

THAT
AUSTRALIAN
FAMILY.

MABEL BOYNE.

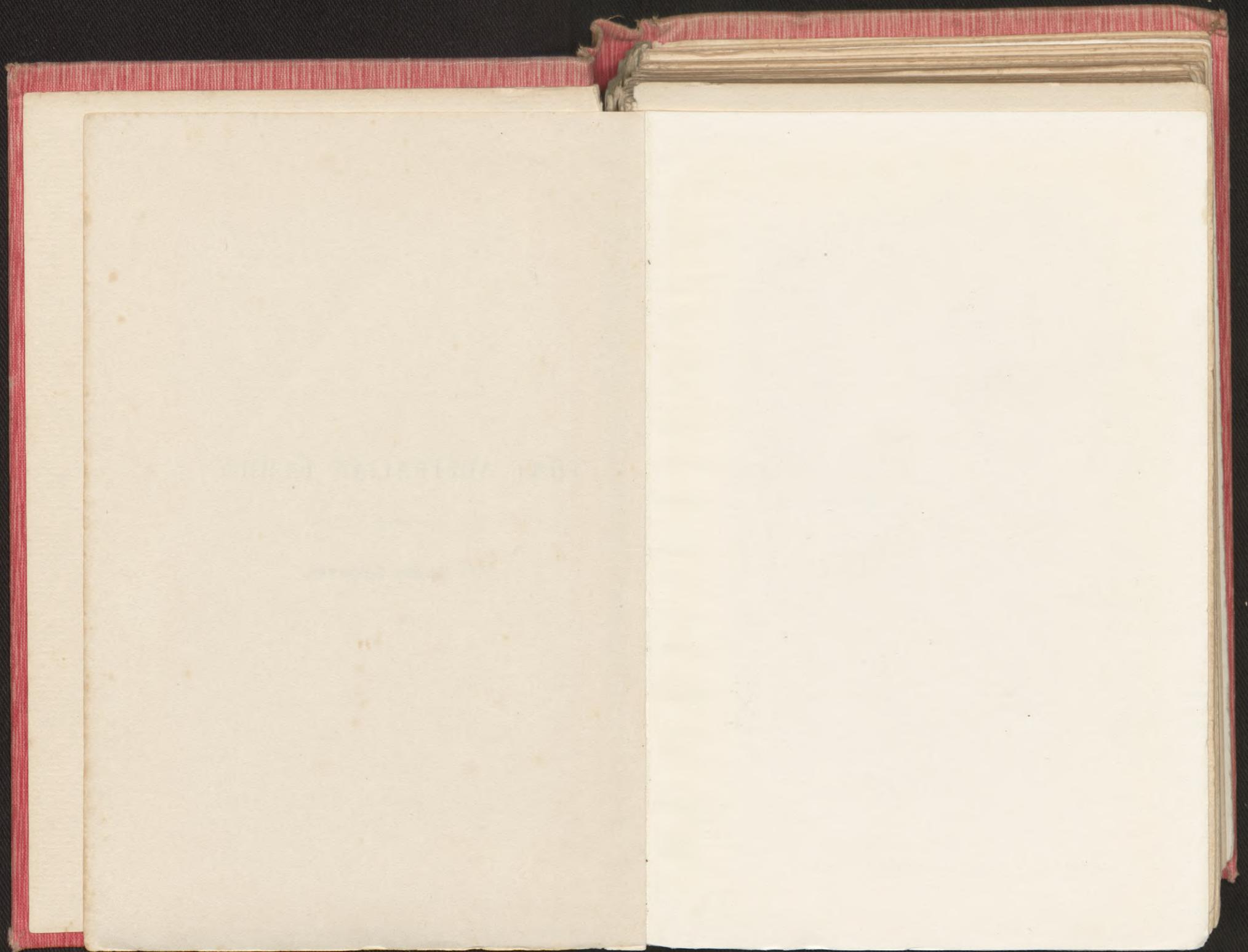
BATSON & CO.,
LTD.,
SYDNEY.

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MABEL BOYNE.

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Casting a look of defiance at his enemy, he quitted the room.

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BY
MABEL BOYNE.



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*“Defer not till to-morrow to be wise,
To-morrow’s sun to thee may never rise.”*

CONGREVE.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT WAS TO BE DONE?

WHAT was to be done? What could be done under such circumstances? Nothing—nothing but to stand and gaze with tear-stained faces—to turn now and then with a look of wild despair, as something loved by one or the other was held up rudely for inspection; as the eager, gaping crowd, anxious to outdo each other in their efforts to secure some fancied bargain, forced their way to the front, neither heeding nor caring for the frequent rebuffs with which they met.

What cared they, if they dragged their wet and muddy boots across the velvet carpets—if they pointed dripping umbrellas at the costly

pictures adorning the walls? Was it not a public sale?—and had not they, with their shillings, as much right there as their neighbours with their thousands?

“Stand aside, I tell you!” “Ha! ha! like your infernal impudence! No, Geoffrey Horton, not I. I have not forgotten old scores. You little thought that your unlucky blow would cost you so dearly; you little thought, as you hastened home to follow Mark Horton to his grave, that within one short month you—you with your airs and graces—would stand beggared before my eyes. You see, I do not easily forget, and I have my revenge.”

“Scoundrel! Neither do I, John Arnold! Were I to sacrifice my life, I would do the same again. Were you now—coward that you are—to again use one insulting word against my dead father, I would thrash you within an

inch of your life. So beware! You have done your worst, brought this ruin—you have gained your end!”—then, casting a look of defiance, scorn, and hatred towards his enemy, he quitted the room.

He could not deny it—they were beggars. As yet he did not realize what lay before him. He thought not of himself, but of his widowed mother, and brothers and sisters. How could they, reared amidst wealth and luxury, face the dark and dreary future that lay before them?

He thought of them all now, as he hurried to where the coarse-voiced auctioneer was busy sacrificing, one after the other, the many treasures that they had prized. He could see in imagination the sad imploring faces of his young sisters; the pale, sorrow-stricken face of his anxious mother.

For himself he cared not. He had youth, health and strength; but these and no more. In all his twenty years he had shown neither talent nor inclination for any settled occupation in life. His father had been a man of reputed wealth; neither care nor sorrow had shadowed his happy family till a few short weeks ago, when he was carried to his home lifeless.

No one guessed, as eager parties, night after night, scoured the bush in search, what the true fate of Mark Horton had been. No one guessed that for three days his body had lain beneath the ruins of an empty house, miles away from his country home at Sutton Forest (where he had taken shelter from the storm), only to meet death, in all its sadness, by being crushed beneath the fallen roof.

* * * * *

At last it happened that everything became known. At last the worried and anxious looks, the slight irritability of manner of late, which the sorrowing wife now sadly remembered, were accounted for.

Mark Horton, fearing the worst, yet hoping for the best, had not confided his troubles to his wife. He tried to persuade himself that everything would come right—that he would yet reap millions from the mine of supposed fabulous wealth in which he had foolishly invested his large fortune.

How he had raved and stormed when the shock at last descended, when it at last became known that the mine was as worthless as the paper he held in his hand. How he cursed the day that he had placed himself in the power of John Arnold, for he had realized then that he was a ruined man.

Even the home that had sheltered his wife and children for so many years was a home no longer. Even they would soon be turned adrift, for he knew that John Arnold would show no mercy ; and as this knowledge preyed upon and haunted his mind, he had decided to ride over to the rich landholder to whom he had mortgaged his home. But he was destined to never again return—never to set eyes upon the one man whom it had been his greatest desire to see—John Arnold.



*“ Fate, show thy force, ourselves we do not owe
What is decreed must be ; and be this so.”*

SHAKESPEARE.

CHAPTER II.

THE HOUSE AT DARLINGHURST.

"I TELL you, Marion, it is the only thing to be done! Look at you—look at Geoffrey and the girls fretting and fretting day after day! It would be better, decidedly better for you all, to make up your minds to turn to something, and the offer I have made is all that I can do, so I will walk down George Street and leave you to think over my suggestion. Poor Mark! It was a sad business. Sad—sad—sad," and the rather rough though not unkind voice of Olver Merton was lost amidst the sobs of the unhappy family as he quitted the room.

Mrs. Horton motioned her children to her side, and together they talked of their future. There was Geoffrey, her eldest child, tall, dark, and handsome—a favourite with one and all. Then came Linda, she was not yet quite eighteen years of age. The chief characteristic of her strikingly handsome face lay in the sad expression that invariably struck one on beholding her.

Next came Madge and Dorothy; twins—alike, yet unlike in character and disposition. Madge, like her elder sister, was of a somewhat romantic disposition, while Dot from her infancy had always been self-willed and vivacious. Then last of all came the youngest of the family—Roy. He was only seven, a pretty, delicate looking child, the pet of the house.

Olver Merton did not return until the after-

noon. He found Mrs. Horton in a calmer mood, for she knew that she must not look lightly upon her brother's proposal—and although the thought of opening a fashionable Sydney Boarding Establishment, in all her inexperience, presented unknown terrors to her—she knew that for her children's sake she must not refuse to consider her brother's proposal, that she should be thankful and grateful to him for the home which he offered. Thus it was all arranged.

On the following day Olver Merton went to Darlinghurst, Sydney, to inspect his property; see to necessary repairs, and give notice to the present tenants to whom, soon after the death of his young wife, he had let his furnished home, now nearly twelve months ago, and which had since been carried on as a fashionable boarding establishment.

He next proceeded to interview a lawyer to arrange about settling the home upon his widowed sister and her children. He was forced to hasten matters, for his passage was already booked for England, and in three weeks he was to sail.

A fortnight later Mrs. Horton and her family were installed in their new home; sumptuously furnished certainly—but far different to the one they had lost.

Two old and trusted servants accompanied them—Martha and Tony.

Of course the question of wages had to be considered, but Martha demurred at this, and protested that it would be very little indeed she would trouble them.

And Tony, when he too declared he would not desert them, as Mrs. Horton sadly remonstrated with him her inability to pay wages as

he had received from her husband, urged “that had he not been paid liberally and well during his long service to them, and ‘shure’ had he not enough saved by for a rainy day?”

They had not long been in possession before they discovered traces of ruin and neglect. New carpets were required; most of the dainty dresden china was either lost or broken; the silver and plate were scratched and dirty; the curtains limp and torn, and almost everything bore traces of destruction. Olver Merton’s face looked cross and stern when these facts were made known to him. He was rich, they all knew, and could well afford to replace them. But what right had he to be liberal with his money, he declared—with the money he had earned by his own hard work and thrift. But time was passing. It might be years before he would again see

his only living relations; so he dismissed the frown, and good humouredly requested his sister and a couple of the girls to meet him at 10 o'clock the next morning at Anthony Hordern's to select the requisite things.

Accordingly at the appointed time Olver Merton, Mrs. Horton, Linda, and Dorothy met at the large warehouse in Haymarket Square.

"Dorothy, wherever did you put the list, dear?" Mrs. Horton timidly asked, for she had seen the length of it as Dot had squeezed it into her bag, and was fearful of producing it. "Ah! this is it," Olver suggested, as he picked up a roll of paper she had dropped, and handed it to her.

It was the list true enough. Mrs. Horton had only proceeded "one piano (Grande)" when Olver angrily exclaimed—

"Marion! Pray, who made out that list?"

"I did!" hurriedly exclaimed Dot.

"Grande piano, indeed! Are not you satisfied with one in the house, girl?"

"Oh, but that will do for the boarders," protested Dot.

"Grande piano, indeed! Do you think it is a millionaire with whom you are dealing? If so I will wash my hands of the whole affair." Then drawing a thick line across the first article, handed the list to Linda, requesting her for goodness sake to say what they really did want, and not keep him standing there like a thundering idiot.

Just then someone approached to attend to their wants, and Linda read:

"Three velvet pile carpets; thirty yards of silk plush, for hangings; one silver tea and coffee service."

“ Yes, madame, this way please ; velvet pile carpets, number one.”

In the hurry of being directed to another department by the courteous assistant, they did not notice that they had left Olver behind ; they did not notice the look of stern anger upon his face as he stood and watched them.

He had decided to let them choose and choose ; for he vowed as he walked impatiently up and down the pavement awaiting their return that it would be for the last time—for the last time.



*“ Heaven is not always angry when He strikes,
But most chastises those whom most he likes.”*

POMFRET.

CHAPTER III.

THE BOARDERS.

Christmas Eve—wet, dull, and dreary within and without. Even the gaily decorated shops in Pitt and George Streets, the grand arcades in King Street, do not seem to attract the usual attention. The eager and hurrying crowd of men, women, and children, who throng the streets of the great and busy city, do not serve to dispel the feeling of depression that prevails this wet and dreary day.

But in nowise disconcerted is the family at "Veldeen."

What care they for the ceaseless pouring rain, for the loud and frequent peals of thunder that indicate the threatening storm.

They think not of to-day, but the morrow—the morrow, and the home-coming of their brother, Geoffrey.

Only once a year, and then for two short weeks is he with them: for since Olver Merton had secured for him—a few days before his departure for England—a situation in the firm of Merton & Merton, Dunedin, Geoffrey found, on the small salary of fifty shillings per week, which he only as yet received, that it was only by dint of great saving that he could afford himself once a year the pleasure of a trip home.

Notwithstanding this, each week during his absence part of his earnings had been devoted to some special purpose, and each quarter had found its way in the shape of a cheque as a pleasant surprise to his mother. Everything is in a state of bustle and confusion. Boxes

and trunks innumerable stand in the wide, old-fashioned hall; the old routine of work and business again commences, the holidays are over, the boarders have returned.

They number eight in all. There is grumpy Mr. Marchmont, a civil engineer; jolly Mr. Sand, a hard-worked and poorly-paid Government official; pompous Mr. Devenzby, a flourishing young solicitor; conceited Mr. Anderson, a young and handsome student; grave, kind Mr. Melville, of the firm of Melville & Harper, Wynyard Square; little Mr. Sharp, a struggling electrician; crafty Mr. Goodman, an enterprising music professor; and last, but not least, Miss Newcome, the only lady boarder.

Miss "Oldcome" sounded more appropriate, the boarders had declared, for she was tall and bony, coarse, sallow, and wrinkled, affected

the latest style in dress, wore hats, shapes and colours neither becoming to her face or complexion, was proud and conceited, and in fact a source of amusement to the whole household. But to admit this would have been disastrous to Mrs. Horton and the girls, for was it not on Olver's recommendation that she had come, and was she not a friend of his? She was also wealthy, and although mean in many respects, paid them well; so they were forced to submit to her tyrannies, to overcome her whims, to treat her complaints with seeming good nature. No wonder that poor Martha was sometimes nearly driven 'loony,' as she declared to distracted Mrs. Horton, for Miss Newcome would come to prepare just a little herring, which generally proved to be a very big one; or make just a little stew, calves' head and a wee drop of brain sauce; or a tiny

soda loaf; just as Martha would be in the act of dishing-up, for Miss Newcome declared that since she suffered so from indigestion, and really ate so very, very little, that she generally prepared something tasty herself. She never could get a cook to season her herring with just sufficient pepper, to put just sufficient butter on her grilled chicken and steak.

And Tony did not escape her. Anger and astonishment were depicted upon his face on the first occasion, when she had despatched him to the leading butcher's establishment in William Street for a quarter of a pound of steak; supreme disgust on the second, when she requested him, as he returned from town, to bring her a red herring, and one penny-worth of coffee-beans.

"But, dash it all, Madam, they'll be thinkin' it's for myself they are!" he had exclaimed,

but Miss Newcome had walked away looking neither abashed nor ashamed, but dignified and offended.



*“Thou heedful of advice, secure proceed,
My praise the precept is, be thine the deed.”*

POPE.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER TWO YEARS.

“WON'T it be charming, Lin, but whatever will you wear?”

“I wear?”

“It's an invitation from the McKyingays, to a ball at Needs'! Oh! won't it be a swell affair, and to come now, nearly the end of the month, of all times. You could fix up your violet silk with a little cream chiffon, Lin—you don't know how lovely you looked in it at the Orlando ball; and I could lend you my evening shoes. They are thin, to be sure, but would last all night if you were to sit out a few dances. Then about Madge: She might press out her lemon crepon, and she

could unpick the black Chantilly off mother's mantle. In lemon and black Madge always looks superb."

"It's true you would both want new gloves, but John promised to call for the kitchen fat this morning, so you might manage a couple of pairs when I've made my bargain with the old 'skin-flint.' Now, see how capitally I have managed it all, so, for goodness sake, don't sit there all day laughing, but tell me whether you will accept or not."

"Oh, Dot, what a wonderful inventor you are!" "Yes, by all means, we must accept. It would never do to refuse the McKyingays on such an auspicious occasion."

"In Saturday's Society columns we shall see our names placed with those of the dignified Misses McKyingay—'Miss Horton, in violet silk and chiffon; Miss Madge, in lemon

and rich Chantilly.' Oh! how I laughed when I read such an account in the *Evening News*."

"Keeping up appearances—One well versed in the art will supply valuable information upon receipt of six penny stamps. Apply Miss Dorothy Horton, Darlinghurst Road, Sydney."

"What fun it would be to send that to the Editor, and request him to insert it at the end of the Society Column. I am sure we would be besieged with inquisitive letters, and then, look at the stamps! Dot, we would make our fortune!"

But Dot was too deeply engrossed in the question of 'ways and means' to offer reply.



"Extremes of fortune are true wisdom's test."

CUMBERLAND.

CHAPTER V.

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES.

“I WISH that I had not gone; I do wish that I had not gone!”

It was said half-aloud, half to herself, but the words and the tone of their utterance did not escape the quick ears of Madge, as she hastily threw off her long buttoned gloves, and stared in bewilderment at her sister.

“Linda, you are a strange girl I declare! Are you not satisfied with making the greatest conquest of the evening?—of being more admired than any one in the the room, and driving the Farrington girls just mad with jealousy? How I just secretly rejoiced as I saw them haughtily turn their vain little

heads, and screw up their thin painted lips with an expression of mingled vexation and contempt, pretending not to see—not to care for the indifference that they were receiving at the hands of the Honourable Richard Grenarth—not to notice the attention that he was paying you. I tell you Linda, he is just one of the handsomest men I ever saw, and yet you declare you are sorry that you went, so you must also mean that you are sorry that he admired you.”

“Madge, into what deep channels your imagination does lead you. You seem to have drawn conclusions based upon very frail foundations. No one could have shown me more courtesy and attention than did that gentleman this evening. He may as you say admire me, but what of that? Perhaps I am only one of many passing fancies; one of the

many whom it has pleased him to flirt with and flatter *pour passer le temps.*”

“Linda, you are provoking to be sure. Do you think that I was the only one who noticed his manner and attention towards you? Ah! Grenarth has already broken his vow, and fallen in love with a beautiful Colonial, I declare. That is what I overheard from young Mr. Endby, and his sister to whom I had previously been introduced, informed me that the Honourable Richard Grenarth was their guest; that he had only arrived from England a few days ago; that this was his first public entry into Sydney Society; that he had a particular aversion to Australian women, and declared that he would never marry while in the Colonies, and yet she exclaimed I am certain that he has already fallen desperately in love with your beautiful sister.”

"Did they go and do it after all? Madge, did you say they had split?"

"Oh dear, Lin, what a fool you must have felt!"

Dot turned over with a groan, but suddenly started up with a look of surprise, as she was awakened by the smothered laughter of her sisters. "Oh! how jolly to be home, girls. I have been in such an awful fix, in my dreams, you know. I was just dreaming that they had split—the shoes, you know, Lin."

"Well, you were right Dot, for towards the end of the last dance I heard a sudden crack, and the next minute I realized that my right sole had parted company. Fortunately it happened just as we had reached a door near one of the conservatories, so I feigned an attack of giddiness, and the Honourable Richard Grenarth escorted me to a seat amidst the ferns and

flowers, while he hastened to procure me an ice. While he was away I quickly slipped the elastic band off my glove, and doubled it tightly round my shoe so I concealed the damage pretty well, and even Madge did not notice anything wrong. But oh, Dot, my toe does ache, for I had to walk with it held up ever so high, you know, to prevent it popping out now and again."

"And did you dance with an honourable, Linda? Oh! I knew you would have a charming time! What is he like? Rich, grizzled and old, or young, poor and handsome?"

"I think the latter description is the more accurate Dot, only——"

"Only what Lin?"

"That she wishes she had never seen him; that she does not believe that one of the

richest, handsomest, and cleverest of men has fallen desperately in love with her," Madge interposed, half-jokingly, half-petulantly, for she was a trifle annoyed at her sister's stolid indifference, at her evident determination not to share her enthusiasm.



*"Mishaps are master'd by advice discreet,
And counsel mitigates the greatest smart."*

SPENSER.

CHAPTER VI.

AN AFTERNOON AT COMO.

WHERE should it be? Which of the many favourite picturesque spots about Sydney for an afternoon's outing should they select?

Madge declared "that for scenery, flowers and ferns, Manly stood unrivalled," while Dot curled up her dainty little mouth at this and said "that she always did and always would vote for Como, the most delightful spot on the Illawarra line. The scenery was just too beautiful for description, while the tree-ferns, maiden hair and flannel flowers grew just as thick as clover."

So to settle matters, Geoffrey is consulted. It is Saturday afternoon. On the following

Monday his holidays will be ended, and then for twelve long dreary months he will again be parted from them.

Geoffrey, Mrs. Horton, and Linda uphold Dot's opinion, and Como is the chosen place. Thus, the boarders do not forget the parting injunction to be home punctually to dinner at half-past twelve, thus allowing them all ample time to catch the 1.30 train at Redfern Station.

Martha, with her usual forethought and goodness, has prepared something 'extra special'—one of her favourite ejaculations—and it is with feelings of gratification and joy that the girls hastily pack the little dainties for their 'gipsy tea,' while Roy thinks of nothing but fishing rods, fishing hooks and worms.

"Thank goodness the charmer is out of the road, Martha! Really, I could love that little Miss Hardcastle for inviting her out to-day,"

Dot could not help triumphantly exclaiming as she endeavoured to fasten the straps of the overladen baskets. But she suddenly let the one that she held in her hand slip and roll to the ground, for there, looking neither pleased nor offended, but standing erect and inquisitive-looking, was Miss Newcome. Dot, outwardly trying to make the best of the situation, but wondering how much she had heard, recovered her equanimity, and laughingly exclaimed: "I was just telling Martha that she ought to be thankful for once, to have us all out of the road. Eh! Martha?"

"There's people and people you know, Miss Dot," and Martha emphasized her words with a vigorous thump upon the table. "Some people I only cares to see their backs"—casting a knowing glance at Miss Newcome—"but sorry I'd be to say the likes of my dear

mistress and her family."

"Perhaps you would like to see my back then, Martha, so I will not intrude, but take your hint and go," and Miss Newcome, with a dignified toss of her head, stalked away.

"Now, look at that, Miss. Did you ever see such airs over nothing?" and Martha, catching up the back of her plain wincey dress, and walking across the kitchen with her head held high in the air, had Dot in convulsions of laughter.

"Oh Dot," Madge just then exclaimed, hurrying into the room, "put up another cup and saucer before you strap the baskets. After all, she has come home and is coming. Miss Hardcastle was dangerously ill with typhoid when she arrived, so she just marched straight home again, and here she is. Geoffrey asked her to accompany us. You know her

weak point there, so she put on a smile like a sunbeam, and started at once to get ready."

"Then I shouldn't wonder if we are late after all," was Dot's grumbling comment.

The boarders returned in good time, and when all were ready, carried the baskets for the girls, hailed a 'bus at the corner of William Street, and they all started off for the station.

Before they arrived, the usual rush to Lady Robinson's Beach, Sandringham, Sans Souci, and other favourite resorts on the Illawarra line was evidenced. It was with difficulty that they found seats in the fast-crowding train.

It was a lovely afternoon. Not one of those sun-scorching days that spoils one's enjoyment and complexion, but bright and beautiful, with just sufficient breeze to cool their flushed cheeks as they scrambled amongst the

rocks and gullies, in search of flowers and ferns. Some of the party had started fishing. When the others—including Miss Newcome—returned, a good haul showed the results of their efforts.

The girls started to prepare tea; but Miss Newcome, who had seated herself on the bank beside Geoffrey, thought it more delightful to watch the fishers.

“I do think it so very, very cruel to torture the little wriggling worms, Mr. Horton,” she sympathetically exclaimed. “I am an adept in the art of fishing myself, but at my own home I always insisted upon my servant accompanying me to adjust the worms on the hooks. I am really so very, very sensitive to cruelty, I could never tolerate it.”

“Perhaps you would like to try your hand

now, Miss Newcome, if you will allow me to offer you my rod.”

“Really, you are too kind! However much I would like to accept, I cannot think of depriving you of your enjoyment.”

The Professor just then settled the question by offering her his own, as he hurried to assist in the making of the fire for tea.

Miss Newcome suddenly gave a little scream of delight as she hauled in a good-sized bream. “There! What do you think of that already, Mr. Horton,” she proudly exclaimed.

“You are indeed an adept, Miss Newcome, but do you not think it very, very cruel”—indicating the bleeding mouth—“to cause such torture to the poor wriggling little creatures?”

But Miss Newcome, leaning over too far in her endeavour to make another successful

haul, just then happened to lose her balance, falling headlong into the water.

She uttered one wild, piercing scream as Geoffrey, in his endeavour to save her, caught her by the arm, but only to lose his hold.

The next minute there was a second splash and a struggle. Geoffrey had plunged in, rescuing the now half-fainting woman from her perilous position, just as the others, looking pale and terrified, rushed to the bank and realized what had happened.



*“Be to her virtues very kind,
Be to her faults a little blind.”*

PRIOR.

CHAPTER VII.

ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN.

"Is it very straight, girls, is it very straight?"

The anxious look upon the face of Mrs. Horton, really the most alarmed of the party, relaxed at these words. The smile that lingered about the lips of sarcastic Mr. Anderson deepened into an unmistakeable laugh. Mr. Sharp, in his endeavour to suppress an outburst of amusement, accidentally knocked against Mr. Anderson, who held the glass of water that they had just brought for Miss Newcome, and which, much to Mr. Anderson's dismay, went splashing over his face, and then into his straw hat, which he was in the act of claiming after sad havoc

had been made of it by Geoffrey, who had utilized it by way of a fan in his endeavour to bring Miss Newcome to returning consciousness, after her timely rescue.

Even the grave face of Mrs. Horton bore an amused smile, as the hands which she had held of the seemingly prostrate figure were suddenly drawn from her clasp, only to convey to Miss Newcome, as she pressed them to her forehead, the unwelcome fact that her fringe had gone straight.

Smoke was seen issuing from behind a clump of trees. Upon investigation a small cottage being discovered not far off, to this, Miss Newcome, Mrs. Horton, and Linda wended their way. The door was opened by the owner's wife, a kind, good natured looking woman.

After detailing a brief account of the acci-

dent, they were ushered into the plain, but neat looking kitchen, and Miss Newcome, despite the heat of the day, was glad to stand before the huge old-fashioned log fire to avail herself of its warmth.

* * * * *

"Oh dear, I wish they would come back!" exclaimed Dot. "Surely they must have a fire as big as a furnace over there, judging by the smoke, and if she's sitting in front of it yet I guess she'll have no fringe left to go straight."

"There's rare fun down at the boat house," said Mr. Devenzby, as he joined the little party, "Geoff's borrowed a suit from the old fisherman's son—a regular giant, about fourteen stone."

"Oh Lor! it's as good as a play," exclaimed

Mr. Sharp, as their laughter ceased, "when Miss N—— comes sailing over in the old dame's finery it will be the crowning point of the show."

"Evidently we are too late for tea!"

Mr. Sharp, who was in the act of eating four sandwiches placed one on top of the other, started at Miss Newcome's shrill offended tones, then, endeavouring to get up in a hurry, and swallow too much at the same time, tripped on a stump and fell. He declared at first that he thought he was dying. He was sure the blood was pouring from his mouth—he was afraid to move.

After one hurrying one way, and one another, in search of remedies, it transpired that he had slightly—only very slightly—cut one of his lips.

"I thought I would have taken a fit as I

clapped eyes on her," he afterwards said, "and the stump just saved me."

Dot managed to have a violent fit of coughing, and nearly choked, and Madge somehow touched a nerve of a tooth she said, as she pulled her handkerchief from her face.

Certainly, Miss Newcome looked very comical. Over a bright purple skirt, she wore a short brown ulster covered with great green bows, all borrowed from the hostess, and as that lady happened to be very short, and Miss Newcome very tall, the effect was ludicrous in the extreme.

A little later, when all were seated at tea, the climax was reached—a heavy downpour of rain set in, overflowing their teacups and saucers, spoiling the eatables, and drenching them all, as they endeavoured to hastily pack up, causing Miss Newcome still further dis-

pleasure, as she found that once more her fringe had gone straight.

Dot found, to her vexation, that her collection of ferns had, in the hurry, been squeezed in amongst the eatables.

“I’m awfully hungry, awfully cross, and feel just horrid,” she grumbled, as they ran through the long, wet grass to the station, “and all through her. I knew she would spoil everything—she always does!”



*“The honest man, though e’er sae poor,
Is king o’ men for a’ that.”*

BURNS.

CHAPTER VIII.

SATURDAY NIGHT IN SYDNEY MARKETS.

"BAD times! Bad times!" Such is the echo far and wide. Everything is in a state of depression. Business is at a standstill. Fabulous prices are asked for food and clothing. The rich, with their well-filled coffers, can well afford to smile, and cast looks of scorn and derision at the struggling crowds of excited labourers, clamouring and fighting for their rights. It is the rich, likewise, who urge the police to do their duty; to draw their batons—which they use indiscriminately; who cheer the mounted police, as they, regardless of the hoots and yells of the excited mob, ride defiantly among them, resolved, at all

costs, to quell the serious riot, to restore peace and order, for it is the great Sydney maritime strike of 1890. Small groups are to be seen at almost every corner, eagerly discussing the latest sayings and doings at the wharves, where great violence is resorted to; and many unfortunates who, for the sake of starving wives and children, gladly consent to work in place of the dissatisfied strikers, are jeered at, termed by the undignified appellation "black-legs," and, despite the vigilance of the police, every available kind of missile—huge sticks, stones, and even bricks, are hurled at them by the infuriated unionists.

Those who know best the real state of affairs between capital and labour, shake their heads gravely as prognostications of a speedy settlement are hinted at; for well they know that it is likely to be a fierce and prolonged

struggle, casting the demon of want and hunger into many a previous happy home, ruining thousands, ruining the country, and ruining, in the end, the resisters themselves.

And at "Veldeen" things have come to a bad pass. The slight cold which Miss Newcome had contracted after the eventful afternoon at Como, and which no one at the time regarded seriously, had turned to inflammation of the lungs. Before a fortnight had elapsed more serious consequences supervened, and Miss Newcome was in a raging fever, the two doctors whom Mrs. Horton, in her alarm, had called in, pronouncing it to be a very bad case of that dreaded malady, typhoid. Despite every precaution being taken to prevent contagion—Miss Newcome and her nurses alone being located in the top story of the house—whispers of the boarders' intentions to leave soon began

to be circulated, emanating from Tony, who, on confiding the news to Martha had, as he expressed it, been sounding them.

It proved only too true. Three days after the nature of Miss Newcome's illness became known, the list of gentlemen boarders had dwindled down to two, Mr. Sharp and Mr. Melville alone remaining.

Meanwhile, the strike continued at its height. Food and produce remained at unheard-of prices, and nowhere could that most requisite commodity, butter, be had under three shillings a pound. Often Mrs. Horton's overburdened mind and feelings gave vent to tears. Her mind was in one perpetual whirl of anxiety and fear—fear that the dread disease which had so inopportunately entered her home should, sooner or later, claim one of her dear ones for its prey.

It was with a sorrowing heart that she watched the thin, pale face of her most delicate child, Roy, grow still paler and thinner; saw the flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes grow larger and brighter, and know that it was not in her power to place him (the most susceptible of all her children to disease) out of reach of contagion; to know that she had no living relation near, no friends to whom she could entrust the care of her child. She knew not one among her small circle of so-called friends who did not openly and readily declare their dread of infection.

* * * * *

Saturday night in Sydney markets!

What a whirl and crush there is within? What a brilliant and busy spectacle is presented to the casual onlooker without? From Hunter Street to King Street (commonly

called "The Block"), and along George Street to Brickfield Hill, the crowds are greatest.

Fashionable people, in fashionable attire, are to be seen every Saturday night in Sydney, not bent upon making some trifling purchase in the city, but alighting from their stylish carriages at the entrances to the principal theatres, while hundreds of their less fortunate neighbours find their way, by hansom, omnibus, or train, to the Lyceum, Her Majesty's, or the Royal, for it is on Saturday night that the greatest attractions are presented to the inveterate playgoer, inasmuch as it is usually the night chosen for the first appearances of foreign and Australian celebrities.

Amidst the din and clatter, the ringing peals of the Post Office clock are heard. Men, women, and children turn their heads to gaze with admiration at the magnificent

building, as they hurry past. Cabbies, perched on their high, uncomfortable seats, cast hurried glances at the tower from whence the sounds proceed, only to quicken pace, to use more freely the whip upon their already overworked horses, with the one aim of gratifying their own selfish desires, and earning, in some respects, an extra half-crown from some of their more liberally-disposed customers—to whom the importance of reaching Redfern Railway Station in time to ensconce themselves comfortably in the train for which they are bound, is their one and only concern.

An air of awe and bewilderment is depicted upon the faces of some, visibly expressing to the more observant, by their attitudes of timidity—women clinging to their husband's arm with an air of protection; children tugging more firmly at their mother's skirts, as

they shrink in affright from the loud-voiced man of "hokey-pokey" fame, or the Italian, ever and anon quoting some short rhyme, to impress upon intending customers the efficacy of his goods, which mainly comprise dainty little bags of pink and white wafers; or quietly place silver coins in the outstretched hands of blind and dumb beggars—that this is their first visit to Sydney markets by night, probably their first visit to the great metropolis.

Martha, well used to the animated scene, stands alone for a few minutes near the massive iron gates through which the seething crowd wander in and out, near the principal entrance in George Street, eyeing curiously the tricks of a well-known organ-grinder, and secretly lamenting that those who compassionately throw him stray coppers as

they hurry past—neither stopping nor caring to listen to the discordant notes, that always sets one's nerves on edge, rather than conduces to inspire—do not know that their well-meant acts of charity are mistaken, that the ill-clad, starving-looking man, who, to all intents, barely ekes out a miserable living, is both rich and a miser. But this they do not know, and Martha, pondering over the world's hardships and deceptions, wends her way to Haymarket Square.

* * * * *

Here a different scene is presented. Here it is apparent that the people who patronise this part of the great city belong to the more humble class in life; and few of the fashionably attired, who patrol the more fashionable streets, are to be seen.

The noise is deafening. Here the street cries, so familiar to Sydney residents, are in evidence.

A vacant space, near the entrance to "Paddy's Markets," offers special inducements to the street hawkers to display their wares, and judging by the fast-disappearing saveloys, smoking-hot potatoes and pies, ice-creams and squashes, with which the hungry-looking children, and starving men do not hesitate to invest the pence they have begged, the energetic proprietors have no cause to complain of dullness in trade.



*"Errors, like straws, upon the surface flow,
He who would search for pearls must dive
below."*

DRYDEN.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WENDEROONS.

DAYS passed into weeks, weeks into months, and with their advent Miss Newcome gradually recovered. Gradually she resumed her habitual imperiousness, and gradually the peace of the house became disturbed.

Mrs. Horton, appearing more careworn and harassed, sighed as she laid down the *Sydney Morning Herald*, where the same advertisement which she had caused to be inserted, setting forth the advantages to be obtained at her commodious and well-appointed boarding establishment, appeared day after day, with the same unsatisfactory result; no enquiring applicants appeared, and thus for months the

large, airy rooms had remained untenanted. But at last there came a change.

They were seated at breakfast one morning, when they were aroused by a sharp, impatient knocking. The next minute a very tall, jovial-looking gentleman, with a very gruff voice, was ushered in by Martha who, in her excitement at seeing two hansoms and a whole bevy of children outside, had left him standing in the hall. It was not long before Mrs. Horton discovered the strangers' name to be Wenderoon; that he was a squatter from Darling Downs; had brought his wife and family away from that trying climate for a six months' change; that they had seen the advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, liked the locality, and sought accommodation at once.

Mrs. Horton, upon ascertaining that the

family consisted of six—from sixteen down to three years of age—in command of a governess, looked somewhat dubiously at the two hansoms, and the round, rosy faces of the children pressed against the panes, their laughing eyes full of fun and mischief.

Satisfactory terms, however, were soon arranged. For a moment, there flashed upon her mind the displeasure her action would be met with from one particular person—Miss Newcome—at this new invasion, as the garrulous stranger hastened to help his wife and children to alight, but the next moment it was as quickly dismissed. There was a sudden din and uproar, and the whole family came trooping up the stairs.

Quite a stir was created in the dining-room amongst the boarders, when Mr. and Mrs. Wenderoon, and the six little Wenderoons,

headed by Miss Fraulein (their somewhat severe-looking governess), made their appearance a little later at the breakfast table.

Mrs. Wenderoon, tall, fair-complexioned, very stout, and very amiable-looking, was in gorgeous attire; her black satin gown, trimmed profusely with old gold lace, displaying to advantage the costly diamond jewellery that glittered at her throat and ears, and in the costly rings that adorned her hands.

Miss Maria was short and fair, with a freckled face, and very little pretensions to good looks. A mass of straight, red hair (designated a fringe) almost concealed her forehead; the remainder, profusely adorned with oil, hung down her back in a long plait, the knot of vivid blue ribbon with which it was tied forming a marked contrast. The boys—Alec, Don, Arley, Loo, and Bardy—

were fine, sturdy-looking children, inheriting the frank, jovial nature of their parents, who, it was soon apparent, were never more delighted than when they had them gathered round, laughing and shouting, or explaining the intricacies of their latest mechanical toy.

Little Mr. Sharp's face looked merrier than usual as he arose to greet the strangers, and hastened to offer Mrs. Wenderoon a chair.

Unfortunately, in the confusion that followed upon the entry of the children, he did not notice that he had chosen the lightest one in the room, until Mrs. Wenderoon's sudden heavy weight caused the light cane legs to bend and snap.

There was a sudden exclamation of affright as Mrs. Wenderoon, to save herself from falling, caught hold of a small table placed near, ready for the children. To her dismay,

the cloth became entangled round her feet. The next minute there was a sudden crash—the floor was strewn with broken china.

Amidst profuse apologies, and after some little delay, order was restored, and the meal proceeded.

* * * * *

“Did you say to the Art Gallery, Museum, and Botanic Gardens? Well, thank goodness for at least a few hours peace! Why not have taken the whole troop to the ‘Zoo,’ where they could yell and scamper to their hearts’ content? Oh, Madge, you have no idea what my nerves have suffered since that ‘impossible woman’ and her ‘impossible family’ entered this house!” and Miss Newcome, looking decidedly aggrieved, proceeded to ensconce herself cosily in her favourite chair, being

soon engrossed in the sayings and doings of the latest Sydney society journal.

“Why ‘impossible’?” Madge suddenly asked. “I am sure you have scarcely exchanged half-a-dozen words with Mrs. Wenderoon, and yet you seem to have already judged her both unfavourably and unjustly.”

“What is money combined with vulgarity? How could I call a woman anything but ‘impossible’ who dons hideous gowns and bonnets decorated with all colours of the rainbow? Who plasters herself with diamonds, and limits her conversation to ‘ow dreadful,’ ‘ow awfully dreadful’, but, perhaps, it is one of the idiosyncrasies of the family?” With a short, sarcastic laugh, and a scornful curl of her thin upper lip, Miss Newcome again turned to her book, and Dot knew that she

was in one of her "tantrums," and that it was wisest to leave her alone.

The following week two other lodgers, gentlemen, made their appearance, and once again "Veldeen" was full.



*" Practised to lisp and hang the head aside,
Faints into airs, and languishes with pride."*

DRYDEN.

CHAPTER X.

ARLEY CREATES A DIVERSION.

CAPTAIN ARTHWAITE and Mr. Felix Lloyd were the new lodgers. Various opinions were expressed regarding them, but upon one point the girls unanimously agreed—that they were very gentlemanly, presumably agreeable, and a decided acquisition.

Of the two, Captain Arthwaite, with his tall, commanding figure, and well-defined, aquiline features, was of the most striking appearance.

Mr. Lloyd, unlike the Captain, was grave, and somewhat reserved. What most impressed one was his air of superiority; but to the more observant, his face bore a cynical expression, and there often appeared a restless, uneasy look in his shiftless grey eyes.

He made no end of fuss and worry—he was travelling for his health, his lungs were affected, he said; he took nothing for breakfast but chocolate and toast; and he must have a room facing the north.

His tastes proved none the less fastidious than his manners. To oblige him, Mrs. Horton gave up her warm, sunny room, and moved to the next storey. Meanwhile, the acquaintance between Miss Newcome and the Wenderoons resulted in further hostility.

As the long summer evenings advanced, they were usually spent by the inmates at "Veldeen" with what they termed "musical evenings." On these occasions Miss Newcome—who prided herself on possessing a rich contralto voice—was, from force of habit, generally asked to open the proceedings, little suspecting that the boarders, who never failed

to pronounce each song "simply divine" before her face, likened the same to a screeching cat behind her back.

The climax was reached one October evening, when there was an unusually large assemblage of friends. Escaping the vigilance of the lynx-eyed governess, Arley, the most unruly of the flock, had wandered into the drawing-room, and as the room began to fill he found no chance of making his escape from behind the piano, where he had taken refuge.

At last, unable to control his exuberant spirits, tiring of the monotony of talking and laughter that he thought would never cease, he created a sudden diversion by calling out in his loudest tones "why don't the lady with the 'cwoky' voice begin to sing?" Instinctively all eyes were turned to Miss Newcome, to whom Arley had alluded. A rush of pink

had crept to her usually pale cheeks, and an angry, passionate glance of rage was directed to the unhappy delinquent, as he rushed from the room.

* * * * *

The following week there were two departures from "Veldeen." Miss Newcome declared that she could no longer tolerate that "impossible family," and proceeded at length to review to the already distracted Mrs. Horton, the many escapades and short-comings of the unruly children.

Many a headache and heartache Mrs. Horton had already to contend with.

Everything seemed to be going wrong. Linda's health, never very robust, she knew was giving way under the strain of over-work and over-worry; and little Roy, despite every care, seemed to grow thinner and weaker.

Often as he threw himself languidly upon a sofa, or seated himself at his mother's feet, she gazed sadly from Mrs. Wenderoon's sturdy, rosy-faced boys to her own delicate son, and she wished that he would not always be so sad and silent, but such as they, bright and vivacious.

It was after many persuasions that Linda was induced to accompany Miss Newcome. It was Linda, who by her many kindnesses and patience had won her esteem. She would accept no refusal when she asked her as a favor to accompany her on a trip to Wollongong; and would insist upon paying all expenses. They had been gone only three days when Linda wrote to say "that they had already been in three lodging-houses, and she was afraid that they were not suited yet." A shade of disappointment crossed Mrs. Horton's face at

this announcement, for she had already pictured her daughter enjoying rest, if not contentment at the quiet farm-house to which Miss Newcome had been recommended. "I have not yet started to unpack my things"—the letter further read—"until Miss Newcome sees what they offer us for breakfast. Yesterday the 'Menu' for dinner consisted of 'stewed eel.'"

"Tell Martha I will send the recipe. It was delicious I am sure, although Miss Newcome would not give me time to taste any. She declared it reminded her of a 'wriggling snake.' We left straight away, and are now awaiting further surprises at Number Three."



*"Whate'er he did was done with so much ease,
In him alone 'twas natural to please."*

DRYDEN.

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTAIN ARTHWAITE.

THE Captain soon became a general favourite. He had already so ingratiated himself into Mr. Wenderoon's favour, that that gentleman had given him a cordial invitation to visit his Buttabadong Station.

He was entirely ignorant of life in the backblocks, he said, and had not been beyond Sydney since his recent arrival from London.

"Life must be so tame out there, you know," he added, "I am afraid that if I were forced to permanently reside 'out back,' with a temperament like mine, it would prove neither conducive to my happiness nor my spirits. Riding out day after day, year after year, in the

blazing sun, to see nothing but miles and miles of barren country, must indeed be monotonous. I am afraid that I should make a very poor squatter."

"Ha! Ha! You're not the first new-chum that's told me that, and yet there's nothing in the world you would get more fond of. We see nothing year after year but barren country, eh? What about our shearing, and our hundreds of shearers, and our thousands of sheep, and our picnic races, and our balls? and——"

"Good heavens, your balls!"

"I pictured you seeing a white man once in six months. Where do your balls come in? Do you mean a corroboree amongst the blacks?"

When Mr. Wenderoon recovered from his fit of laughter, he good-humouredly replied:

"Well, I do not know whether to be

offended with you or not, but when you do visit Buttabadong, I think you will agree with me that you were under false impressions regarding life in the backblocks. Wait until I introduce you to some of our reigning belles! but, perhaps," he added, *sotto voce*, "they might prove dangerous rivals to your present infatuation. Why, our friends think nothing of riding forty or fifty miles from different stations to visit us, and Buttabadong, I can assure you, is never dull for want of company, entertaining and dinner parties being the order of the day. I warrant you the ladies even now are worrying about their finery; and that David Jones and Farmer's are besieged with orders for our next picnic races and ball, which take place soon after we return. Mrs. Wenderoon, I know, to my cost, is already deeply engrossed in the latest things in shades

and fashions, and you wouldn't believe what a stunner Miss Fraulien comes out at our greatest event of the year."

"'ow dreadful, Phillip! I declare I was just too late to secure that lovely shade in green satin that I had set my mind on at Farmer's, and——"

Mrs. Wenderoon, who had just returned from a shopping expedition, suddenly stopped, for she had only just observed the Captain, who, as he arose to greet her, endeavoured to cover her embarrassment by the flippant remark: "Of all shades, green, I think, is the most lovely!"

"I do not doubt, Maria, that the most lovely thing about it was the price," Mr. Wenderoon said, turning to his wife with a good-natured laugh, but as they left the room, Captain Arthwaite ejaculated "'ow dreadful! 'ow

awfully dreadful' she will look if she yet picks upon that lovely shade in green."



*“ Ye racking doubts ! Ye jealous fears !
With others wage internal war ;
Repentance, source of future tears,
From me be ever distant far ! ”*

BYRON.

CHAPTER XII.

MEMORIES OF THE PAST.

WAS it a surprise? No, it certainly could not be called a surprise, for it had long been evident to the inmates at "Veldeen" that it was Madge—Madge with her pretty face and winning ways with whom the Captain had become infatuated—and now they were engaged.

"Mrs. Raymond Arthwaite!" How strange it all seemed. Madge repeated the name again and again, as she toyed idly with the small circlet of gold, studded with flashing diamonds and sapphires, that adorned her hand.

"How they do sparkle! What a lot of money it must have cost! How happy I ought to be! and yet——"

Madge was suddenly interrupted in her reflections by the entry of her mother; who did not fail to notice traces of the tears that she hastily endeavoured to hide.

"Why Madge, my child! have you been celebrating the first day of your engagement with tears?" she gently asked. But a convulsion of sobs was her only reply.

"Is it possible that you have been mistaken, Madge?—that you find you cannot love your affianced husband."

"My child—you are young. If you have been mistaken in your feelings towards him, reflect! Do not sacrifice your own and his life's happiness—before it is too late, consider. He is handsome and rich! Madge—Madge,

surely you have not acted from mercenary motives!

"Better for you both—far better that you should marry the poorest man for himself, than condemn yourself to everlasting unhappiness for the sake of a rich man's gold."

"Mother, Mother, it is not that! Oh, how could you doubt me. I love Raymond only too well. It is because—because of father—dear father. Oh how happy we would all be if he were only with us now! If we could live over again the happy old days—if only the past had not shadowed our life with misery!"

Madge looked singularly handsome as she arose and tried to comfort her now sorrowing mother. Her soft golden hair had fallen in disorder around her shoulders. Her large brown eyes were raised in mute appeal; and two crimson spots that seemed to burn her

soft delicate skin, dyed her cheeks, contrasting strangely with the pallid hue that her impassioned words had brought to her mother's sad face.

Just then there was a sudden scream. Before either could form any conjectures as to the cause, Dot, looking very excited and frightened, rushed into the room with a little bundle in her arms.

She held out Mrs. Wenderoon's toddling child, Bardy, to her now alarmed mother, breathlessly exclaiming—

“Oh mother, he's poisoned and nearly choked! I'm sure he's poisoned. I've turned him upside down, and it might have run out—but oh! goodness knows how much he's swallowed.”

“Why, mother, you've been crying, I de-

clare; and Madge you're eyes are as red as a lobster!

“For goodness sake get something quick—quickly I tell you. He's swallowed belladonna!

I was passing the nursery door and saw him with the bottle to his mouth.”

The noise and excitement had already attracted the rest of the household; and Miss Fraulien, really alarmed at the result of her carelessness in leaving the liniment within reach of the child, hastened to procure a doctor.

Meantime the unfortunate Bardy was subjected to all kinds of unpleasant treatment, strenuously opposing his objections to the emetics that he was forced to swallow, by repeated struggles and kicks.

All minds were relieved when the doctor pronounced that there was no danger—that

their prompt actions had been the means of saving little Bardy's life.

And Mrs. Wenderoon, bound on one of her usual shopping expeditions, little thought as she partook of a dainty luncheon at the "A.B.C." that the life of her youngest and favourite child had been in danger.



*"They varnish all their errors, and secure
The ills they act, and all the world endure."*

SIR J. DENHAM.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. FELIX LLOYD DISAPPEARS.

"WILL arrive in Sydney to-night. Nearly dead.—M. Newcome."

Mrs. Horton read and re-read the short telegram. She received it one evening, about a month after Miss Newcome's departure, causing her no little consternation and worry.

"Provoking old thing; not one word about Linda, and no letter for four days, grumbled Madge. Does she mean they are both nearly dead?"

"Oh, surely she is not bringing fresh trouble to our home! Surely she has not caught that dreadful diphtheria! You know she mentioned in her last letter about it being

prevalent. Oh, why did I ever persuade Linda to go!" And both Madge and Dot did not fail to notice the anxiety the tones of their mother's voice betrayed.

"Now, mother, dear, don't worry over uncertainties," Dot said, coaxingly. "She always is more or less 'nearly dead,' you know. Most likely she has swallowed her false teeth; or got an attack of the nerves; or trod on a snake. Great Scott! None of us at the station, and here they are!"

That they were there, and that Miss Newcome was very much alive, was soon evidenced, as her shrill voice was heard in colloquy with the cabman.

All Mrs. Horton's forebodings were dismissed, as she found herself clasped in her daughter's arms.

"Do I look nearly dead?" Linda exclaimed,

good-humouredly, as the girls explained about the telegram. "Why, I have quite outgrown my last new jacket; and look at my cheeks! Now confess, are not they as red as apples? And that reminds me, mother dear, that I have brought you a basket of your favourite fruit." And Mrs. Horton could not but admit that the change had at least proved beneficial to her daughter.

"Poor Miss Newcome declares that she has been dying the last two weeks with indigestion," Linda whispered to Dot, as they hurried back to the hall, wondering at that lady's non-appearance. To their surprise, she was still in argument with the "cabby," her shrill voice raised in tones of anger.

"I tell you I will not pay another penny! Three shillings, indeed! It's no use you trying to hoodwink me. I know you; I have your

number; and I know quite well that you are the man to whom I gave half-a-sovereign, in mistake for sixpence, a month ago, although, as one might expect, you deny it," and with this parting thrust, Miss Newcome stalked into the house.

The now infuriated "cabby," however, was not to be baffled. With muttered imprecations and threats, he followed her to the door. Linda, realizing the situation, quietly placed half-a-crown in his hand, and thus pacified, he drove away.

It was not until they had partaken of tea that Miss Newcome's ruffled temper was mollified, but when, a little later, she began to search amongst her parcels to find one missing, it was again launched into fury, and a fresh tirade was heaped upon the defenceless cabman.

That she had placed it in the cab she was certain, and that no one had since seen it was equally certain, and when (after many thinkings and reckonings) she was not quite certain, it was equally provoking.

When it transpired that the missing parcel had contained a present for Madge, that young lady was naturally interested, until she ascertained its contents—what Miss Newcome deemed "the most lovely bunch of peacocks' feathers imaginable."

"Oh, how glad I am that they are lost!" Madge, with her usual impulsiveness, exclaimed.

"You unfeeling girl!" Miss Newcome replied, in her severest tones.

"But I would not have them for the world. Don't you know that they are dreadfully unlucky?"

"Unlucky! How am I to be expected to know of every foolish superstition you Australians adhere to? Knowing your admiration for the artistic, I thought, at least, you would appreciate them."

"I did not mean that. Of course, I appreciate your kindness, but as I really could not accept them, you see it is just as well that they are lost."

"Decidedly, just as well. If I had been lost myself I suppose it would have been just as well to you."

"Oh, how you do misconstrue one's ideas. I hope you do not think me quite so callous. You are tired, or I would tell you how I first became superstitious, as you term it."

"Yes, do, it is sure to prove diverting."

"It was while Dot and I were at school. One of the boarders had been home for her

holidays. Her father owned a station hundreds of miles from that outlandish place, Bourke; and on her return she brought Miss Usula some of the feathers that you so much admire. They were placed in a costly, hand-painted vase, upon a small table in the drawing-room. That afternoon the front windows chanced to be left unclosed; there was a terrible storm, and we were all startled by a crash—the wind had overturned the table, smashing the unlucky vase to atoms.

"Miss Usula placed the feathers upon a shelf in the bookcase, and nothing further occurred until the following afternoon. She was re-arranging the pictures upon the walls; one happened to be placed over the bookcase. Leaning over, somehow Miss Usula slipped, and in falling, struck the glass doors, when we were all horrified to see a great gash on her

arm. For weeks she could not use it, and it cost ever so much besides for a doctor. Of course, it was all put down to the feathers, and they were placed where we all thought out of harm's way—in the laundry."

"Indeed! And I suppose the taps chanced to be left running, and the next morning you found it flooded?"

"No, worse than that, everything had gone—all our summer frocks, besides three great baskets of clothes. Everything—even the feathers—had disappeared."

* * * * *

That night Mr. Felix Lloyd mysteriously disappeared, leaving behind him a disagreeable record in the shape of unpaid bills, and the only thing by way of payment, a huge trunk, containing a goodly supply of bricks.

*"View not the spire by measure given
To buildings raised by common hands:
That fabric rises high as Heaven,
Whose basis on devotion stands."*

PRIOR.

CHAPTER XIV.

CASTLES IN THE AIR.

It was November; and so far had been an exceptionally hot summer in Sydney as elsewhere. Everyone who had the means escaped from the "back country," where people dropped dead in the streets from the effects of the intense heat. Never had the quiet country towns been so besieged with visitors. Every hotel, lodging house, and even private houses were crowded to their utmost capacity. The energetic hotel proprietors, rather than turn away custom, yielded to the "force of circumstances," and in many instances their great roomy billiard rooms were resorted to for sleeping accommodation, and

many were glad of the 'shake-downs' that were by this means afforded.

The elite of Sydney, who could afford the more expensive luxury, adjourned to their summer residences, principally on the Blue Mountains, at those favourite and picturesque resorts—Blackheath, Katoomba, Springwood, Wentworth Falls, and Lawson.

Numbers chose that charming spot, Moss Vale—the Governor's country seat—and Bowral; while that pretty town, Orange, situated between Bathurst and Wellington, on the Western line, noted for its salubrious climate, and now one of the chief sanatoriums in New South Wales, proved quite a haven of rest to the numbers who continued to arrive by every train from Bourke, Cobar, Wellington, Dubbo, and other smaller towns in the far-off West, where the thermometer rose daily

to 126 in the shade; where sheep and cattle died in thousands; where every vestige of herbage and grass drooped and withered; where the sun seemed to cast its cruel rays like a furnace.

It was on such a day as this that Madge and Captain Arthwaite, who declared the heat of the city to be unbearable, had taken a hansom to the Quay. They were soon seated on the "Fairlight," among the many passengers bound for Sydney's favourite watering place, Manly, where, added to the enjoyment of the magnificent scenery, that deservedly causes Sydney Harbour to be world-famed, and the fresh sea breeze, Madge was enraptured by the Italian players' capital renditions of "Killarney," and that delightful Australian composition, the "Heather Waltz." The beach was already lined with children;

letting the waves splash over their little bare feet, or happy in the enjoyment they derived from building the sand into imaginary castles, with their tiny buckets and spades.

How happy they all were in their innocence and youth! How glad and joyous were their frequent bursts of laughter, as now and then the little heaps of sand, piled too high, tottered and fell, and their little castles were scattered, only to be washed into oblivion by the leaping waves.

Very different were the "castles in the air" that Madge and the Captain were planning, as they strolled along a shady pathway away round by "Fairy Bower."

Their's were of towering strength; nothing could shake their foundation—for were they not bound by the stronghold of love!

They were to be married in that fashionable Church, St. John's, Darlinghurst Road; and

the breakfast over, were to leave by the Express, for Melbourne. Linda and Dot were to act as brides-maids, and little Roy in the capacity of page.

It was all to be very simple and very quiet. Only the question of their future home was yet undecided. The Captain preferred Mosman's Bay—Madge preferred Manly; and they were discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the respective places.

"Then there are the shops to be considered, and the magnificent views, and the people, and the additional ferry service, you know."

"And the additional crowds of noisy young urchins, Madge, who break your charming seclusion, and give one a headache," the Captain laughed gaily.

"You will agree with me that there are other places besides Manly, equally as pic-

turesque, and equally as charming, when we go to inspect that little villa at Mosman's—but where are we going? We have passed your favourite tea shop."

"How engrossed we must have been, Raymond, and both dying of thirst too!"

"Yes, I am just ready for an ice, Madge. This heat is something awful."

"Then we shall have tea Raymond—nothing else. Do you think I have forgotten what you told me on our last visit here? You are just as over-heated now, I am sure, as the day you had those three ices, one after the other, and ended by taking that horrid fever."

"What a little diplomat you are! If I were not so very, very fond of you, Madge, I really believe I would not mind."

"Mind what? the tea or the fever?" Madge asked teasingly.



"What a little diplomat you are!"

“The latter,” was the Captain’s unexpected reply.

A little party seated themselves at their table; and Madge did not then understand his meaning, but his words were soon to be recalled to her.



*“ Trifles, light as air,
Are to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs of holy writ.”*

SHAKESPEARE.

CHAPTER XV.

AT THE STRAND.

THE great bells chimed the hour of four from the Post Office tower as they again alighted at Circular Quay.

The city presented an unusually busy aspect. Eager and expectant crowds thronged the principal streets, for it was the day of that great annual event, the "Melbourne Cup."

The little Sydney newsboys (mostly bare-footed and ragged) made the most of their opportunities, and above the din and uproar their shrill voices were to be heard, as they announced the latest special editions of the *Evening News* and *Star*. Long before the great race was run, these little urchins, bent

upon trade, did not scruple to add "Result of the Cup!" and by this clever ruse their unsold early editions were forced upon the unwary.

At last all curiosity was at an end. The crowds at the corners of King and Pitt Streets became more dense; elbowing and pushing their way to the front, to read for themselves the result; to be quite certain that the shout which suddenly rent the air was true—"Carbine!"

The excitement was at its height when Madge and the Captain passed through the Strand, and walked towards Farmer's.

"Half-an-hour, at the most, Raymond, I have only to choose gloves and ribbons," laughed Madge, as they soon afterwards stopped at that fashionable establishment, and

with the parting injunction: "Wait for me in the Strand," she disappeared.

The half-hour lengthened into three-quarters, and still Madge remained involved in the intricacies of shopping. A little later she appeared. The colour in her face, heightened by her quick walk, suddenly faded.

A tall, fair young lady, smiling and handsome, was talking to the Captain, who evidently seemed to find her conversation both amusing and agreeable.

They were walking through the Strand, towards Pitt Street, and a jealous light crept into Madge's eyes as she saw the Captain, smiling and bowing, hand her into a waiting carriage.

The carriage whirled along the crowded street, and Madge noted the look of impatience

that crossed the Captain's face, as he glanced at his watch.

"Five o'clock. Why, Madge, here you are! Which way did you come? I have been waiting near this entrance nearly half-an-hour."

"You did not observe me, although I saw you. I came in from George Street."

"Ah! that is how I missed you, Madge."

"Or perhaps you were too much engrossed with that handsome young lady with the fair hair, Raymond."

"Ah! you mean Miss Darrell. It is the first time we have met since I arrived in Sydney, by the "Ormuz." She also was a passenger from London, and, I believe, has been staying with her aunt at Double Bay."

"She is very handsome, Raymond."

"Yes, most people would think so."

"Do not you?"

"No. I think no woman handsome but the one I have chosen for my future wife."

And Madge was happy.



*“And swift, and swift beyond conceiving;
The splendour of the world goes round;
Day’s Eden-brightness still relieving
The awful night’s intense profound.”*

GOETHE.

CHAPTER XVI.

NEW YEAR'S EVE BRINGS TROUBLE.

LITTLE Roy was dangerously ill. Mrs. Horton knew it by the grave look upon Dr. Vandberg's face, as he stood at the bedside of the little sufferer.

The girls knew it, as they hovered near the door of the sick-room, with tear-stained faces; knew that the little fragile child, so dear to them all, despite their increasing care, had suddenly become worse, and even as they stood, his wild cries of delirium burst upon them.

The doctor said it was a case of pneumonia in its severest form, and that little Roy's

chances of recovery (with such a poor constitution) were remote—very remote, indeed.

A pallor overspread Mrs. Horton's face at the words. A choking sensation prevented reply, and with a moan of anguish she covered her face with her hands.

For days there was no perceptible change in the little patient.

"Mother, look at the spiders! Look! look! Take them! Can't you see?—coming through the curtains!" he would cry in his delirium; and his little thin fingers would grasp at the bed-curtains, with such an air of affright, that the curtains had to be removed.

The doctor still looked grave, and shook his head.

A look of abject despair now rested upon Mrs. Horton's anxious face. The girls moved noiselessly about the sick room, speaking in

hushed voices words of hope and comfort that their very looks of fear and dread belied.

New Year's Eve came again. Geoffrey had been home a week, and still little Roy grew gradually worse.

They all listened and wondered—wondered, as peal after peal rang merrily from the Church of St. John's, ushering in, with gladness and joy the coming year that had just dawned, what to them its advent would bring forth; wondered at the change that had taken place in the great world; when another year's sorrows and troubles were left behind; when the departed year had added to the long list of days and months that were to be recalled no more.

And they prayed that little Roy's life should be spared; that the echoes of gladness and joy that rang out from every quarter of

the great city should also mean joy to them ; that the dark cloud that had fallen upon their home should soon be lifted.

* * * * *

For nearly three weeks little Roy's life "hung in the balance," and then there came a change for the better. Very slight it was, indeed, the doctor said, but still enough to strengthen the slight thread of hope that recovery would eventuate.

At last came the day for Geoffrey's departure. His holidays had already been extended, and he could remain home no longer. Little Roy was propped up with pillows when he entered to say good-bye.

Against the doctor's orders, Geoffrey remained longer than the allotted ten minutes.

"You're a nice old chap to get sick just

when I come home, and want you to take me out fishing, and to the Cyclorama, and to the Centennial Hall, to hear that grand organ—and everywhere!" Geoffrey exclaimed with a forced air of gaiety, as he bent over and kissed the little pale face buried amongst the pillows. "Wait until you're better, and I come home at Easter, then we will make up for it all, eh, Roy?"

"But when you come back I might be gone, Geoff," came the faint reply.

"No you will not, Roy, mother will not take you right away to Orange—where Doctor Vandberg says you must go, when you get stronger—until I come home at Easter; and then we can have some grand times first."

"Oh, but I didn't mean that, Geoff, I might be gone to Heaven, you know, with

father. Do you remember the last time we went to Rookwood how lovely the flowers had grown on Father's grave? And you know that lovely patch of grass next to it? that's where I'd like to lay, Geoff, just beside father; but be sure and tell them to put me very close, so as there will be room for mother, when God sends for her.

"There, I have made you cry, and I didn't want to, Geoff.

"That's why I wanted to tell you before you go, because mother and Linda, and Madge and Dot just cried something awful, you know, when I tried to tell them."

"Darling Roy, you must not tell them; you will get better, the doctor says you will; and I am sure that God wants you to get strong and well. Now, do not talk any more,

or Doctor Vandberg will not let me come again."

And before Geoffrey crept slowly from the darkened room, the little sufferer was asleep.



*“Some truths are not by reason to be tried,
But we have sure experience for our guide.”*

DRYDEN.

CHAPTER XVII.

LINDA AND DOT GAIN EXPERIENCE.

THE brilliant sunshine of an Easter morning stole upon the little scene.

Everyone wanted to do something. Geoffrey took little Roy's thin form in his strong arms and gently carried him downstairs; Mrs. Horton hurried after cushions; the girls after rugs and wraps; and Miss Newcome had expressly ordered the neat brougham that stood awaiting at the door. At last everything was ready, and little Roy, carefully tucked in between his mother and Miss Newcome, was whirled along Oxford Street towards Centennial Park, after many long weeks of suffering.

The house was practically deserted. The boarders, taking advantage of the few days holiday, had organized a fishing party, and journeyed to the Hawkesbury River; the Wenderoon's holidays ended a week ago, they had returned to Buttabadong Station. Madge and the Captain were invited to spend the day with friends at Coogee, and Geoffrey had gone into the City.

Linda and Dot were watering the great "tree ferns" that were planted here and there on the well-kept lawn.

They were anticipating a few hours gardening, and were already both so intent upon their work that they had not observed the entry of a telegraph messenger, till he held out an envelope addressed to Martha. They both ran inside with the missive; fearing bad news for their faithful old servant.

"Come at once, your father has been thrown and severely injured," were the words it contained.

Amidst fears at her father's misfortune, and regrets at having to leave the dinner uncooked, Martha was ready in a few minutes to start for Penrith.

"Mind you don't worry about us—and the dinner! Martha. We'll manage capitally," was Dot's parting rejoinder from the balcony, where she stood watching the hansom hurriedly disappear round the corner and speed down William Street, till it was no longer recognizable among the mass of carriages, hansom, and omnibuses, that are generally to be seen whirling to and from those aristocratic localities—Pott's Point, Double Bay, Elizabeth Bay, and Darlinghurst Road.

Linda was already in the kitchen when Dot

went down, with a great white apron on, looking more perplexed than elated at the prospect of her first day's cooking.

"Dot, I'm just waiting for you. I see Martha has left the vegetables ready—what do you say if we have a meat pie and some sponge custard?"

"But you know how Miss Newcome hates that, Lin!"

"Does she?"

"Of course, it always gives her indigestion for a week," she says. "We had better make her favourite pudding—'Brown.' I've often watched Martha. I'm sure I could make one."

"Very well. You make the pudding, and I'll make the pie; then we can have cold ham as well. We must not forget beef-tea for Roy!"

"I think I'll have flaky pastry for the pie—it's so light and rich," Linda exclaimed, proceeding to work.

"Well, you had better go to the other table, Lin, I want this."

"What for?"

"The pudding, of course!"

And as Linda glanced at the table, already strewn with things from one end to the other, she thought Dot was right.

For awhile the work proceeded in silence. The day proved to be exceptionally hot; and Dot had already become very flurried, very hot and very exasperated at seeing the bad effect the heat had upon her fringe.

As well as a range, a gas stove stood in one corner of the kitchen.

This, Linda decided to use; having a great objection to becoming so red and so comical

looking as did Dot, with great black smudges all over her pretty pink cheeks.

"Oh, this is something horrid! I'm nearly baked!" Dot exclaimed, looking very irritable.

"I wish I could get my pastry in that unenviable condition," Linda replied, not quite so sanguine as to the success of their first experience in cooking.

All too soon the time slipped by. One o'clock came. Mrs. Horton, Miss Newcome, and Roy returned, all surprised and sorry to hear of Martha's hasty departure, and the cause of it.

"Well I don't think we will mind a cold luncheon to-day, girls, as there are such a few of us," Mrs. Horton said, wondering what Dot had been doing to get such great black spots on her face.

"But, mother, we have been cooking all the morning. We have a delicious pie, and 'Brown' pudding, and beef-tea, but —"

"But what, Dot?" her mother asked, laughing in spite of herself.

"Only that I'm so very hot, and I don't think that I'll go to the Technical College next week after all; cooking is so very horrid in weather like this! There's Linda calling me, mother, so I suppose I must go," and Dot laughed as she hurried off.

"Turn the gas right off, Lin, these plates have blistered my fingers."

It was now half-past-one. Miss Newcome came to the door looking very hungry and very cross.

Linda, in her hurry, accidentally turned the gas the wrong way.

Dot drew back quickly, but not before the fierce flame had caught the little curl papers sticking out on her forehead.

Linda, to her horror, saw it, and tearing off her apron covered Dot's burning hair.

"Oh, what a horrid fright I am, I know! Linda, you mean thing! Did'nt I ask you to turn the horrid thing off? Look at me—just look! and after promising to go to Bondi with the Sedgwick's to-morrow!"

"Of course I am very sorry, Dot, but it's lucky you escaped with a burnt fringe. It will soon grow again, dear."

"Grow! I can feel it; its sticking out in bristles, like a porcupine. They say burnt hair always does take twice as long to grow—and Geoffrey home, too!"

Linda was now quite red and flurried. The door-bell had rung twice. Mrs. Horton was

upstairs with Roy; Dot still fretting over her grievance; and Miss Newcome was on the balcony, awaiting the ringing of the dinner-bell.

There was nothing left for her to do but to go to the door herself. The scarlet flush grew deeper in her cheeks, as Geoffrey, followed by a stranger, entered the hall.

"I have brought my friend to dinner, Linda," Geoffrey said, as he introduced her to the tall, good-looking stranger—Mr. Barraclough. Just then, to Linda's relief, her mother appeared. Leaving her to welcome Geoffrey's friend, and make explanations about the dinner, she hurried back to the kitchen.

"Oh, Dot, whatever shall we do? We never had such a dinner before; and here's a friend of Geoffrey's come home with him!"

"Well, there's the pie and 'Brown' pudding, besides the ham."

"Yes, there's the pie—if it's right."

"Well, what's wrong with it? I've covered it all over with a tablecloth, and the pastry is as soft as butter."

"Covered it over! Whatever did you do that for? It will be doughy, I know, and after after all my trouble to have the paste flaky!"

But Dot was too much engrossed with the sauce for her 'Brown' pudding to offer any reply.

At last everything was ready, and the meal commenced.

Linda hoped that the ham Geoffrey had started to carve was for the stranger, but it proved to be for Miss Newcome and his mother. She watched Geoffrey, as he again

carved more of the ham, and a sigh of relief escaped her as he handed it to his friend.

"I will try some of your pie, Linda," Geoffrey exclaimed, as he started to help himself, and pressed his friend to have some also.

Linda's face suddenly became very red.

"What sort of a pie do you call this, Lin?" Geoffrey laughed, good-humouredly. "You've forgotten the gravy—it's all stuck to the bottom!"—but, on a pretence of bringing in the pudding, Linda had hurried away.

"Oh, Dot, I forgot to put in the gravy—the meat is all dry, and stuck to the dish."

"Never mind, they'll know you are a novice, Lin; the pudding is ready, and will make up for it. It's just like Geoff to bring home a swell when we're all in such a horrid muddle as this!"

"Don't you think it looks rather white, Dot?" Linda said, referring to the pudding.

"Yes, rather, but it's brown inside, you know. For goodness sake take it, Lin, and let us get this dreadful meal over."

Linda had taken the precaution to place cheese and salad in front of Mr. Barraclough, but he, with the others, awaited the arrival of the pudding.

"Dot thought she would make one of your favourites—'Brown'"—Linda said, as she placed it on the dinner-waggon, addressing Miss Newcome, whom she started to serve.

Fortunately, her back was turned to Mr. Barraclough, and he did not observe the look of confusion, mingled with disappointment and dismay, that crept over her face.

She did not move until she had served off a small portion for each, then handing it round

quickly to one after the other, fled back to the kitchen. Dot had found an old piece of looking-glass, and was ruefully surveying her unfortunate fringe.

"Oh, whatever will he think of us, Dot?—it's white, and as heavy as lead. I declare I will not go in again! Miss Newcome sniffed, and turned up her nose; I saw Geoff stare as I handed him his, and, before I could get out, he said:

"I thought you called it 'Brown,' Lin?—white pudding would be more appropriate, but Dot must have forgotten to put in the—eggs," he chimed in, before I could add baking-soda, and I never felt so ashamed in my whole life.



"Procrastination is the thief of time."

YOUNG.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NIL DESPERANDUM.

A THOUGHTFUL look settled upon Dot's face. One of the windows at "Veldeen" commanded an uninterrupted view of Woolloomooloo, Rushcutters' Bay, and Pott's Point. It was only a small space that divided the residents of these localities, and yet—how wide was the gulf that divided them in their worldly sphere of life?

The shadows of night had fallen upon the great and busy city. Thousands of lights shimmered and glistened under the gathering darkness.

Dot contrasted the lives of the humble and the rich, as she stood and watched the portly

gentlemen from the City whirl by in the luxuriance and ease of their comfortable carriages towards their elegant homes; and the foot-sore, weary pedestrian, dragging his tired limbs from the scene of a hard day's toil, to his humble abode in one of the slums of Woolloomooloo, bare of furniture, bare of comfort, and more often than not, bare of food.

"If I were only rich I would help them all," Dot said slowly.

She felt in her pocket, produced two half-crowns, and after a little hesitation hastily ran downstairs. Martha and Tony were in the kitchen.

The accident to Martha's father proved not to be so serious as was anticipated, and she had returned early the next morning.

Even Dot had joined in her laughter, as Martha had listened to the recapitulation of their previous day's trials.

Dot went straight to Tony now, and to his astonishment, handed him the money.

"I have been thinking over it, Tony," she said. "I heard you this morning telling Martha about the blue paper and your dreams."

"Yes, Miss Dot, but dash it all, she won't believe me!"

"Well, I do, Tony, so I want to join you instead."

"Take my advice and keep it in your pocket, Miss Dot. I never did believe in that kind of luck," Martha somewhat sharply interposed.

"But if I had not burnt my fringe I would only have spent it to-day, Martha, so for once in my life I am going to try my luck in 'Tattersall's Consultation' on the 'Melbourne Cup.'"

"And dash it all, Miss Dot, I believe we're the winners. As I was telling Martha

yesterday, three times I've dreamt it. The ticket was blue—I'm blessed if I didn't draw 'Blue Boy'—and the jockey was blue."

"Blue, Tony?"

"Yes, Miss, well not blue exactly, you know, but striped with blue, and as I said to Martha its a great 'coincidence.'"

Dot laughed at Tony's enthusiasm as she replied "that she hoped it would not only prove a coincidence, but a reality."

A vision of the Doctor's bill that had arrived that morning flashed across her mind. Olver Merton still remained in England, and his annual Christmas cheque to his sister had long since been spent. Wine, jellies, and other necessaries had to be bought for little Roy during his long illness; no expense had been spared.

"Tony, send for it in the name of 'Nil Desperandum,' " Dot suddenly exclaimed.

"It is my favourite motto. I'll write it down to-morrow," as seeing Madge pass the door, Dot hurried off to acquaint her with her scheme.

A puzzled expression stole over Tony's face. "Nil Desperado!' What does that mean, Martha?"

"I don't profess to know the ins and outs of the dictionary," Martha replied shortly. "Its a bit of one of them foreign languages I should say."

"Well I know nil means nought, and dash it all we don't want any blanks." Tony's ruminations were just then interrupted by the appearance of Miss Newcome with letters for the post.

About an hour afterwards, Madge and Captain Arthwaite appeared, attired for the Theatre.

It was the night of the first appearance of that talented actress and actor—Mrs. Brown Potter and Kyrle Bellew.

Great enthusiasm was manifested by the Sydney public, and almost every seat at the "Royal" had been booked beforehand.

Madge looked extremely well; attired in a soft white muslin gown, simple, but both stylish and becoming in effect; soft folds of lace were gathered at her creamy throat, and on the short sleeves that just reached the tops of the long suede gloves that covered her shapely arms.

A diamond star—a present from the Captain—ornamented her rich golden hair, but the

chief charm of her dazzling beauty, lay in the wistful expression of her large dreamy eyes.

"A handsome couple" was the remark from more than one as the Captain proudly handed Madge into the awaiting hansom, and together they were driven away.



*"The world's a theatre, the earth a stage
Which God and Nature do with actors fill."*

HEYWOOD.

CHAPTER XIX.

RAYMOND, WHAT HAS HAPPENED ?

LONG before they had taken their seats in the dress-circle—reserved by the Captain—“standing room only” was announced to the numbers who attempted to find seats in the already crowded stalls.

Mrs. Brown-Potter had chosen “Camille” for the opening night, and as the curtain fell upon the first act, the enthusiasm evoked was evidenced by the deafening applause that immediately resounded from all parts of the crowded theatre. Madge had recognised some acquaintances ; she drew the Captain’s attention to a little party seated in one of the boxes.

"That is Lady Berkley, Raymond—the tall one in grey, and the two pretty girls in white are her nieces."

"By jove, what a likeness! Can't you see it, Madge? If Lady Berkley only wore that hideous ruffle of Miss Newcome's, I would take them to be twins."

Madge gave vent to a little burst of amusement.

"If ever I wish to invoke Lady Berkley's ill-favour I will reiterate your opinion," she laughed provokingly. For a few minutes the Captain did not speak.

The curtain had risen upon the second act. As the theatre again began to fill, his gaze had wandered to the figures of two men, whose eyes were riveted upon him. They were leaning against the wall, near the left-hand corner of the stage, on the ground-floor.

"Madge!"

She started, as the Captain pronounced her name, struck by a peculiar intonation in his voice.

As she turned to gaze into his face, she noted the peculiar, uneasy expression of his eyes, and the unnatural hue of his face, almost as white as the handkerchief that he pressed nervously to his forehead, endeavouring to hide the great drops of perspiration that stood there.

"Raymond, what is the matter? You are ill!"

"Do not be alarmed, Madge, it is nothing; I will be alright if I can get out into the air."

He spoke almost in a whisper, and Madge noticed how clammy and cold was the hand that touched hers, as he assisted her with her cloak.

They made their way hurriedly down the stairs, the Captain acquiescing to Madge's proposal that they should return home. Her face was now almost as white as his own.

"Bet your life I'll do it for two 'sovs.,' sir. You'll be there in less than ten minutes!"

"Then drive for your life." The Captain stepped into the hansom; the horse pranced and kicked, and then started off at a gallop.

A heavy thunderstorm had now set in. The hansom dashed onward at a furious pace, and Madge shrank back in fear, as great flashes of lightning illuminated the blackness of the night.

"Raymond, what has happened?"

The Captain noted the anxiety that the tones of her voice betrayed, as he clasped her hands in his.

"Madge, dearest Madge, forgive me! Promise that you will forgive me. Remember, when I am gone, that once you loved me—Great heavens! loved me!"

Another great flash of lightning lit up the sky, and clasped hand in hand, in that brief interval, they gazed into each others eyes.

"Oh, Raymond, what do you mean? What mystery is this? Do you think that anything in the world would ever cause me to love you less?"

"You have not promised, Madge—I have risked all for your sake. Promise, dearest. Let me believe, when I am far away, that you were true to the last!"

"I promise. But, Raymond, you must, surely, be getting that horrid fever again. Oh, how you do frighten me! Why should you go away?"

“Great heavens, I must go! Madge, I cannot tell you why, but I must leave Sydney to-night. It may be only for a while, but——”

The Captain's words died upon his lips.

There was a sudden jerk. Both fell forward, and the next minute each realized that their lives were in danger.

An exclamation of horror escaped the Captain. He saw the driver of the hansom thrown upon the footpath, and springing up, endeavoured to catch the reins, but unsuccessfully, as the frightened horse made a desperate plunge down Victoria Street, starting off in its unchequered career.

“Madge, for God's sake, keep still!”

The next moment the Captain had sprung to the ground, and with one frantic effort to stop its mad pace, had rushed to the horse's head.

*“For all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: ‘It might have been!’”*

WHITTIER.

CHAPTER XX.

STUART DONALDSON.

ONLY that wild despairing cry—only a few moments of horrible suspense, and then all was darkness and despair.

There was a sudden stoppage. The horse stumbled, then fell. An exclamation of fear and dread escaped Madge, as half-stupified she called to the Captain.

Only a low moan echoed her cry of anguish. The flickering light from a gas-lamp revealed the hideous truth—the crouched form and ashen face of the Captain lying beneath the glare, and the trembling, white-robed figure kneeling beside him.

A hansom dashed up to the pavement, and two men alighted.

"Good heavens! We're too late! I believe Stuart Donaldson is dead!"

"Dead—dead! It cannot be. Help—help me I beseech you! You are mistaken. This is Captain Arthwaite. There's been an accident. Oh Raymond, Raymond, speak!"

One of the men had hurried off for a doctor; the other recoiled, as Madge raised her white imploring face.

The Captain's eyes slowly opened.

"Madge, dear Madge, forgive! They call me Stuart Donaldson——"

He felt Madge start and tremble—tremble more violently as she held his hand.

A spasm of pain contracted his haggard-looking face.



"Oh, Raymond, Raymond, speak!"

“It is true—all—all true. Forgive! Forgive!” His words ended with a low moan.

Madge bent over the still form. The tears fell faster and faster down her ashen cheeks. She saw and recognized Doctor Vandberg approach, and with a wild look of horror, sank unconsciously beside the dying form of her lover.

* * * * *

At last all was over. In a peaceful spot at Waverley, facing the sea, he whom they had known as Captain Arthwaite was laid to rest.

A look of unspeakable horror had rested upon the faces of all, as the detectives (who had discovered ^{the} Stuart Donaldson, injured and dying), related his story.

He had been a mine manager in West Australia, liked and respected—a favourite with

one and all. Twelve months ago he suddenly and mysteriously disappeared. Then the truth was revealed—gold to the value of fifteen thousand pounds was found to be missing.

A warrant had been immediately issued for his arrest, but effectually disguised, and styled as Captain Arthwaite, he had succeeded, until the night of his death, in evading the law.

Mrs. Horton already appeared aged and altered.

Madge moved about with a white, sorrowful face, and a dull, vacant stare in her large, brown eyes—seeming to hear nothing but the great rumbling of wheels, to see nothing but the white, drawn face lying beneath the glare of the gas-lamp—the flashing lightning—to hear still the last broken plea of the man she still loved.

*"Let the great world spin for ever down the
ringing grooves of change."*

TENNYSON.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHANGES.

Two months passed by—months of hardship and sorrow to the family at “Veldeen.”

Now, more than ever, the sting of poverty became harder to bear; owing to dismissals and retrenchment, the list of boarders again numbered two.

But there was one in that household who never quite despaired.

“11211”—Dot repeated the number that she had carefully jotted down. “Two elevens; our lucky number. Only two more weeks, and then——”

The newsboy thrust the *Evening News* under the door. She hurried down to secure

the paper first, but with an exclamation of disgust, placed it aside.

"Why, there's no 'Blue Boy' in it," and Dot began to lose faith in Tony's dreams. The day of the drawing at Tattersall's at last came round.

Martha answered a sharp ring at the doorbell late that afternoon, not a little surprised to receive a telegram addressed to Mr. Tony Fraser.

"Read it, Martha," Tony said, as he hurriedly tore open the envelope. "Dash it all, the sight of them things always makes me feel *nervous!*"

"Why, Tony, it's from Tattersall's!"

With some difficulty Martha read: "You have drawn—drawn——"

Tony, in his excitement, snatched the tele-

gram, and having only one horse in his imagination, cried "Blue Boy!"

"I tell you it's not, Tony. Let me read—its something like 'Ramrod'; you've got 'Blue Boy' on the brain."

But Tony did not listen; he had seen Dot on the lawn, and darted off with the news.

To her joy and surprise Dot read: "You have drawn 'Pharamond' in the 'Melbourne Cup.'"

The excitement at "Veldeen" now became intense. It was four o'clock on Saturday afternoon—the hour that the great event was to take place in Melbourne. Tony, looking and feeling very important, had gone into the city to await the result, and, despite the very discouraging opinions that had been expressed as to their chance, Dot never lost faith.

Five o'clock. Dot's impatience became

greater, when an unusual thing just then happened—a hansom dashed past the door, and stopped at the side entrance.

Tony, breathless with excitement, stepped out, and before Dot could hurry down, shouts of Hurrah! Hurrah! 'Nil Desperado' reached her ears.

She was met half-way down the stairs by Martha; her kind, good-natured face radiant with pleasure and excitement.

"Oh, Miss Dot, I am glad! Read—read. It's won!"

In spite of herself, Dot's hands trembled as she took the telegram addressed to Tony, and read:—"You have drawn First Prize, £10,000 in the 'Melbourne Cup.'"

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A few weeks later there were many changes at "Veldeen."

In the Church of St. John's, Tony and Martha were married.

Their elaborate wedding breakfast was given by Mrs. Horton at "Veldeen," and one and all joined in wishing health and happiness to the two faithful old servants.

Dr. Vandberg's orders—that Madge should have change of scene and climate—were now able to be complied with.

Soon after their unexpected good fortune, Geoffrey had returned home, and a few weeks later Mrs. Horton and her family sailed by the "Carthage," for Melbourne, for a six month's change.

Miss Newcome accompanied them, but only upon a short visit before returning to her relatives in England.

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Three months afterwards, the engagement of the Honourable Richard Grenarth with Miss Linda Horton, of Sydney, was announced in the leading Melbourne society paper.

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