of the name of "H——," for whom there

is an order from the Duke of ——, that he be released as a prisoner and exiled.' Overhearing this, I got the wardsmen to call Whittaker, who had been preaching to me several times of the influence his family had with the Duke, but found I was too late, as he had heard all about the order, and himself came in saying, 'What do you think of my blowing now? In a day or two an order will come through the governor for a complete outfit, some two or three hundred pounds, and all my present belongings shall be yours, my boy.' Still partly incredulous, I laughed at the idea, but in a few days, as he said, the articles arrived, everything of the very best material. There was even a gold-headed cane. Swaggering down the yard, cane in hand, his military gait and huge stature (six feet two inches) commanded attention from all. He was escorted to the cutter in waiting, saluting the men in passing in his usual off-hand manner with 'Good-bye, Jack,' 'Good-day, Bill,' etc, and passed from the island a free man, and, as he told me, bound for China.

Feeling stronger and much improved in health, I fancied I could go out of hospital, when Mr Broderick, the chief, asked me if I would take charge of the engineer gang again, as I should have very little work to do. At nights, after mustering the gang, I retired to the officers' quarters, where I had my meals, my rations being sent on there. Rioting still continued, the principal grievance being the non-remission of sentences. Now and again a batch of the most troublesome were sent from the island to Darlinghurst.

One day in the shop, Gardiner, the noted bushranger, said I ought to get up a petition, stating the

services I had rendered, and I might get a partial remission. I told him what I knew to be a fact, that if I went to the superintendent I, no doubt, should get permission to write, but that the chances were ten to one against my letter ever leaving the office, as all letters describing anything occurring on the island were stopped, so my petition would be of no use. He asked me where my wife lived, and being told Bathurst, he said if I would think of some plan, any message I entrusted him with should be faithfully delivered, as he would be going out soon, that Piesley and he would be due for their tickets that month, and intended going Bathurst way. I pondered that night how to avoid the strict search made on anyone going away. At last I conceived an idea—to have my letter written on Gardiner's back. Although in the search the body was stripped, yet, by being on his back, it might escape detection. 'When they search me at the jetty,' said Gardiner, 'I'll keep them face on, and they'll never think of looking on my back. You get everything ready.' That night I begged the loan of a pair of scissors from Miss Taylor, daughter of the identifying clerk, telling her I wanted to put a patch on my clothes. In the place where I had my meals was a favourite cat, which I caught, and from her tail cut off the tip, and some of the long fur from the flanks, and made two little brushes. I then got some red lead, and to heighten the colour, started my nose bleeding, and mixed the paint. I acquainted the draftsman in the shop with my intentions, and he being a good penman, I got him to write my letter on Gardiner's back as he lay face down in the pattern shop. The letter was a statement of the grounds of

my petition; my good deeds, etc., occupying from the shoulders to below the waist. In order to dry it, I advised Gardiner to say that I had had him down the well at the pump, and that he had got a chill, when he would be allowed to stand by the boiler fires till the paint and blood dried up. When half-roasted we succeeded, and I gave the writer a shilling, and offered the bearer of the inscription two shillings, which he, however, declined to accept, as he said I should want all I had, while he could get money when he went out. He faithfully delivered my message, as I had a letter from my wife telling me that Gardiner had given her all the particulars, which should be attended to. The suspense I underwent till Gardiner was out of reach of the authorities on the island was simply indescribable, as had he been discovered I should have lost my overseership, besides being punished, thus undoing all my good deeds, and rendering my chance of remission void.

Piesley was afterwards hanged in Bathurst for shooting a man in a barn, while Gardiner, the noted leader of a desperate gang of bushrangers, was captured, receiving a sentence of thirty years in all, but was afterwards exiled.

CHAPTER VIII

MANSLAUGHTER

One day several of the bushrangers in the yard were boasting what they could do in defiance of the police,

when I observed, 'You talk about your defying the police. There's not one of you could hold your own against them as I could do, without arms of any sort, beyond what the bush would provide me with. If I were to be met by the police in the bush, and one of them were to attack me, I could make surer of killing him with a spear than you could with a rifle at one hundred yards, as my spear would not miss fire. As sure as he was born I would hit him, and most likely kill him.'

One of them said, 'If you were to throw a spear at me at fifty yards, with nothing better than this' (holding up an eighteen-inch file) 'I could ward it off.'

I replied, 'A white man's eyes are not like the black's, and a spear properly thrown goes with such swiftness and force you could scarcely see it, and if you happened to miss your guard you would be a dead man.'

Close beside where this talk was going on stood Mr Doran, at the present time, I believe, engineer on Cockatoo, who heard all. I continued, 'If I had a spear I would make a white ring at the end of the yard and show you what I could do.'

One of them answered, 'I will make a spear and wommera' (or throwing-stick), 'and with this file, standing here, I defy you to hit me, and will freely forgive you if you do.'

In the course of the week he made both, watching his opportunity when the free men were out of the way. He brought them to the shop and said, 'Now I'll show you what a fool I'll make of you and your boasted spear-throwing.' So saying, he concealed the spear under the planing table. He told his mates what

he had done, and next morning, the way being clear, all the free men being out of reach except Mr Doran, who was working at his bench, and had heard every word that passed, he and his mates came up and said, 'Now's the chance.' The challenger got the eighteen-inch file, and took up a position about seventy yards off. All being ready, I was frightened, and told him repeatedly that if he missed guarding off the spear he would certainly be killed. 'Oh, that's all blow,' he said; 'I know you can't touch me. I want to bring you blowers down a peg.'

With that I laid hold of the spear, and took my stand at the end of the shop, telling him to be on his guard; that I should call out three times, and at the third call would let fly. I did so, and away went the spear straight to the mark, and down he fell, the spear penetrating his head. The men rushed to his assistance; when springing forward I threatened to knock out the brains of the first man who tried to pull out the spear, saying that if the spear was pulled out the man would die in an instant. I told them to run off for the superintendent and the doctor. While they were away I was steadying his head, when he said,—

'Well, Bill, I can't blame you; it's all through my pigheadedness this has happened. It's my own fault.' In the presence of the superintendent and doctor, he said, 'You mustn't blame Bill. I was standing looking up to the loft when the piece of wood somehow slipped and entered my head. I've only myself to blame.' A portion of the spear was then cut off, and he was removed to the hospital. Next morning, when stationed at the gate, I saw the men clustering together in the yard, and asking the engineer, was told the man

I had speared was dead. I then called the sentry to the gate and went to the superintendent, whom I informed of the whole particulars of the argument, and the results.

I was sent to a cell, six feet by eight feet and nine feet high. The entrance to this cell was through a trap-door in the roof, and down a ladder, which was afterwards pulled up, cutting off all chance of escape. The trap was covered with a top in the shape of a bandbox, having a small hole for espial, and through this trap the prisoner's food was lowered. These cells, twenty in number, were ranged along near the guard-room on one side, and on the other leading down to the water's edge, towards Balmain. At supper-time my rations were lowered, being fetched from the clerk's quarters. I placed my allowance of bread on my berth, and proceeded to get ready for supper, but as soon as the trap was closed I was besieged by a whole army of enormous rats in pursuit of my victuals, and I had enough to do to keep them from attacking myself. I took off my blue jacket, and wrapping the food therein, put it under my head, stuffing my boots and socks into the mouth of the sink-hole, whence the rats had come. I lay down so, and at length fell asleep in my cell, over which slept the sub-overseers. In the morning at ring of bell, getting up to dress, I found my visitors had gnawed their way through my jacket and carried off every particle of eatables. Also they had eaten through the toes of my boots to gain entrance. When the wardsman came with my breakfast I told him of my plight, when he brought me another pair of boots, and at ten o'clock, the ladder being lowered, I ascended to the office, was placed for examination before the

coroner and jury, and was committed to Darlinghurst on a charge of manslaughter. Six or seven of the men, wishing to have a trip across to Sydney, came forward to swear that I had threatened the life of the man because he was an Irishman. The coroner saw the dodge, and said it was no use listening to them, as they merely wished to get away from the island for a spell; that he could not see anything in the case that would prevent my being returned to my situation, as no malice could be proved against me, but that I must be committed on the charge of manslaughter.

CHAPTER IX

DARLINGHURST

I WAS accordingly sent handcuffed to Darlinghurst, in charge of a sergeant of police, and marched through the streets. The confinement in the damp cell brought on another fit of bleeding internally, and about twelve o'clock at night, by kicking at the door, I drew the attention of the night watchman, whom I told I was bleeding to death. The assistant surgeon being called, I was ordered to the hospital, where I lay about a month awaiting trial at the assizes. Several of the rioters from the island were in the hospital here, who kept teasing and worrying me with questions as to the mates which they had left behind. But as my instructions were to keep perfect silence, their queries went unheeded and unanswered. At the

trial I was brought up before Judge Dickenson, and was undefended. I was cross-examining one of the witnesses, when a barrister, sitting in front of me, whispered, 'Don't ask that question, prisoner.' The judge, seeing this, asked me if I wished the question put and answered, when I answered, taking the hint, 'No, your honour.' That barrister was Mr Dalley.*

The men who were prepared to swear that I had tried to kill the man speared because he was an Irishman were not called on; then, asked if I had any witnesses as to character, I named Captain Mann, superintendent; Mr Broderick, chief engineer; Mr Doran, sub; and Mr Taylor, clerk; 'and yourself, your honour.' His honour stared, and asked what he had to do with it, when I replied that he had tried me in Bathurst for the crime for which I was now undergoing a sentence, and that he had read several certificates of character I had then produced. Having received first-class testimony as to conduct from all connected with the island, and thinking that someone or more of the jury might consider my position of sub-overseer might have been obtained by my tyrannical and treacherous bearing towards the prisoners, as was very often the case in penal settlements, the greatest brutes being often appointed overseers, I called Mr Broderick, the chief engineer, under whom I was, and asked him whether, during my tenure of office under him, I had ever laid a charge against any man without bringing that man face to face before his accuser? Had I ever had a man punished while in my charge? To

* The late Hon. W. B. Dalley, afterwards Colonial Secretary of New South Wales.

all these questions answers in the negative were returned.

While giving me a character, and before the case ended, the superintendent, Captain Mann, was called over to the island, as another riot had just broken out. The jury, without retiring, brought in a verdict of 'Not guilty,' and I was discharged, handed down, and marched back to the island.

CHAPTER X

STERN DISCIPLINE

THE superintendent met me at once on my return, and asked me whether the judge had said anything to me in discharging me, when I answered, 'No.' 'Well, then,' he said, 'you take charge of your gang as usual, and look after your conduct as you have done, and all will be well.' The men were still dissatisfied, and gave me a deal of trouble, but I so regulated my gang that I had about an equal division of the parties, one half being on my side, and the other half opposed to me. On my side the men had signals among themselves, and understood by me, so that should there be any chance of trouble to me the sign was made, I was warned, and kept a good look-out, till I found out the quarter where it arose, and its nature. If I got the office, it was never known among the men whence it came, consequently my informers never clashed one with another, and placed

confidence in my keeping it close. If I had anything against a man, instead of bringing him up for punishment, I would say, 'Stand back in your rank,' and would have nothing to say to him in the presence of any other gang but our own, nor in that of any other overseer or free man; but when I had them again in the shop, I would walk boldly up to the offender and leather him there and then. He would sometimes sing out lustily, but I had to show that I was master, otherwise I would never have had the control over them I had.

On one occasion I was passing the dock, with my gang, where the *Orpheus*, man-'o-war, Commodore Wiseman (afterwards wrecked in New Zealand waters), was being repaired. Among my men was one, a bit of a bruiser, who had been rather obstreperous, and showing off before the blue-jackets. We went up to dinner, and in the afternoon the men went to work in the shop. I took my opportunity, and this man being the head of the mischief-makers, I had to conquer him or lose my influence over the rest, so I went at him, and battered him about till he shouted murder.

Being close to the police-station, two constables came up to see the cause of the outcry. As the man was cut and bleeding, we should both have been arrested for fighting had not I, as overseer, at once given my opponent in charge for striking me. He was taken off to the cells, brought up before the Water Police Magistrate on a charge of insubordination and striking an officer, and would have met with condign punishment had I not told the magistrate that there could not be a better workman, or one

generally more attentive to his duties, but that his violent temper led him astray, and on that account I did not wish to press the charge. He was about to make some remarks for himself, and to try to throw the blame on me, when the P. M. stopped him, saying, 'You hear, the officer does not wish to press the charge against you. You ought to be thankful to get off so lightly. In the present rebellious state of the island, I am determined to make an example of anyone infringing the rules of discipline, and now, go back to your work, and see that you do not come before me again.' Thus, by stratagem and determination, I gained complete command over my men.

This man's mate used to do the engine work in the shop, and one of the men on my side told me to be careful how I went near where he was at the forge, as he had threatened that, if ever I came near him to interfere, he would run me through with the red hot poker. I knew it was no good to be daunted; firmness and a bold front would alone carry the day. I went to the office and told Mr Duff, the free assistant clerk, of this man's reported intention of taking my life, so that should anything happen to me he would bear in mind the disclosure I had made. I then went back to the shop, where seven or eight men were at work at the forges, took up a plan of some work to be done, and, passing the other men, who, expecting something, stopped work to look on, went up to the man who had threatened me. I showed him the plan and told him I wanted him to do the required job. I just happened to see him drawing the heated iron from the fire, but before he had removed it more

than a few inches, I seized the tongs, and with all my force brought them down on his arm. I repeated the blow as a reminder, and left him. This visitation landed him in the hospital wards for some six or seven months. Having thus cowed the two ring-leaders, I had peace and quiet in the gang as long as I was overseer.

A curious incident about this time happened in connection with the big man named Swan whom I had so grievously beaten on a former occasion, and who, by the way, never showed any malice. Swan was noted as a tasteful and skilled workman in ornamental stone-cutting and scroll-work, and was directed to hew, carve and figure out an immense ornament for the dome of the engineering house—a stone representation of the Royal Arms. The site of his operations was directly in front of the engine-shed, where I was acting as sub-overseer. He had been engaged on his carving for about two years, under the supervision of Mr Kale (his overseer). When his work was almost completed his assistant operative committed some offence against the rules, and was banished to the quarries.

Mr Kale appointed his successor, who did not suit Swan, he wishing another man, whom he pointed out. Mr Kale, however, was resolute, which aroused the evil passions of Swan, who forthwith beat his magnificent carving to pieces with a sledge-hammer. I was near at hand, and Kale called on me to endeavour to prevent this wanton demolition of as fine a piece of stone-cutting as had as yet been seen in the colony; but I, knowing that such interference was in no way connected with my duties, declined to interfere,

although had I been his overseer I must and would have taken some means to stop his violence. As it was, a file of the guard was summoned from the barracks. Swan was secured, and afterwards sent off to Darlinghurst. Another piece of Swan's work, under the same overseer, was the circular parapet on top of the tall chimney erected in the lumber yard, for increasing the draught of the engine furnaces.

CHAPTER XI

A PLAN OF ESCAPE

THE men being still mutinous, the last batch of the ringleaders was sent over to Darlinghurst. Thinking of all sorts of schemes while there to draw off the attention of the guard, they formed the plan of getting hold of a book and reading aloud, thus forming such a cluster of men near the angle of the walls as to effectually screen from the observation of the sentry a man who was employed on his knees opening a passage through the wall. By perseverance the passage was made, and several had passed through, when it came to the turn of one who seemed to have indulged too freely in that highly-fattening gaol diet, 'hominy.' He got stuck fast in the opening, until released by some outsiders of the larrikin tribe dragging him through, thus enlarging the hole. A doctor, who had been in attendance on a patient in the vicinity, had his horse standing near, on which

one of the fugitives quickly sprang, and made off in the direction of the swamps. The alarm was now raised, and the sentries, rushing to the spot, formed an insurmountable obstacle to further flight.

Our old acquaintance, Swan, who at this time was doing another sentence here, showed a great desire to be put in a particular cell in one of the wings which he had assisted in building during a former confinement. Knowing what a slippery sort of customer they had to deal with, however, the gaol officials kept him pretty close under their observation. Some time after two men, Dave Clarke and one C——h, managed to make their escape from this wing, in doing which the former sprained his ankle in the drop from the wall. He had formerly got away from the peninsula, Port Arthur, got out of the Bathurst cells, and even out of the strongholds and vigilance of Berrima — that dread of all criminals. Long after, hearing that I was on the Turon, he called on me there, to my great surprise, and, of course, as I was one of the old flock of black sheep, I was bound to make him as welcome as my own safety would permit. I gave him a hearty meal, some tea and sugar, etc., and five shillings to carry him on the road. At night, in conversation, I asked him how he managed to get away from Darlinghurst, about the strongest prison in the colonies, so quietly. 'Oh!' he said, 'that was the easiest escape I ever made. You must know that Swan was one of the principal hands employed in building that wing, and being an ingenious customer, he constructed a get-away in one of the cells, securely blinded from detection, so that should he ever be confined in that gaol again, by

finding his way to this cell he could easily get out. On his second sentence here, being unable to succeed in his object, and despairing of breaking his long sentence, he laid me on to it, and C—— and I being placed there by some lucky chance, found out Swan's secret after some search, and soon reached the outside and fresh air.'

I was in Mr Walford's on the Turon one day after this, when Inspector Medley, from Mudgee, said to me, 'Do you remember a man of the name of Clarke on the island, who was sent there for robbing a gold buyer near Mudgee? I have just nabbed him again on his old beat, and he has gone down, I think, on his last cruise.' I asked this Clarke one day where he used to hide himself at the times of his various disappearances for a day or two on the island, but he would never enlighten me, as, he said, he might want that some day; however, when he did not appear he was always found by the water's edge, but no one could find out how he came there.

Things on the island then became quieter, the principal ringleaders having been removed.

CHAPTER XII

SIR HENRY PARKES AND HIS FRIENDS

WHILST on Cockatoo Island we had a visit from Mr Henry Parkes*—afterwards on several occasions, Colonial Secretary—who had lately arrived from Eng-

* Sir Henry Parkes proceeded to England in 1861 as Immigration Commissioner. He returned in 1863.

land, where he had become thoroughly acquainted with prison management, and prison regulations especially. I remember reading of those at Worcester and Redditch, near my native place, where he had been lecturing. On his arrival on the island, at a subsequent period, the prisoners would be on the look-out for the man with 'the umbrella,' crying out, 'Here comes our best friend.' In fact, he was looked upon by the men as the hero of the day, and from the date of his advent among them, matters were entirely changed, and for the better in every way. A little time after, a committee of inquiry was appointed to visit the island, to inquire into the alleged grievances and the causes of the late tumults, when from among the men a number were picked out for examination, all the officers being excluded. In consequence of this, great reforms were instituted, particularly in the sleeping accommodation, and in the way of discharging prisoners. A man, on being released from penal servitude, finds himself the possessor of a substantial suit of overclothes, two shirts, and a pair of serviceable boots, all looking as unlike a gaol-bird's attire as possible. He is taken to the police-office, and, unknown to himself, passes an inspection by various members of the force for future identification. Next, he goes to the sheriff's office, where he is asked where he intends to go, and on application can get a railway or other pass to his destination, and according to distance receive a sum of money, at times £2 or £3, to keep him out of temptation and crime till he can find employment. This alteration acted as a stimulus to good conduct, and shortly after notice was given that by good-conduct marks a remission of

sentences would be regulated, a thing lately unknown on the island. By the old system a seven-years' man, by additional terms of punishment, might serve, perhaps, twelve years. Schools were next established, reformatories instituted, and every encouragement held out for improvement.

I remember a remark once made by the notorious 'Jack o' the Boots,' as he was called, a famed bush-ranger. Said he, 'What a blessing 'twould ha' been for me had Parkes brought his umbrella and brooms here long before. I would not now be a "one-eared croppy" as I am.' Jack had one ear completely severed from his head during a rough and tumble in the late disturbances. After an easier routine of order and discipline was established, the erstwhile disturbers of the peace were returned from Darlinghurst, and at once dropped into the ways of the new system. Under it the free officers enjoyed an immunity from fear of being treacherously attacked in the performance of their duties, as was the case on one occasion with Mr Broderick, who was murderously set upon by some fiends armed with shovels, and would certainly have suffered severely, if not been killed outright, but for the intervention of myself and a free man. My service Mr Broderick never forgot. Superintendent Mann, who, I may say, erred on mercy's side, was on several occasions rushed by the senseless and infuriated band of ne'er-do-wells, but being of a mild temperament, though firm in action, he had, as a rule, the good feeling of the worst of the crew. Had he been like his *confrère* in position in the hulk at Melbourne John Price (a tyrant to the core), he might have shared the same fate.

One thing worthy of notice now was the dispensing with the bayonet-armed force, always attendant in the courts during the administration of justice.

Soon after these salutary changes, the men who had been selected to give evidence as to the grievances of themselves and their companions were removed to different gaols throughout the colony, and in a few months after were set at liberty. Among them was the famed bushranger Lowrie — one of the most desperate, and certainly the most active of all the fraternity, either in athletics or on horseback, as the police unhappily found to their cost. To clear over five feet by a standing jump, was a feat of no difficulty to him, and his equal in the saddle might only be found among the Indians of America or such like.

I had a man in my gang named F——g, a noted forger, whose skill had duped the cleverest of the clever ones, among others, Nash, the celebrated bullion broker. Knowing F.'s character, I kept my eye on him, and one day came upon him in the dome of the engine-shed, in the act of finishing off two £5 notes. I at once appropriated them, when he became cheeky, but when I threatened to take him to the superintendent, he begged of me not to interfere and he would share with me. As the time was approaching when liberty would be sweeter to me than ever, I refused, contenting myself with securing all his appliances and destroying every vestige of them in the furnace, as I did not wish to increase his punishment. Some months after a detective came over from Sydney. It seems that F——g had given the gardener a note to change, who had transferred it to the boatman supplying the prisoners with stores. This man, instead

of presenting it at some store or shop in Sydney, where it would have been readily cashed, had presented it at the bank, where it was at once detected, and inquiries set on foot. Of course F——g denied having given the note to the gardener, and there being no proof against him, there the matter ended. Years after, a number of notes were forged, uttered, and cashed while he was in Darlinghurst, and so in Parramatta, the authorities being constantly blinded by the agencies he had formed outside.

Not long since, being in Sydney, I paid Mr Doran a visit on the island, when he called to my recollection this F——g, saying that he had come over in company of some 'swells' to inspect the place, and was cutting a great dash, when, on his approaching and recognising him, he slipped off.

CHAPTER XIII

AN APPEAL TO THE GOVERNOR

GREAT excitement was caused on the island by a report that Governor Young was about to put in an appearance on a tour of inspection, and preparations on a great scale were made for his reception, everything being in the height of order and cleanliness, not a thing out of place. After viewing the official premises, the prisoners' quarters, the cells (those mysterious receptacles for criminals, some of them

cut from the solid rock, the dismal gloom of which was enough to make the stoutest heart quake), and the various workshops, he came to the engine-room, where I was stationed. He was accompanied by the commodore,* the superintendent, and others, including his aide-de-camp. It was a perfectly understood law that no prisoner should address a visitor on any pretext, unless spoken to in the first place, but I told Mr Doran my intention of speaking up for myself. He strongly advised me against any such attempt, as I should certainly land myself in trouble; but I determined to carry it out. One of the men was at the lathe, employed on a very showy piece of brasswork, cutting a worm. To this the attention of the commodore and the others, with the exception of the governor and his aide, was called. Seeing my opportunity, I started the slotting machine and went to the drilling machine, when they came up and stood looking on close to me. I told the governor then that I had been five years in that room as overseer without an atom of complaint against me, and spoke of my saving life, etc. The superintendent, turning round, and seeing me in conversation with his excellency, and the aide taking notes of my complaint that no notice had been taken of a petition presented by my wife in Bathurst, came rushing up, horrorstruck at my audacity. I, knowing the consequences of this breach of rules, cried out in a state of alarm and excitement, careless of all rules of etiquette or governmental formalities, 'Stick to me, your excellency, stick to me, or I'm ruined for speaking to you.' As soon as Captain Mann came up, knowing I could not make matters worse, and seeing

* The ill-fated Commodore Wiseman, who perished in the *Orpheus*.

the governor amused at this comical scene, and inclined to listen, I launched out with all the fervour I could command, laying down everything I could think of in my favour, when his excellency was pleased to say that on his return to Sydney, he would have these matters looked into, and I should receive an answer to my petition. His tour of inspection at an end, he took his departure. Scarcely had his boat left the island for the vessel in waiting, when down came two policemen, armed, shouting out, 'William Day.' I presented myself, when the order came—'Ten paces ahead—march' and off I trudged to limbo. Till I had been some time thus I had great difficulty in realising my position. At last its horror flashed upon me in full force. Ready for any emergency, I set my wits to work to find a remedy. At 9 a.m. I was brought before the superintendent, who had it in his power either to hear a charge himself, or, according to its nature, hand it over to the police magistrate. Mr Broderick asked me how I came to forget myself so far, and from this I judged he was inclined to assist me. The superintendent then charged me with disobedience of orders, asking me if I had not read the regulations, and why I had infringed them. Bold as brass, I told him that while they were inspecting the work at the lathe the governor had come up to look at the drilling machine, and had first addressed me, among other things asking me how long I had been there; that I had told him 'five years'; that he had then asked me what I was in for, and a lot more questions; and I had taken the chance to refer to my petition. Mr Broderick stood by, but said nothing, as he thought I had made a good defence, and cleverly

got myself out of a nasty scrape. I referred the superintendent to the governor himself for verification of my statement, in these words: 'You ask the governor; he spoke first, not I.' The superintendent, of course, said he would inquire into this, and if he found my statements false, I should be heavily punished.

'Go down to your duties,' was my order. I returned to the engine-shed, knowing that I had heard the last of this affair, as I had no fear of the governor, whom I had begged to 'stick to me,' troubling himself any more about it.

During my time on the island my principal works in connection with the engine-shed were making two pumps—22-inch cylinders—and sinking wells for the same for twenty-four feet through solid rock, to drain the dock. I also had to do with making a steam crane to run round the dock, and with work for P. N. Russell & Co. for waterworks at Newcastle. For Russell's we did all the heavy work, our lathe for ten feet face being the largest in the colony, and having corresponding planing tables and a two-ton steam hammer. The dock also during my time was lengthened, so we had our department's hands full.

CHAPTER XIV

LIBERTY

Now for liberty. I put my name down one day (as we had to do if we wished to see the superintendent

on any particular business), and on seeing him I referred to my petition. He said he would take me to the Water Police Magistrate, Mr Cloete. Accordingly, sent for, and told him my object. Mr Cloete told me to get my petition ready and he would himself deliver it to the Colonial Secretary. I paid five shillings to one of the prisoners, who was equal to the task, had it drawn up, and at the time appointed handed it in. In three weeks after I was called to the office and informed that I was to be released in two months — *i.e.*, three days before Christmas. My sufferings from anxiety of mind and impatience were extreme. I remained at work as usual, restless, fretting and anxious. At last the weary time of waiting expired, and I was called to the office; and, under charge of a policeman for the last time, was sent to the office of Sheriff Maclean, with a letter of recommendation for a supply of cash. There I received £4, and a most friendly piece of advice from our late commissioner on the goldfields. Some of the free engineers, on being told by me that I intended again following my trade of gunsmith on the Turon, presented me with some useful tools from their private stock, and three days before Christmas 1863 I got my discharge, and was again a free man. I went into a public-house in Sydney and had a glass of ale, or she-oak, and in feeling for cash to pay, pulled out the piece of parchment containing my discharge. Before the astonished waiter, I put it in the fire, he no doubt thinking me cracked, burning cheques in that reckless fashion.

In bidding a long farewell to Cockatoo, I may here state that during all my time as overseer I never had a

man brought up for punishment, always performing that operation myself, and was the better liked for it, both by men and supers. Keeping my pledge to Mr Maclean, I only stopped one night in Sydney, and at once started for Bathurst on my way back to the Turon.

PART VIII

SETTLED DOWN

CHAPTER I

A FRESH START

THE first man I met on the Turon was Billy P——, then married to my old chum at digging, Miss Hinton. After a long chat on old times and occurrences during my enforced absence, I strolled down to my old acquaintance, Mr F——n, publican, butcher and mail contractor, from whom I received a cordial welcome back. I told him of my intention to try the diggings once more. He said, after my experience in engineering on the island, I ought to set up in my old trade of blacksmith, etc.; but I wanted a start for that. He said, 'Oh, that's easily done. You make out a list of everything you want; I'll get them for you; open a shop at once, and there's no fear of your not getting on.' I made out a list, and, handing it to him, asked him to add £20 in cash to the £30 worth of tools, etc. Meanwhile, a thought struck me that I would try my old friend, Mr W——d, a J.P., and owner of a great part of the township. At W——'s

I met several men waiting to see him, and talking of each other's business. I told mine, when they burst into a laugh, saying, 'You'd better go in first, as you'll soon be out again if money's your errand.' 'All right,' I said, 'you'll see,' and in I went. Mr W—— expressed his gladness to see me back, and asked me to have breakfast, which I declined. I handed him my list, with the £20 cash added to it, and told him my object. He read it over, and passing it to his clerk, said, 'Do you think we can do this, Mr B——?' The clerk, returning it, said, 'Oh, yes; I think so.' Mr W—— then said, 'I hope you will now look a little better after yourself, and get into no more scrapes; though I don't blame you so much for the last affair, as you were treacherously led into it by a villain.'

This from a magistrate gave me no little comfort. I received my £20 cash, and a promise that all else should be attended to. I told him that as he had a shop close handy I would take it, and build a house at the end. 'All right,' he said. 'I've plenty of timber, and S——e, the carpenter, can give you a help.' I thanked him and went out, when I was met by the anxious gaze of the men outside, who had laughed at the idea of me, 'Bill Day,' borrowing money from W——; but their merriment was changed to astonishment when they learned the issue of my appeal. The site I had chosen being a good stand for business, I found I had fallen on my feet again, and lost no time in opening the shop and building the house, with the assistance of S——e. My shop stood between those of two other blacksmiths. One of them expressed his surprise at my taking up the old

trade, especially between two others. He told me there was only work for one, and I, as a third, would never get on. I asked him if he took a glass. 'Yes.' 'And does the other?' 'Yes.' 'Ah, then,' I said, 'I have a double advantage, for I don't touch it.' All prepared, up went the sign—'Gunsmith, Blacksmith and Jobbing-smith of all sorts.' I advertised in the local papers, 'Bill Day back again on the Turon.' In the first week or two I had orders to occupy my time for three months.

In two months I had paid off all my obligations to Mr W——, and as I had no rent to pay while doing so, I now agreed to pay ten shillings per week, and as he had a great many houses on the river and elsewhere, I had any quantity of orders from him.

CHAPTER II

A BUSH TRAGEDY

One of my neighbours, a Mr Chisholme, storekeeper and saddler, was one of my best and most regular customers, and next to him a lodging-house keeper of the name of M'G——. M'G—— was a Catholic, and one of his daughters had married a Protestant. M'G—— and his wife were continually urging the son-in-law (Bob ——) to embrace their religious views, and were backed up by their daughter, who was the mother of two children, one in arms. Bob often told me of their constant nagging, by which they were rendering his life miserable. The young

man after a time became somewhat dissipated, and being locked up in the police-station one Saturday night it was found, upon his being searched, that he had a razor in his pocket. Hearing this I went to M'G—— and told him, advising him to cease interfering between Bob and his wife, as it was sure to end in some of them being maimed, or perhaps murdered. He laughed and said, 'Bob was not game.' I repeated my warning and left him. Next Monday I went up the creek and washed up some of the dirt that Bob, who was working for me, had stripped from near my old holding on Church Hill Creek. I finished up with £40 worth of gold. While I was thus engaged the magistrate had discharged Bob, in consequence of a charge of drunkenness and damage not being pressed. I had now pegged out two claims on this ground up the creek near the racecourse, and opposite to where I now live, and had told Bob of what gold I had got, and set him to strip another piece. He went to work as usual, but by night he knocked out my pegs and repegged the ground on his own account. Next day he went for the commissioner, Mr Bridson. M'G—— told me of this, and I appealed to the commissioner myself, with the result that my right was held up. I paid Bob off on the spot. Being ousted by me, and getting the cold shoulder from the diggers for this attempt at a dirty trick, he engaged with Mr Smeed, at the Two Mile Creek, haymaking, intending after to take employment under him as a shepherd, and to remove his wife from the old folks if she would go as hut-keeper. At night he came in and told her of his intentions; but she objected to go out in the bush, or without the consent of her parents. The

next day, in a loft at Smeed's, Bob wrote a letter addressed to Mr Walford, asking him, 'after this tragedy,' to see after his children. This letter he kept in his pocket. At night—Christmas Eve—he came over to the town, reaching my place, after various visits, at about half-past nine. At the end of my shop lay a large log, used generally as a seat by the customers. On this he sat down. I was sitting in front of their house, talking with Mr and Mrs M'G——, and we heard a whistle. The mother said, 'That's Bob whistling for Mary.' Mary came out, and as she passed me I went to her and said, 'Mary, don't you listen to the old folks; but tell Bob you'll go with him to the station.' She had the child in her arms then.

I waited for about a quarter of an hour longer, talking with the old folks and persuading them to let Bob have his own way, then bade them good-night and went to bed, where I could hear the young couple talking at the end of the shop, though I did not catch what they were saying.

Just as I was dropping off to sleep I heard the mother call out to Mary to come to bed, as it was half-past ten o'clock. She replied she would be there presently. Dozing off again, I could hear a slight sound of scuffling outside, but paid no attention.

Shortly after I was awakened by a voice crying out, 'Bill! Bill! There's something wrong at the end of your house. Get up quick.' Half awake, I hastily flung on some clothes and, barefooted, hurried out, and was horrorstruck to see the poor little baby lying near the middle of the street close to a great pool of blood. Getting better light, and

looking closer, I discovered the body of Mary, with the blood gushing from a gaping wound in her throat. I shouted out, 'Police!' and in a minute Sergeant Casey was on the spot. When he came up I said, 'I'll see if Bob' (who was lying on the ground also) 'is dead.' I put my hand under his shirt, and, feeling not the slightest pulsation, said, 'Oh, he's dead enough.' I then picked up the body of the wife, and, bleeding as it was, carried it into her parents' house and laid it on the floor.

Dr H—— arrived and, looking at the unfortunate woman, began sewing up the wound, while her head rested on my arm to keep it as close as possible. When he had stitched one side of the neck up to near the centre of the throat, the gurgling still continuing, I asked him to stitch the other side, putting a hitch on the thread. He did so, and had just reached the front of the throat when Dr W——r came in, and after examining her he placed his two fingers on the small aperture left. The instant he did so and pressed on the wound, with one convulsive gasp the spirit fled. The body was then placed in the hands of some women, and brought out into the front room or travellers' sleeping-room. Bob's body, with razor firmly grasped in hand, was borne to the lockup close by to await an inquest. Preparations were now made for the wake on the wife's body, but few passed in and out. No doubt curiosity was deadened by horror of the deed.

I went home to bed, and had not long turned in, when Mr and Mrs M'G—— came over and begged me to go and sit with them, as the neighbours had all left. I unwillingly assented, and on entrance found

on the tables, among the candles, a good supply of spirits, etc. Although several times urged by them to partake, I steadily refused, but agreed to stop with them till daybreak.

Sometime after midnight, as I was sitting on one of the beds, I must have fallen asleep, as I had been nearly two nights without a wink. At about three o'clock, when I awoke, a storm of wind was howling round the building. I was roused in the midst of a fearful dream of murders and other horrors, and found all in darkness. For a time I thought I was in my own bed, and was quite forgetful of the late past events. Having no matches on me, I stretched out my hand, feeling for them as usual, when it came in contact with a candle which had guttered with the wind, fallen over the socket, and been extinguished. Groping further still, I placed my hand on something cold, cold! A horrible thrill ran through me, and in a moment everything flashed across my mind. The touch on the cold dead face thoroughly roused me to my senses, and knowing from the position of the body where the door was, I speedily made my exit.

I sat outside my own door opposite till clear daylight, when I went to the scene of bloodshed. Looking about I found a pipe, knife, and a bit of tobacco, also a bit of cloth rolled up, which I kicked lightly, and disclosed two half-crowns, all smeared with blood. Not far off was the dark pool, about ten feet in length, now clearly and horribly visible in the bright morning light. The money I afterwards handed to Sergeant Casey.

In about half an hour after my finding these

articles Drs H—— and W—— came up and asked me to get them a wash-hand basin, some water, and a towel. These I carried over to the lockup, where the body of Bob lay rigid as a block, the upraised hand stiffly grasping the razor. His throat was cut from ear to ear. I afterwards carried the basin and towel to the creek, and left the running water to wash away the blood.

Just then a man named Jack Poole came across, asking me, 'Where are they all?' I replied I did not know; I had just come from Bob. We went together into M'G——'s where Mary's body lay, and a sad scene was presented to our view. There lay the inanimate form, shrouded and surrounded by the remains of half-melted candles, extinguished by the wind from the broken windows. Bottles and drinking-vessels were scattered about, but not one drop of spirits in them—all that had gone.

We opened the bedroom door, where the old folks slept, and found the two, he on the floor and she on the bed. I woke her up, and opening her eyes she recognised me and moaned out, 'Oh, my poor heart's broke with him; I'm so overcome, I can't get up.' This roused him, and with vacant staring eyes he inquired what was the matter. Leaving them in their helplessness, I went in search of the child, whom I found in charge of a girl, one of the daughters of the house, and cleanly washed, dressed and comfortable, but with a scar on the forehead, near the temple, caused no doubt by the razor in the attack on the unfortunate mother. After the inquest I went in to see Bob, and there he lay stretched out, his arms now by his side, the razor still in hand, and his long boots

on his feet, and thus he was buried. I attended the funeral of his wife at the Catholic cemetery, with the members of the family. After the funeral I and the brothers surrounded the grave with large boulders, still to be seen.

CHAPTER III

STUCK UP

SOME time after the funeral M'G—— went to the Weddin and started as a selector. I saw him there and helped him to settle, but he behaved very shabbily, not repaying money that I had lent him, though by the sale of his effects he had plenty. I returned on my way home on foot. Between the Weddin and Cowra I was overtaken by young Jack M'G——, the eldest boy, who told me that, as I had been so kind to them before, he had run away, and wanted to go back to Sofala with me, where he would work for me at any wages I chose to give him, as all he wanted was a comfortable home. Knowing his situation, I consented. Shortly after he had joined me, as we were tramping along, two men suddenly sprang from the bush by the road, and bailed us up. Here was a pretty fix—the once sticker-up himself stuck up. As they stood with their guns pointed to me, and close to me, I had a good look at them, and recognising one, I said, 'Hilloa, Jack, is that you? Have you taken to the road? It's a long time since I saw you last. I remember you working on the old Dubbo road.

Don't you remember me? They used to call you "Three-finger Jack." I'm Bill Day, don't you know me?'

He instantly dropped his gun, and shaking me by the hand asked me to sit down on a log and have a yarn, his mate sitting by Young Jack. He told me that, hearing of the great rush to the Weddin, he had been induced to try his hand at what he could pick up. He asked me how I was off for cash. Suspicious, at first I hesitated, but as he was sitting within arm's length of me, and his gun out of immediate reach, I thought I had nothing to fear, as had he attempted any treacherous act I could have caught him and easily strangled him, being so superior in strength and determination. Consequently I told him the truth, that I had a goodish bit of money on me, when he said he was glad to hear it, that his own pockets were pretty well lined, and that he would have let me have some if I wanted it. Seeing that he had no bad intentions, I promised not to mention having met him, as there was a large reward offered for his capture.

I left him, and we proceeded on our road. We travelled through Cowra, merely stopping to buy some bread and cheese, and at night camped close to the road, my large rug being sufficient covering for us both, the weather being very warm. Nearing Carcoar, on top of the hill we lay down for the night; but having pitched close to an ant-bed we could get no rest; so after shifting about we at last resolved to camp in the middle of the road, every spot in the bush being infested with some sort of creeping insects. We had no fear of anyone passing along the road at night, so we dossed down, and slept till about eleven

o'clock, when I felt something touch my head several times, and looking up saw a man standing over me. He had been pushing me about with his foot, and seeing me awake he said, 'Well, I see you're a trump. I've been following you all the way from Cowra to see if you had any communication with the police; but I'm satisfied.' It was 'Three-finger Jack'!

I told him I had had no thought of such a thing, and hearing the sound of horses' hoofs he slipped off into the bush, and I lay down, covering my head. Presently up came the horse at a smart gallop, but seeing the obstacle in the way, propped, flinging his rider some distance over his head. He turned out to be a (dis)mounted trooper in search of the very 'Three-finger Jack' who had been talking to me not five minutes before. He picked himself up, his pants and coat none the better for his downfall, and threatened me with all sorts of vengeance for blocking his path and causing his mishap. I innocently told him the reason of our making the public highway our camping-ground, when, somewhat mollified, but grumbling at his damaged uniform, he followed his horse, and left us to repose in quiet till morning, and I never saw him or the bushrangers after.

CHAPTER IV

WORK AT SOFALA

ONCE more at Sofala, I put this young M'G—— to work on the ground I held opposite my present residence, near the racecourse, and took a contract to get and

put up twenty telegraph posts, from M'Cann's race-course into the town, at £1 each. Being, as I said, of immense strength, I cut the posts on Bell's Creek Mountain, and up-ended them to draw; they were mostly stringy bark. At nights, coming home, I would shoulder a post down the mountain, so doing with the whole twenty, not once having one drawn. I had some larger than the others for erection in town—one in particular, a very heavy pole, near Mr M'Cloy's, took the attention of the diggers passing, some of whom wondered how on earth I was to up-end it by myself. While they were talking I made a bet with J. Griffiths, now on the Turon, that I would sink the hole for the post five feet deep, strip the wire from the old pole, and fix it on this, completing the whole in one hour and a half, which I did, and won the bet. Among those present was Mr S. Swain, then a publican near by. For six years I had the looking after the line from Tambaroora to within fifteen miles of Bathurst—a length of about forty-five miles—at 7s. 6d. for a horse, and 7s. 6d. for myself, or 15s. per day whenever on the line repairing, etc., a portion of a day counting at full pay. During all these years I never had assistance from any, nor did I ever use a horse in drawing in the poles. One day I told Mr W—— that it was my intention to take up a spare block of ground, between the Hospital and Parsonage, putting up a house on it, with a garden, and send for my daughter, then living at a Mr Greninger's, near Braidwood. 'Very well,' he said, 'I have plenty of houses about and any quantity of timber, and, as I have told you before, anything you are in want of you can have.' I started a carpenter on it, and built a house

twenty-four feet by fifteen feet, fronting the road, surrounded by a post and rail and paling fence, and made a fine piece of garden. At this time a man known as 'Lawyer Jack' and his party were cutting a water-race leading from near the head of Little Oakey Creek, about three miles in length, along the old Bathurst and Sofala road and into a reservoir then being built at the head of Church Hill Creek. In assisting to do this I put on a man to work at £3 per week, with the understanding that I should have the surplus water, which I conducted by another race cut from the top of Cemetery Hill, and crossing the road in a culvert opposite the cemetery, and along it into Bullock Horn Creek, on the racecourse. By having this position on the hill, and by virtue of my storm-water right, I commanded the whole water-shed, which could be led by races for miles either up or down the river, and entering my sluicing ground in Bullock Horn and round the cemetery became of great value. This latter race ran side by side with that of Cummings and Barlow at the head of the cemetery. After a time, by application under the Mining Act regulations, this reservoir came into my possession, increasing the value of my holding on the racecourse. Having now a full command of water, I put a miner, named Geo. Williams, to sluice in Bullock Horn at £3 per week (the current wages), with a little assistance from me at spare time, as I still kept up the shop. I would, on washing up the sluice on Saturdays, obtain an average of four ounces of gold. I now applied for and got a right of race from Moyle's (Little Oakey).

Under the old regulations an outlay of £50, or every mile of race cut, entitled a miner to one acre of

ground, but under the new Mining Act regulations £100 expenditure only entitles him to the same. My rights being under the old system I could hold three acres by this race alone. I then made application for a tailrace, which I cut 200 yards in length and 22 feet deep, occupying two years, which entitled me to two acres additional, making in all five acres held under a small annual rent to Government. Besides, I had a protection of 20 feet on each side of tailrace, and 10 feet on each side of a water-race. According to the regulations, the value of all reservoirs, race cuttings, or works done in connection with such, is estimated by the owner of such completed works, and no class of miners are more generally protected than the holders of water right. The racecourse then comprised between twenty and thirty acres, level almost as a ballroom, and not a growing tree to be seen. At the time of the annual or other horse races, I was compelled to fill up across the track, and afterwards reopen my water-courses.

Holding so much ground by virtue of my water rights, I had no occasion to peg out any particular portion; but kept working away as water supply permitted, and I was only too glad to see any miner sink on the ground, as, should he be successful, he undermined the ground containing gold from top to bottom, and so rendered it more easy for me, by turning a stream of water on the residue, to obtain the gold left. Besides the deeper workings, gold in more or less quantities is spread over the whole surface of this space of twenty or thirty acres, the whole of which can be worked by the water supply from my races, and for many years to come.

CHAPTER V

A BANK MYSTERY

I HAD got many jobs to do at Mr Walford's, the bank, and other places, and used to wonder how I had so much to do at the bank. The manager, Mr J——, used to frequently have a yarn with me while at work in the shop about Cockatoo and my former career. One day I had to repair a pump at a certain public-house, and when finished received my charge, £1, and went in to have a glass. Looking into the parlour I saw J—— at a table playing cards, and was surprised, but of course took no apparent notice. Next day he came into the shop as usual, when I said, 'I was astonished, Mr J——, to see you occupied as you were last night. You know I have had a great deal of experience of the world. Don't be offended at what I say. I became a poor man through cards, and such must be the fate of all. If the authorities get word of this you are a ruined man; and what will become of your wife and family? Take my advice—though a fool's—and don't touch another card. I vowed I would not; and kept my word.'

'Well,' he replied, 'I would not, but I'll tell you just how I stand. To that man you saw me playing with a few nights ago I lost £100. I could not afford it, and resolved to play no more. But last night I thought I might recover by another try. In my emergency I applied to a neighbouring storekeeper (Mr Fulton) for the loan of £50, not saying, of course, for what purpose. I obtained it, and started

playing again; and as everything seemed to favour me, I recouped £100, my opponent declining to play on. After thinking over it a bit, he decided to have another go; luck turned, and I lost his cheque for £100 and an equal further amount, including Fulton's £50. Now, I've told you the whole truth, and after consulting with my wife, I have made a resolution to give up cards and gambling of every sort for the future. Although I have command of so much money of the bank, I dare not lay a finger on it, and I would only be well satisfied if I could repay Fulton's £50. Now, you are always willing to do a good turn, but what I propose to you I would not for the world anyone knew, as it would seriously injure me. You're doing well in the shop and sluicing, and have money by you, as you never bank it. I want you to lend me £100 for six months, and, besides the usual work at the bank, I will give 5s. per week interest, and a receipt for the money.'

After some thought, and his solemn promise to avoid gambling, I agreed to advance him the sum, and told him to come in the evening with the receipt, and the money would be ready. When he came I had for him (weighed) £60 in gold dust and £40 in notes, got the receipt, and only looking at the figures in the amount, and in the date, which I could read, I took the receipt and placed it in a bottle with other papers, he impressing on me the absolute necessity of keeping the whole transaction a perfect secret.

I was continually getting odd jobs to do about the bank, such as repairing stoves both in the bank rooms and in the kitchen. I was often sent to work in the cashier's department, where money was lying about in

lots and parcels, as if carelessly laid in my way; but I may say there could not be a more careful man of business than the then cashier, Mr B——o.

One day J—— said to me that the carpet on the bank floor was getting worn, I could get it up and keep it, as he would get a new one. After this, I learned that he and two others were in the habit of card playing again at another place, and after the pledge given to me, I became doubtful as to the safety of my money. I asked a friend one day who were the men J—— played with, and at what? He gave me the names, mentioning several games. A night or two later I found they were playing that swindling game called 'Blind Hookey.' I thought, 'If that's so J—— is a ruined man.'

One day he came to the shop, and remarks were made about 'keys.' He asked me if I knew where he could get a very small lathe, as, being a bit of an amateur mechanic, he would like to have one with a slide rest. I told him that Mr Jones, at Cockatoo, had a small 3-inch one, such as he required, and that by writing to him he could obtain all particulars. He said he would, and I could let him fix it up in the shop, as he did not care about messing with it at the bank, and that he could come to the shop and get instructions from me.

My impression was that he intended to try the safe for his own purposes, and that if anything went wrong I should be suspected. I resolved to be on my guard. I believed his aim in regard to the lathe was to leave an impression of his master-key somewhere about my shop, and that with the lathe on my premises, and my assisting him in making a certain key, he could rob

the safe, and suspicion would be thrown on me. He told me the fire did not burn clear in the bank stove, and asked me to make him a small crowbar, with one end forked and turned up like a claw-hammer, and the other square. Saying that he intended going fishing some time soon, he gave me a small dark lantern to repair, telling me to bring it and the bar to the bank next morning at nine o'clock, that he would leave the bank door ajar, and I could put them on the counter, and pull the door to as I went out.

My suspicions were now thoroughly awakened. I mended the lantern, but did not take it to the bank, nor did I make the crowbar. Shortly after the time I was to have done so I saw a man gallop past in the direction of Wattle Flat, and another run towards the police camp. Mr Walford came to my shop. I asked him what was astir. He said, 'Have you not heard of the bank robbery?' 'No,' I replied. 'I suppose they are galloping after the robbers; but, in my opinion, the further they gallop the further they'll go from the right parties.' Meantime, unknown to him, during the search and inquiry going on, J—— was placed under espial, as he had forwarded some money to his wife, I believe part of the missing notes. In a few days after Mr W—— and the Bank Inspector came to the shop, when the latter told me that J—— had tried to throw him off the scent, talking largely about my cleverness in picking locks and such like, and of my being so much about the bank premises. The money, I learned, was taken from the cashier's amount, not from the manager's. I told the inspector that after what I had gone through in my past life I set such a value on my liberty that not for five times

the value of the money in the bank would I endanger it by being mixed up in anything of this sort, and that I was not that sort of man; had I had anything to do in it I would have cleared out the whole, not a part. 'Now you've got him, I'll tell you how to deal with him. You tell him to make a full confession of the act, and the bank authorities will do all in their power to get him off as lightly as possible. He's that kind of cowardly rascal, he'll disclose all.' As it turned out he did as I expected. After his arrest I, knowing he had some valuable articles of his own—a splendid rifle and other things—sent him a bill for work done privately, fifteen shillings, and five shillings, the week's interest on loan. I gave this to the lock-up-keeper, with a note to J——, threatening that if he did not pay me what he owed I would send notice to my old chums in the gaols of his conduct, and he would in consequence lead a dog's life with them.

I then went to the bottle where I kept my papers, and got J——'s receipt for the £100 loan and asked an acquaintance to read it, saying I did not mention this debt in my letter to J—— as I did not want it known. The reader looked at the paper. 'Why,' he said, 'there's no fear of J—— paying you any money. I would not let anyone see this paper or they'll be down on you for the cash.' 'What do you mean?' I asked. 'Don't you owe J—— £100, and aren't you paying him five shillings a week interest?' I looked at him, and telling him he did not know what he was talking about, asked him to read the paper to me. I found that J—— had made it out to be an acknowledgment from me to owing him £100, money lent to build a house. This he had palmed off on me under a pledge

of secrecy, knowing I could not read, and that my word once passed was sacred and binding. All was now clear to me—the money lying about in my way, as if carelessly left; the many trifling jobs keeping me occupied so much about the bank; the lathe; the turning of the key; the crowbar and dark lantern. Had I taken the last to the bank that morning and been seen coming out so early, all these things would have told against me. I should have been arrested, the suspicion against me would have been strengthened by the knowledge of my previous exploits, J—— would have got clear, and had I been tempted to have taken even one pound of money where I could have taken hundreds I should have had the whole robbery on my shoulders, and nothing could have saved me from a felon's doom. I tried all I knew to recover my £100 loan, but to no purpose. The stolen money, I believe, was traced and mostly recovered, and thus was I again protected by an all-ruling Providence.

CHAPTER VI

AUSTRALIAN ADVANTAGES

I NOW told Mr Walford that I intended taking up a piece of land on the racecourse near my work, and building a house on it at the end of the shop I had put up there. I applied for a residence area, although I had no occasion to do so, only for greater security, as any miner by his miner's right and under the im-

provement clause could take up two acres of land, and, having fenced it and built on it, could make application to purchase. I selected a piece of ground on the edge of the racecourse, the house having a frontage of thirty-five feet to the Sofala and Bathurst Road, having a lovely view of the country up and down for miles, a splendid run for my fowls, and no neighbours to find fault or be offended as in the town, only half a mile away. There was any quantity of timber of all sorts within easy reach, and water almost at the door. One of the advantages of the liberal land laws here, in comparison with those of the older countries, is the extent of freedom and liberty allowed to the smallest occupier. Take, for instance, a case such as my own. I want a settled home; I select a piece of ground, no matter where, so long as it is on unalienated Crown lands; I put four pegs or posts in the ground, one at each corner of the allotment selected; I start to build a house on it, no matter of what dimensions; the material is all at hand, no putting your hand in your purse for timber merchants' accounts; I am my own merchant, and the almost unlimited bush forest my market; I go there, fell what timber I require, draw it in, and erect my house, and no one to ask me what I do or why I do it. So with the fencing of the land; I get posts and rails, split palings, fell trees, and draw logs, strip immense sheets of bark from the trunks for roof coverings, and no one to say me nay, or ask from me one penny for leave or liberty so to do. I run my stock, through a vast tract of unoccupied country, almost free, or on the extensive commons, some hundreds upon hundreds of acres, at a nominal charge for horses, for instance

up to a certain number one shilling per head per annum.

If not at work on my own account I can let my services to any employer that suits me, or that I may suit, for a time, long or short, as required, at wages varying from 30s. to 50s. per week, and no references required, so long as the agreement is fulfilled. In fact, a man with prudence, frugality and care need have no fear of not prospering in this land of plenty and freedom. While looking after my home affairs, another race about four and a half miles long from Spring Creek, round the ridges, flumed with boards across the smaller creeks and gullies, was finished on to the racecourse, and reservoirs constructed by Barlow, Cumming, and party, at a cost of £600. In this I bought a fourth share from Mr Halpin, a storekeeper, and made up my mind as opportunity offered to become in time the sole owner of this race, as by so doing I would hold the key of all the workings within an area of twenty or thirty acres, to the debarring of anyone else, as the two main races would command the whole watershed of the surrounding hills for miles on two different falls. At the time I bought in, the owners of the Spring Creek race were receiving for rent of four heads of water £8 per week, or £2 per week per share, exclusive of their own water supply, so that in addition to the water from my own original race I had an extra supply from this one, and £2 per week also.

CHAPTER VII

CLARKE'S BUSHRANGING GANG

SOON I had my house quite finished and the floors boarded, and, of course, had a 'shivoo' by way of housewarming. One night I was sitting by the fire alone with my daughter, when I said to her, 'You have never given me any account of your life at Braidwood all the time you were away. Let's have it now.' She then told me something as follows:—'When I first went to Mr Greninger's, near Braidwood, they had no family. The diggings were in full go and gold plentiful. Mr Greninger had a tannery near Braidwood, and a boot factory, employing a great number of hands.

'Near the house was a large bush paddock for the cattle, running miles back through a dense scrub. I sometimes went here for the cows. At this time the gang of bushrangers known as Clarke's gang * was in the neighbourhood, and had been for a good while. I had frequently seen some of them (as

* The Clarkes, John and Thomas, were famous bushrangers of the latter sixties in New South Wales. Their robberies are too numerous to record, but among the principal of them were the stoppage of the mail near Moruya, and the Yass and Queanbeyan mails, all in 1866. They twice stuck up the Yass mail in that year, and once in the year succeeding, when they also robbed the Goulburn mail. They were further particularly noted for their robberies of Chinamen on the Araluen Mountains and stoppages of travellers on the Braidwood Road. Among the darker crimes charged against them were suspected complicity in the murder of four special constables at Jindera in January 1867; the murder of Miles O'Grady at Nerrigundah in 1866; shooting at the Ballalaba police in 1866; and the felonious wounding of Constable Walsh and the black tracker 'Sir Watkin,' when resisting capture at Jindera in 1867. For the last crime they were tried and executed at Darlinghurst Gaol, Sydney, June 25, 1867.

I found) going through the paddock, jumping their horses over the fences, going towards the scrub, and had been asked by the police if I had seen anything of such men. I always answered "No," fearful of consequences.

'One day the cows had strayed further away, and I was tracking them through the scrub, when suddenly I was seized by a one-eyed man, a member of the gang, subsequently supposed to be murdered by the Clarkes, who led me off to a cave at some little distance. He told his mates that he had found me prowling through the scrub. "If we let her go," he said, "we're sure to be trapped; she's bound to split on us. I think the best thing we can do to prevent it is to knock her on the head." "I've seen you two," I said, pointing to the Clarkes, "often going over the fence and through the paddock, and I've never told anyone, not even the police, when I've been asked, always saying I had seen no one, and I'm sure I'm not going to tell now if you let me go." The Clarkes were also of this opinion, one of them saying I looked like a brick, and he would engage I would not peach.

'After a long barney among themselves they let me off with heavy threats as to the consequences should I blab, which I never did while they were out.

'After a time I became nursemaid to Mrs Greninger's first baby, and was as happy as I could wish. One day, months after, I took the child with me searching for the cows, of which I had lost the run, and wandering hither and thither, found I had got lost. I kept on walking about, followed by a little lapdog. I at last got frightened and confused. At nightfall I wrapped the child in a shawl, and having

no means of making a fire, crept into a hollow log or stump of a tree as far as I could to get out of the wind and cold night air, protecting the child with my dress till morning, when it became peevish and hungry. I chanced upon some wattle gum, and gathered all I could find, ate some myself, and softening it, gave some to the child. I wandered about all that day, eating nothing but a little of the gum, and at night had to seek the best shelter I could find for myself and my poor little charge, sometimes eating, or rather chewing, the soft and moist roots of tussock grass. The child I managed to appease by little pieces of manna which I had collected under a tree. The third day, when emerging from my shelter, I was confronted by something in the shape of a very tall man, seemingly covered with a coat of hair, and looking as frightened of me as I was of him. While he stood gazing at me, without attempting to get nearer, I heard at a distance a peculiar cry, between a laugh and a bark, which my companion of the scrub answered in the same manner, and, after seeming to consider for a few moments, he leisurely walked or shuffled off, greatly to my relief. I was afterwards told it was what the people here called a "Yahoo," * or some such name. I was so overcome with fatigue and fright—more on account

* Stories of 'Yahoos,' or hairy wild men seen in the bush, were at one time common. If they were not intentional hoaxes, they probably had no other foundation than that some imaginative persons from time to time caught glimpses of ragged lurking bolters from the convict gangs, or of renegade white men who had gone to live with the blacks and adopted their customs. It is a matter of history that in the early days of Australia an escaped military prisoner (Buckley), upon whose genuine narrative the later notorious 'De Rougemont' so largely drew in his fictitious 'adventures,' lived with blacks until he forgot his own language. When discovered after years he was fantastically attired and adorned with a huge and matted beard. A hurried glance at him might well have made anyone believe in the 'Yahoo' tales.

of the child than myself—that I could go no further, and sat down, when a thought struck me that if I could drive away the little dog, Fanny, she would make for home, and as there were, no doubt, parties out in search of me and the youngster, they might come across her, or she them. I got a stick, and with some difficulty drove the faithful animal away.

'It appears the neighbours, after a vain search, had got the assistance of a black tracker or two, and were about to renew their labours, when Mr Greninger, coming out of the bush, joyfully cried, "Little Fanny's come home, she was with them, we may find them now." At the same time some more of the unsuccessful searchers came up, and orders were given to suspend further operations till Fanny was refreshed, but to keep in readiness to follow her when she had rested a little. Having had a feed, she soon began to sniff about, and shortly scampered off into the bush, in the direction whence she had come, the watchers after her—some on foot and some on horseback. They followed her in her course backwards and forwards for about fourteen miles, when she brought them at last straight to where we were. They placed us in the saddle, and we returned home. I was at once put to bed, and carefully and kindly tended until I quite recovered, as also the poor child, for whom I was most anxious.

'A person lived near us, an eccentric sort of old lady, who had had six husbands. I called on her one day with a friend, and found her seated in a large arm-chair, seemingly almost helpless. In the cellar beneath the room she had five coffins with glass covers, containing the remains of her five departed partners in life, while the last resting-place of the sixth was under the door-

step in front of the house. She was quite lively and chatty, despite her bodily frailty, and at times quite amusing.

'One day Sergeant Duffy (in charge of the force at Braidwood) came over to Mr Greninger's and asked if he would kindly allow me to go over for a time to take charge of his child during the illness of his wife. I thought I should enjoy the change for a little, and I went to Braidwood, when I found that the Clarkes had recently been captured by a party passing themselves off as surveyors, in the vicinity of their haunts, though with the loss of one of their party, who was shot in cold blood. They (the Clarkes) were now lying in the gaol at Braidwood, and I would sometimes go with the sergeant, or some other of the gaol officials, to see them, being grateful for their interference while I was in the hands of the one-eyed ruffian who proposed my death at the cave in the scrub. In sympathy I used every stratagem I could think of to alleviate their sufferings somewhat by conveying to them trifling articles. One day, however, I was found out, and my visits prohibited in future. The men in the prison—not the Clarkes, however—used to be led out at times by the officers of the gaol, or by Sergeant Duffy himself, to work in the fields, grubbing stumps, etc. They were at work at a very large stump on one occasion when I happened to take the child to its father. The stump had been nearly uprooted, and the prisoners were endeavouring to overturn it. Duffy, putting down his gun, went to their assistance, and the man next to him, no doubt by a preconcerted plan, made a rush at him, or the gun, and they grappled. Seeing the sergeant in some

danger of being strangled I dropped the child, and catching hold of the barrel of the gun, brought the stock down with all the strength I could command on the head of the assailant, sending him kicking, and freeing the sergeant, who recovered his weapon and at once marched them all back to gaol.

'A short time after this the Clarkes were hanged, and though they were deserving of their fate, I felt sorry, on account of their protecting me when my life was in danger. After this, knowing I could now do them no earthly harm, I told Mr Greninger of what had occurred at the cave in the scrub. He communicated with the police, and on search being made the relics of their raids, with portions of their stores, were found.

'At this point of my stay at Greninger's I had your letter calling me home. Now, as you have not much need for me here, what do you say if I pay them another visit? It seems a shame I have been away so long and never written to them. I'd like to go back for a while. I have saved some money of my own, and with a little help from you I could easily go.'

I agreed and told her to write and say that she would be in Sydney on a certain day, and would write from there asking at what time it would suit them to meet her at the steamer at Nelligen. So, giving her £20 for expenses, I packed her off.

CHAPTER VIII

A GOLD RUSH

DRY weather had now set in, and Barlow and Co. proposing to sell off, I seized the chance and closed

with them, and obtained sole possession of both ground and water supply, which I long had an eye to. I then started and cut a tail race in Hospital Gully to where the company had accumulated an immense pile of tailings during about two years' workings, which I intended to wash away, to form an open face in the ground for future operations. I put a man (G. Williams) in one sluice, and a man named Smith in the other, and with a full supply of water, the dirt went off like flour. From the tailings in the two sluices I got about £18 per week. Having now two men constantly employed in sluicing, I was at liberty to look about me, and as the brothers Moore, members of a highly respectable and long-established family, resident in the district, of the Australian yeoman class, had just discovered a richly payable vein of gold at a spot afterwards named New Chum Gully,* about nine miles distant, in a wild and rugged country, a party of us miners, about a hundred strong, agreed to start in a body. An amusing sight it was to view the start, men on foot, men on horseback, in all guises, with every sort of equipment in tents, blankets, and mugs, mining tools, and cooking utensils of simple and primitive construction. All were in a high state of excitement and bustle, prepared to overcome all obstacles, to force their way through brush and scrub, over rocks and through deep gullies in pursuit of the all-absorbing object.

On arrival there we found the 'find' no myth, but a pleasing reality. Though fortune on a gold-field

* This place must have been named after New Chum Hill, Kiandra, where two nuggets, one weighing forty-two ounces and the other 200 ounces, were found in July 1861.

is ever fickle, none had much cause for complaint, for I believe I averaged about the least of the lot, and my share of the gains was not to be despised, being about £4 per week. In one or two instances as much as £50 per week was obtained, one piece alone, I remember, weighing over 5 oz. I used to come in weekly for rations, as did many others, returning on Monday, some with the regularity of clockwork, others dilly-dallying on the way to finish the carouse carried on during the stay in town. In some cases miners did not again reach the scene of operations till Wednesday, and then in anything but a fit state of body or mind to prosecute their labours. In those back gullies and ranges, the sad effects of intemperance and recklessness under drink have been more than once brought to light. Men have hoarded a few pounds, started on a prospecting tour, and, luckily securing gold, have returned to town to dispose of it. Returning, many a one with his brain clouded by drink has lost his way, and the cases have not been few in which such wanderers have succumbed to exposure.

At this moment, while writing, the police have just returned from a fruitless search after a man of long experience in bush mining, and well acquainted with the lay of the land in the district, who has been missing for some days. He had come into town on business connected with the mining board, got too much, and went off to his home towards New Chum, with a bottle of grog in his possession. As he did not reach his quarters, the report of a missing man was spread, and every exertion made, with the miserable result of merely finding the empty bottle, and no

doubt exists but that he has sauntered off into some lonely spot, and, overcome by the inclemency of the cold, has perished miserably by the side of some log, or fallen over some one of the many dangerous precipices with which the bush hereabouts is studded.

As for gold among the ridges there is no telling what an immense amount of riches is unearthed back from the Turon. There is not a gully or creek known that has not borne good fruit to the miner, and to say that they are worked out, is to the experienced miner almost equivalent to admitting that they have not been half developed. Thousands of acres of unexplored ground await only the enterprise and experience of practical hands. My time being now fully occupied in looking after my sluices and races, I had no one to attend to the business of the shop and household affairs, so I sent for my daughter to return, as she could receive orders for repairs, etc., in the shop, and in the course of a week she came home. The season now being very rainy, I had an over supply of water, and carried on the work night and day, sunshine or rain, on an open face thirty feet deep near the cemetery. At night working alone I had two large lanterns fixed at a distance apart to throw light on the sluice. If it rained, though I always worked barefooted, I had no other clothing but my trousers, and an oil-skin cap on my head, always keeping a dry long flannel shirt under a large oilcan to slip on when I knocked off.

CHAPTER IX

QUEER BUSH VISITORS

Soon after my daughter's return I was sitting with her at the door, when a man, dressed as a gentleman, and mounted on a blood bay horse, rode up, and to my astonishment said: 'I'm looking for employment: I'm very hard up, and understand that you employ hands at your works.' I replied, 'You do not appear like a working man, by your own looks and that of your horse. Why not dispose of him and the housings, and have something in your pocket?' He said he had offered the horse for sale, but could not find a purchaser. I asked him inside to have something to eat, telling him I was full-handed at present. He fastened his horse at the door, and my daughter placed some food on the table before him. During the meal I told him I had been placed in the same position as he, and without a penny, and all through gambling; perhaps he was in the same predicament. 'Just so,' he said, and at that moment I heard the sound of horses coming up at a smart pace towards the house. I asked my daughter to see who they were. She ran out and said they were two police. The jaws of my visitor ceased operations, and he looked flurried and rather disconcerted. Sergeant Fagan jumped off his horse and inquired who claimed the horse at the door. I said, 'It is this gentleman's,' and related what had passed between us. Fagan then arrested my would-be *employé* on a charge of horse-stealing, and marched him off. A telegram was sent

off, and a reply came that a horse answering to the description had been stolen from near Cobar. Next day I was subpœnaed to court. The prisoner was committed to take his trial at Dubbo Quarter Session, to appear at which I was bound over in £40. At the appointed time Fagan and I started off on horseback for Dubbo, going by Hill End. Instead of putting my horse in the police stables, I put up at Swan's public-house, intending to start early for the Ironbarks. At Swan's, a man rather groggy, hearing me mention the last place, said he also was going there, and said that he would show me a short cut or two if I could follow him. He said he rode pretty sharp. I went to the barracks and told the sergeant in charge to let Fagan know. 'Oh!' he said, laughing, 'he's gone half an hour ago.' Just as I went for my horse, the man who was to be my guide came round the corner, and setting spurs to his beast started at a break-neck pace. I jumped on my nag and after him in the direction of a station called the Paling Yards. I had to ride hard to keep him in sight. Half-way down a steep pinch into a gully I saw horse and rider go topsy-turvy, and my horse, being hard in the mouth, passed them like the wind, nor could I pull him up till we got to the Paling Yards hut, a long distance ahead—some 200 yards—where a woman came out, whom I asked if I was on the right road to Suttor's Triamble Station. She told me to keep the right-hand track, as the other led to the Ophir and Macquarie River. I told her of my guide's downfall in the gully, whence we could now hear his coo-ee. While talking to her, who should make his appearance, tearing down the opposite hill, but Fagan. I rode

out, and he asked me how I came to start without him. I told him what the sergeant at the barracks said—that he had started a half an hour before—and I was hurrying off to pull him up. He laughed, saying that they were only joking with me. I then told him of the man who had offered to show me the short cuts; but that he had made a short cut I had no inclination to follow—I had left him and his horse in the gully, where we could still hear him shouting.

Fagan and I continued our journey, and after losing our way, and much scrambling over rough ground, came to country I knew in days bygone. I went straight past the site of my house when Wilson and I had started on our mad road exploits. All traces of my former home had disappeared. At night I met with a few of my old-time fellow-diggers, who told me it was now only a tucker diggings—that the good old days had departed. I told them I was going to have a look round in the morning before starting for Dubbo—that I believed there was good ground round my old place yet. At peep o' day I strolled about the old spot, where I had done so well, and spent about an hour there. From the dirt thrown out of the holes and the appearance of the ground I had my opinion that there was any quantity of gold left there still, as in some places where I had found it, very little ground had been broken since I left, the whole place being covered with a dense growth of wattles. The gold-bearing veins here were very easily missed, as at times they ran close to the rock, and at others they would run three or four feet up, in a mullock above the gravel, and much really payable ground was left untouched by the inexperienced miner. Between the

Muckirawa and Ironbarks, near where a doctor broke his neck by falling down a hole, and close to where I have got over an ounce to the tub of dirt, I found only a few holes sunk since my time. Two brothers working there had in five weeks obtained over 600 ounces of gold, and, as the old hands may remember, went home to England.

I started with Fagan next morning, and made Wellington by night. I met a few here also I knew, and called on Jack Poole, an old Turon friend. He asked me if I had seen the landlord of the house where I was staying, adding, 'That's the very man who drove the mail you stuck up on Mt. Victoria.' 'Well,' I said, 'I have no animosity against him. He did not swear to anything but the truth, and could not do me any more harm. I'll have a look at him.' I did so, and found him so much altered I would not have known him; whether he recognised me or not I do not know, as the subject of the mail was not broached by either of us. Next morning we reached Dubbo early, and the day after, the trials commenced. On the case on which I had been subpœnaed being called on, the Attorney-General said that he was not prepared to go on with it, as the stolen horse in question had been again taken away from the police paddock and could not be produced. The bonds were renewed, and I was paid my expenses, amounting to over £7. I then went to a public-house near with Fagan and the Dubbo sergeant, who was afterwards shot dead by the bushrangers. Fagan told me he would have to return by coach, as his horse was done up, and I would have to go by myself. I asked him the time. It was half-past four, afternoon.

'Well,' I said, 'I'll be in Wellington by half-past seven, thirty-five miles.' He laughed and shook his head, but I started at once and got in a quarter of an hour before the time stated.

CHAPTER X

A DECLINING DIGGINGS

For many years back down to the present time, there has been no work done on my area of twenty or thirty acres except by myself and a neighbour, to whom I have shown the ground. During this time I have invited many miners to come on to the ground, saying that I would find them work sinking shafts by piecework; but this does not suit the generality of miners nowadays, as they are bent on day work at wages that a poor man cannot afford, as it is often a matter of indifference to them how his interests are affected, provided they obtain their wages. It is often said by some croakers that the Turon diggings are worked out; but here is an instance of a large area being practically untried, and there are many other spots of the same nature in the district.

Having mentioned the subject of wages, an occurrence which took place during my late trip to England comes to mind. Coming along the road one evening between Shirley and Birmingham after dusk, I heard a rustling in the ditch by the side of the road under the hedge, and thinking it was some stray donkey or other animal I went up, when a human voice issued from the

depths of the ditch. 'Hilloa,' I said, 'what are you up to here?' I was asked the time, and I replied, 'Nearly seven o'clock.' 'Oh! it's near knocking-off time.' 'What hours do you work?' I asked. 'From 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. for 2s. 6d. per day, and I consider I am well paid, as many of the others, less practised hands at hedging and ditching, receive but 12s. per week.' I told him that where I had just come from, the gold mines of New South Wales, he would not catch anyone working such hours nor at anything like such wages, and gave him full particulars of mining and agricultural affairs, and added that as he was a man with a family he was just the person wanted in the colonies, to which he ought to turn himself, as he could get assistance in emigrating. He seemed quite struck by my remarks, but whether he availed himself of my advice I know not.

Great laxness about money prevailed upon the diggings in the good old times, many instances of which I might give. I remember once coming home and seeing two bank-notes blowing about my garden, and on looking into the matter I found my daughter, then little, sitting in the doorway building a baby house with stones and bank-notes worth £200. I knew the money could not be mine, as I had all my money safely stowed away, with the exception of a few pounds, and here was a sum of nearly £200 flying about the country. On appealing to my wife as to the possibility of accounting for this strange occurrence, she was as much in the dark as myself. A short time after it came to her remembrance that a Mr C. Wilson, a gold-buyer, had left a parcel with her, which she had carelessly laid on one side, ignorant

as to its contents, and afterwards, the child crying, she had tossed this parcel to her to keep her quiet. I may explain that Mr Wilson had some short time previous been talking to me about getting him a quantity of gold, either of my own, as I was in a rich claim, or purchasing some for him, leaving the money for that purpose with my wife for me, but not stating any particulars. Thus the money was being cast about almost at the mercy of the wind. I think of the £200, the contents of the parcel, about £25 was never recovered. I have known instances of the large gold-buyers being short of cash through the non-arrival of the gold escort from Sydney with remittances. They would then become indebted to some of the tradesmen for an advance for the purchase of gold. Often did I have a call of that nature from Mr Wilson to the amount of £100 or £200, which would be handed over without demur, and without acknowledgment or receipt of any sort, and promptly repaid on the arrival of the escort. No doubt some losses were incurred through this off-hand way of dealing, but they were few.

CHAPTER XI

AN OLD-TIME RACE MEETING

An incident of old times, worthy of record, has just come to my remembrance. An intimate acquaintance of mine, a Mr Lyle, often came to my place

for a 'pitch,' and being a lucky miner like myself, we soon became the best of friends. He was a determined Orangeman, and always in hot water with the opponents of that brotherhood. I had on one occasion sent a load of mining utensils, cradles and suchlike to Hill End, where there was a great demand for them, and went over in person to dispose of them. On my return I became involved in a funny adventure, in which Lyle was also concerned. I stopped at Keefe's public-house, about twelve miles from Sofala, put my horse up, and went into the taproom, filled by a noisy crowd, all diggers, and mostly Irish. I at once took up my position in the huge, old-fashioned chimney-place, having seats on each side for the accommodation of half a dozen people. I did not see anything of Lyle here, but I saw what kind of men his opponents were.

I was sitting in my corner, about eight o'clock in the evening, when a swagman came in, a traveller from Bathurst to Tambaroora, without a penny. After some conversation I handed him half-a-crown and a drink, when he made some remarks about the rough mob assembled there. I told him he was safe enough so long as he did not interfere with them.

Some time before bedtime, being all pretty well full, the company began singing. The stranger said to me, 'What a lark if I was to strike up "Boyne Water."' 'My God,' I said, 'they'll kill you.' 'Never mind,' he said, 'you give me a shilling, and I'll show you some fun.' I did so, and he set himself down at the table with them, when one of them said, 'Come, stranger, give us a verse.' He protested he

only knew one song, and they might not like it. 'Oh, anything; sing anything,' they chorused, and ordered in two glasses of brandy in succession to wet his whistle.

He had scarcely finished the first few lines of 'Boyne Water' when he was pounced upon, and in a trice hid from my view by the number of his assailants. He would have got some rough treatment but for the fact that they were so far gone in their cups that they belaboured one another soundly without sense or reason, so giving the disturber of their harmony an opportunity to escape. He poked himself into an obscure corner opposite me, from which vantage ground we never stirred till bedtime, witnessing a fight in which blood flowed freely.

Early in the morning I and the stranger got up, and the brawlers of the previous night, forgetful of the disturbance, hailed us with the welcome of old friends.

The landlady, Mrs Keefe, asked me if I would stay to breakfast. I said, 'No,' as I would get as far as the Lower Turon first. Giving the stranger some provender for the road in lieu of breakfast, she ordered her horse and started with me for the races to be held that afternoon on M'Cann's racecourse, about a mile from Sofala.

My companion was about the best horsewoman it had been my lot to meet in all my travels. Avoiding neither brush, stumps nor logs, she led the way along the telegraph line, down a tremendously steep hill, at a break-neck pace. I expected every minute to see her thrown headlong from the saddle. At the bottom we crossed the river and made for Cole's public-house, but were disappointed about breakfast,

and started again by the Wallabies and Jew's Creek, so on to the racecourse, where was assembled a great crowd of diggers and others. Said my companion to me, 'I came out for a lark, and a lark I mean to have; I mean to enjoy myself to-day.' As an earnest of her intention, seeing my friend Lyle (the Orangeman mentioned) standing in front of the booth, she told me to hold her horse. She jumped off, and to my utter amazement at once rolled into him. He was, like myself, quite taken aback. This happened at the time so much excitement existed over Fenians and Fenianism in New South Wales.

The spark once kindled, up blazed the fire. Sticks, stones, and bottles from the booth held by Mr Partridge, of the Museum Hotel, now in Lithgow, came into requisition, and were freely handled. Chief among the combatants stood out my two friends, Lyle, paling in hand, and Mrs Keefe, flourishing a rather ticklish-looking riding-whip, and cheering on her supporters. After a time comparative quiet was restored, and the interrupted sports were proceeded with. During the continuance of them, Mrs Keefe and some of her party rode into town, about a mile off, and returned in the afternoon on their way back to their homes at Sally's Flats. Among them were M. Crawley and the redoubtable Mick Collins. The last bore in his arms a huge wax doll, obtained at the stores of Mr Cummins, Sofala, and dressed out in ribbons of the brightest green. Coming at a smart pace on to the course, the bearer of the doll pulled up at the entrance of Partridge's booth, and shouted, 'Here comes the Fenian Queen. Look at the Queen of the Fenians.' This roused the wrath of my friend Lyle, who met

the invitation to view Her Majesty by hurling a soda-water bottle full at her champion. Others joining in on each side, at it they went again, ding dong, heedless of the efforts of poor Shuttleworth, the only constable on the ground, to keep order. In the strife the brave Lyle was knocked down by a treacherous blow from the butt of a riding-whip in the hands of one of the opposing horsemen. The policeman's only resource, with the overwhelming odds against him, was calmly and impartially to watch proceedings, take names, and bring summonses. Shortly after, Lyle came to me inquiring if I knew anything of his mate, with whom he had been working a very rich claim near the junction of Spring Creek. I, of course, knew nothing of him, not having even heard of his disappearance. It sometimes happened on the diggings in prosperous times for a man who was known to possess a great quantity of gold, or a large sum of money, to leave his place without notice, and his hut or tent in such a state as to induce the belief that he intended shortly to return; while really, to avoid the danger of being followed, stuck up, and robbed, he had secretly collected all his valuables, and started off unseen on his way to Sydney by some unfrequented track. This proved to have been what Lyle's mate had done; but Lyle, being a man known to have violent feelings against a certain class of his countrymen, suspicion was cast upon him. This grew so strong as to cause his arrest, and he was eventually committed to stand his trial in Bathurst. While awaiting trial it transpired that his mate had actually gone off in the manner here described, and after knocking himself about the country, and knock-

ing his money down, had been admitted into Yass Hospital suffering from delirium tremens. When convalescent, he by chance got hold of a newspaper in which Lyle's name was mentioned in connection with his own disappearance in so serious a way, as to induce him at once to communicate with him through the proper channel. Lyle was then liberated without a stain on his name or character.

THIS brings to a conclusion Mr Day's narrative as it appeared in the *Sydney Evening News*, and the Editor added the following additional information :—

'Mr Day concludes with somewhat of a lament over the degenerate diggers of the present time, many of whom seem, according to his account, to prefer regular wages to the glorious uncertainties of the early days. He himself, too, sturdy man as his memoirs reveal him to have been, has altered somewhat with advancing age, and has had to change with his times. His last great fight about a disputed water-right was settled unsatisfactorily to him in a fifty days' law case before the Warden's Court. He lost the cause because of the absence of a solicitor. How different to the one-round encounter which carried matters so triumphantly at the Ironbark diggings in the fifties! He still, however, has much of the old spirit within him, and his blood was stirred by the news of the later Hill End finds. 'It put me in mind,' he says, 'of the rich old times on the Hill,

when I lent a hand in lifting the world-renowned mass of gold in one cake from the police-office to the rack of the escort coach—the mass weighing some three hundred pounds—which was obtained from Byers and Holterman's ground, Hill End, or rather Hawkins's Hill. It was bundled up in a three-bushel bag. Gold is still abundant in all these ridges and mountains, more especially among those overhanging the Macquarie at Burrendong and Ophir. Some of these ridges lie back 300 to 400 yards from the river, and on the ledge near the summits extensive areas of untried ground exist at the present day, which, through aid from the prospecting fund, may very soon be discovered to contain large quantities of ore.

Supporting his opinion he tells the following, which must be the last of his stories :—'Talking about the late finds at Hill End brings to mind the case of a miner named Prosper, and a very appropriate name, as events will show. One day, coming along the Redbank, at Wattle Flat, with his dray, he noticed something in the track that drew closer attention, which something proved to be a nugget of solid gold, about £400 in value. He was complaining to me afterwards that the Wattle Flat was about done, and that he could get very little gold in general. I told him that as he had some money by him now he ought to stick to the place where he had found the nugget, and give it a thorough overhauling; that I had great faith in nuggets, like pigeons, being in pairs. He followed my advice, and after much searching and working round the spot, and almost disheartened, he was there with his boy one day, when the latter unearthed a lump of some substance bearing the

resemblance of a large cinder or clinker, and after knocking it about a bit with the pick took it up, and from the weight found it to be a metal, and called his father, who at once exclaimed, "That's the other fellow's brother."[2] It was about the same weight and value as the other, the shape of a smoothing-iron and as black as coal. In paying me an account he owed me he gave me a pound as acknowledgment of the good effect of my advice.'

Day now lives on Spring Creek, which he describes as the most congenial of all places for an old digger. He says:—'One of my races comes from near the head of it, running parallel to it on to the racecourse. In one portion of the creek, about half-a-mile up, the Hollingdale nugget, value about £500, was found. Next to this Roger's men got the lump of gold about the same value. A quarter of a mile from this the M'Carty piece was dug out, about £200. Then came Lloyd and Armour's, about £500, found one Saturday evening just before knocking off, after a week of barren labour; and the nugget found by a Chinaman, who was burnt in his tent after being shot, the value of which no one knew, but which was supposed to be the largest of the lot. Next there were the sailors' three junks, about £250 each, with which they went home. All these were obtained in the space of one half-mile of the length of the creek, besides numerous other bits up to one pound weight.'

Day has resumed correspondence with his family, of which he is now by no means reckoned the black sheep, and has sent them gold dust and specimen pins.

The last to be said of this survival of the old days is that he has prepared his own grave and epitaph, 'Old Bill Day's Grave' having been a sight in Sofala in its destined occupant's lifetime. The way he was led to make these gloomy preparations was characteristic. He had had a suit with M——, a fellow-digger, concerning sluices; but in the latter part of M——'s life the pair became friendly, and one day, talking over the speed with which the dead were forgotten, they decided, possibly half in joke, that whichever was spared longer should make it his duty to see to the other's grave. M—— died, and Day after some years was reminded of his old comrade and opponent by having some words with the widow about a business matter. The widow unfairly threw out the broad hint that *her* husband had never been 'in trouble.' Upon this our hero, knowing that the deceased's grave was yet unfenced, came out with the obvious retort that it was a pity then that his memory was not more respected. He then called to mind his odd bargain with M—— years before, and set to work to repair the omissions of himself and others, causing to be erected round the mound that covered the deceased a fence large enough to cover a second grave, which for the time was only marked by a shallow trench and a row of rose cuttings. Over M——'s grave his mourner and intending companion had placed a headboard, with the following inscription:—

'I lie on your right hand.
When the roses grow up they will shade you and me,
When decayed and forgot God will not forget me.
Born 5th June 1819.—W. D.'

M——, it must be understood, was lying to the right of where Day intended to lie. The widow of the former objected to another's last tribute to her husband, and so Day had the word 'right' changed to 'left,' and removed the headboard to the site he meant for his own last home. It is to be hoped it will be long before the words above the tomb can be considered literally true; but whenever in the course of time they become so, the little trick concerning them will be recognised as peculiarly appropriate in connection with the memory of a sterling man,—who though an 'old hand,' had to resort to so many shifts in his life.

THE END

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