TWO
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ALLNUTT.

Two Convicts

LONDON: DRANE'S 82a, FARRINGDON STREET, E. C.

TWO CONVICTS

A Romance with a Moral

BY
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RICHMOND, MELBOURNE

"The mills of God grind slowly,
But they grind exceeding small."

London:
DRANE'S
DANEGELD HOUSE
82a FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.

TWO CONVICTS

I. THE PARTNERS

ON the first floor of a suite of offices in Lime Street, London, in a room facing the street, were seated, towards the end of December, 1867, three men, the principals in the firm of Graham, Butler & Marston, shipping agents.

George Graham, the head of the firm, was a man about middle age. His burly form, weather-beaten appearance and lurching gait would have convinced any observer that, at some period of his life, he had followed the sea as a calling. And the surmise would not have been incorrect. His early years had been passed in the mercantile marine, and he had risen to the position of Captain of an Australian liner; but he had lost his command through an accident which had resulted in the wrecking of his ship; and, instead of wasting time in vain regrets and in looking for another berth, he determined on starting in business as a shipping agent. He had lived frugally, and his savings amounted to a considerable sum, and he knew that he would receive support from those with whom he had been connected during his life at sea. In this he was not disappointed. Business increased, and he soon

found it necessary to have help in his office. More capital, too, was needed, and he decided to seek a partner. Carefully made enquiries resulted in an interview being arranged with one Charles Butler, whose knowledge of the shipping trade had been acquired by many years of service as confidential clerk in one of the largest firms in the City. He had saved a considerable sum, and this had been added to by judicious investments. After conferences with Graham, he decided to join him in the business which was already well established, and the firm of George Graham & Company became that of Graham, Butler & Company.

The work increased, and it became necessary to engage an accountant. There was very little difficulty in obtaining a suitable man for the position, and Edward Marston, who had served in the Royal Navy as a Lieutenant and had retired from a sea life that he might the better assist his mother who had lately become a widow, accepted the post. He was a man of splendid physique, tall and well-bred. He soon made many friends and brought much business to the firm. After some years, Marston, who had inherited a small estate, was received as a partner.

The war between Chili and Peru opened up an opportunity for adventurous shipowners who were willing to take the risk of running the blockade and carrying arms to the Peruvian Navy. Marston was approached by a Secret Service agent of Peru, and negotiations with his firm resulted in a vessel being purchased for the enterprise. Hence the partners' present earnest discussion at the office.

Carefully worded advertisements were inserted in the Press for a commander. Among the numerous applicants, Charles Frankston was considered the most suitable, and after he had been taken by Marston to inspect the vessel, which had been repainted and christened the "Helen," he had an interview with Butler at the office, and the appointment was duly made.

"By the way, Captain," Butler remarked, "there is one thing the firm wishes to impress on you: the Chief Mate, George Cranbourne, has already been selected. He is considered specially suited for the post, having had previous experience in blockade running, and it is essential that you allow him a free hand in the enterprise. You will readily understand the reason for this."

"I do not know that I do understand," replied the Captain; "but if it be distinctly understood that I am master of the vessel and that my orders are to be obeyed, I shall be satisfied; if not, I must refuse the appointment."

"I will see that your wishes are complied with, Captain," was the answer.

"Give him a free hand," said the Captain to himself, as he took his way to the docks; "give him a free hand. I wonder what is in the mind of the firm; don't like it, anyhow, and Butler's voice is not to my taste, pitched in a false key. But the Mate shall have a free hand so long as it's an honest one, but Charles Frankston's not going to be a party to any dirty work, and if that's the free hand, I shall know what to do with him, and he may be very sure I will do my duty."

II. THE "HELEN" AND HER OFFICERS

THE "Helen" lay in the London Docks, and Captain Frankston, as he stepped on board, criticised her closely. She was of a thousand tons, trim and apparently built for speed. "Ought to be well suited for the work" was the Captain's thought. "Too much paint for my liking—looks if it were meant to hide defects of some sort. Spars were younger once," he muttered, as he tapped the timber still on deck.

"Were you looking for anyone, sir?" came a voice close by, and, turning, the Captain faced a young man, dressed in the garb usually assumed by officers of the mercantile marine, his red hair was cut very short, his complexion florid; he was rather under the medium height, and the shifty look of his eye was not lost on the Captain, who was used to all classes of men and was a good reader of character. "Not much," he answered, "I came to look over the craft before sailing her, that's all." "Are you the new Captain, then?" "Exactly, and I suppose you are the Mate?" "Yes, George Cranbourne, at your service."

After this introduction, the rest of the day was occupied in watching the stowing of cargo. All the cases were marked with the name of the firm in New York acting as agents in the enterprise, the nature of which was kept a close secret.

A smart, sailorly-looking young officer saw to the stowing. The Captain watched him closely, and noted that he had both judgment in placing the cargo and tact in dealing with the men working.

"Second Mate, I suppose," soliloquized the Captain, "and if his seamanship is as good as his judgment he will make a first-class officer."

"How is the lading going?" he asked, and as the young man turned with a courteous answer, the Captain was struck with his fine open countenance and the sincerity and firmness which showed in the lines of his face. "All well, so far," was the reply, as the young man turned to go aft—then he added:—"Have I the pleasure of speaking to Captain Frankston?" "I am the Captain," was the answer; "but what made you come to that conclusion so readily?" "I generally know a sailor when I see one, and I expected the Captain would be aboard to-day."

Further talk elicited the fact that the officer's name was Ernest Clyde, and that his father, who commanded an Indian liner, had, in the old days, been a shipmate of Captain Frankston and a close friend, though circumstances had led to their being in different employs and had prevented their meeting for many years.

Young Clyde now told the Captain that his father was expected home from a voyage that day, and that he had often spoken to him of Captain Frankston and of the old times when the two had passed through trying ordeals together.

The Captain determined that, as soon as possible, he would visit his old friend, who, he learned, was living at Clapham. Nothing now remained to detain the Captain or the Second Mate, the latter having been relieved by the Third, and they left the vessel together.

Captain Frankston lost no time in paying a visit to his old friend and former shipmate, and no more kind and hearty welcome could have been received than that which was given to him.

Captain Clyde had purchased a house for his son and himself, and had named it " Tooradin Lodge," in memory of the ship in which he and Captain Frankston had sailed together.

Naturally, there was much to talk of as to the old days and present experiences, and Captain Clyde asked his friend about the " Helen," and what the other officers were like. " As to the ship," was the reply, " well, she has seen the best of her days, but she is well suited to the work she has to do, and I am satisfied. But there's a man aboard I can't quite take to, and that's the Chief Mate. There's nothing to take hold of, but he's not true somehow, and, what's worse, the firm wants me to give him a free hand. Anyhow, if I find anything wrong when we sail, I will stand on no ceremony, but will serve him the same as you and I did the Captain of the old ' Tooradin ' on our first voyage together, when he had drunk himself mad; and I will have him in irons before he does any mischief."

Soon afterwards the two friends parted, Captain Clyde promising to come and see the " Helen " before she sailed. Two days after he boarded her at the London Docks, and was heartily welcomed by his old friend. Together they critically examined the vessel. Satisfied with their inspection, they adjourned to the saloon for lunch, and sat chatting together for some time. Suddenly

Captain Clyde started, and rose to his feet, saying : " Whose voice was that on deck?" " That," was the answer, " is Cranbourne, the Chief Mate;" and the two friends walked from the saloon towards the place whence the sound had come. As Captain Frankston surmised, Cranbourne was the speaker, and as he turned towards the two Captains, it was evident that he recognised Clyde, for he started and changed colour.

As soon as the two friends were alone together, Clyde remarked : " That is strange, you tell me that is your Mate Cranbourne; but if he is not John Flinders, formerly Quartermaster of my old barque ' Nautilus,' I am very much mistaken, and I do not often forget a face. The ' Nautilus ' sprang a leak, and examination showed that an attempt had been made to scuttle her. Suspicion fell on Flinders, but nothing could be proved. I got rid of the fellow as soon after as possible, and have not seen him since till now. When the leak was discovered, I kept all hands at the pumps and plugged, so the ship was saved; but nothing will make me believe that Flinders was not in some way connected with the affair."

There was nothing to be done under present circumstances in the matter of Captain Clyde's suspicion, but he promised to warn his son, and advised him to keep a sharp eye on the Chief Mate and to join with the Captain in defeating any attempt at treachery.

Captain Clyde soon afterwards left the ship, promising to come down on the day of sailing.

Captain Frankston had more interviews with the

owners, but nothing more was said about the Chief Mate, who, though reserved in his bearing towards the Captain, yet proved that he was competent as an officer, and gave no loophole for complaint.

The Third Mate, Frederick Hastings, was a youth who had served his time on an Australian liner, and held a Second Mate's certificate. He was a typical young sailor, and made a favourable impression on the Captain as honest and trustworthy.

Leonard Row, the boatswain, was a jovial British seaman, who critically examined the " Helen " in all her parts, and confided to his chum, the carpenter, Joseph Dunning, his notion of the craft and her equipment by the brief remark: " Too much paint, Joe; too much paint. You'll have your work cut out for you this trip, or I'm a Dutchman."

The owners came on board early on February 17th, the day when the " Helen " was to leave the dock, while many visitors and friends of those on board were on deck. To these Butler was very attentive, and made presents of curiously wrought revolvers and other articles, which he explained were samples of the cargo. Captain Clyde decided to remain during the run to Plymouth, as he had much to say to his son and his old friend, the Commander.

III. THE LEAK—SUSPICIONS AROUSED

SOON after mid-day the " Helen " left her moorings and proceeded down the river. Nothing of moment occurred during the run to Plymouth.

Like all sailors under a new Commander, the men narrowly scrutinised their Captain, to see what sort of a seaman he was, and the boatswain's brief summary, " He'll do," was universally endorsed; and this judgment was verified during an exceptionally rough time in the Bay of Biscay.

Shortly after crossing the Equator, the wind freshened and there were some storms, but none of any account to seamen.

Hitherto, though a careful watch had been kept on the Chief Mate, both by the Captain and the Second Officer, nothing had occurred to cause suspicion; Cranbourne proved himself an excellent seaman, amply qualified for his duties, and all doubt of him would have been allayed but for the caution received by the Captain from Butler on his engagement as Commander.

On the 25th of April, during the Second Mate's watch, there was some rough weather, but nothing to call for special attention. Towards midnight, however, some noises attracted young Clyde's attention; at the same time the boatswain passed from the forecastle and came near to where the young officer was. Clyde took little notice of this, and the working of the ship during the rough weather called for all his attention. Shortly after the noises became more pronounced, and there seemed to be nothing to account for them. It seemed like a knocking, together with a rush of water, such as no storm would be likely to cause. While the officer was trying to find the reason for this, the boatswain again approached and stopped close to where Clyde stood. "What is it, boat-

swain?" the latter asked, wondering at the action of the man. "Can't say, sir; can't make it out; but there's summert going on I should like to get at; don't like it, sir, don't like it at all." "Don't like what?" asked Clyde in the same low tone that the boatswain had used. "Don't like them noises, sir. I've heard 'em afore oncet, but that were many years ago, when I were a boy on the old 'Seagull,' a fine craft she were, too; but after the knocking there was no more of her, and only for the Second Mate there wouldn't have been any more of me neither." "Did she go down, then?" asked the officer, who was becoming more than interested in the man's story, and was impressed by his evident sincerity. "Went down just about where we are now, sir, and no reason given for it, neither. All hands was at the pumps, and all we knew was that she sprung a leak. But some of the knowing ones whispered of foul play, and more nor me had heard the knocking. Howsomeever, the Captain ordered the boats out when he saw there was no chance of saving the ship. The long boat was staved afore she got away from the ship, and not a man on her was saved. The other two got away all right, and I was wondering what my poor mother would do when she knew her boy was lost, when the Second Mate seized hold of me and jumped into the jolly-boat as she shoved off. Both boats were picked up by a homeward-bound, and we was taken aboard. But how the 'Seagull' sprung that leak was never known."

"Halloa, what's that?" This exclamation was uttered as a sound of rushing water was heard.

Then, by sudden impulse, they sprang to the main hatch and raised it. Peering down, they saw what both believed to be a light. It lasted but a moment, and all was black darkness; no sound was heard except of that rush of water. It was beyond human comprehension, and the boatswain's account of the sinking of the "Seagull" and the mystery attached to it, so like that of the present moment, seemed to justify his belief that something uncanny was at the bottom of it. It was no time for hesitation, and Clyde was turning to call the Captain, when the boatswain, pointing towards the officers' quarters, exclaimed: "Did you see that, sir?" "I thought I saw a figure pass towards the cuddy," was the reply. "So did I, sir; and, by Heaven, I'll follow, and get at him." As the boatswain turned hastily away, Clyde went to the Captain's cabin. From long habit, that officer was easily aroused, and he realised from a short colloquy with the Second Mate that something serious was happening; and the two men went together to the deck.

Meanwhile the boatswain had been endeavouring to follow the movements of the man who had been seen to pass towards the officers' quarters. Whoever this was, he had too good a start, for no trace of him could be found.

The Captain now ordered all hands to be called, and the men were soon scrambling on deck. The carpenter was sent with two sailors to find the reason for the noise. In a few moments they returned and reported that water was rushing in below and that the hold was too much flooded for them to find the leak.

All hands were ordered to the pumps, but every effort to keep the water down was unavailing.

The boats were now ordered out and victualled, ready for any emergency.

IV. "HOLES IN HER SIDE"—RIO JANEIRO

As in other details of his work, so also in this difficulty, the Chief Mate proved himself thoroughly able, and the boats were soon reported ready to put to sea. Still the Captain was anxious to use every effort to save the ship, and the pumps were kept at work until it became evident that the lives of those on board were in jeopardy, when he reluctantly gave the order to lower away. The four boats were soon in the water under the command of the Captain and First, Second, and Third Officers respectively, the Captain being the last to leave the ship.

Orders had been given that the four boats were to keep as much in sight of one another as possible. The boat of which the Second Mate was in charge drifted somewhat to the stern of the ship, when the Chief Mate called hastily: "The Captain's orders are that you are to keep in line, Mr. Clyde." At that moment the ship gave a heavy lurch to port, leaving the starboard side far out of the water. In an instant the cry went out from the crew of the Second Mate's boat: "There's holes in her side; some fiend's work has been done here," and the boatswain, who was in the Second Mate's boat exclaimed: "The 'Seagull' over again, sir, and the

same old trick." "Aye, but it won't have the same ending," remarked one of the crew. Both Clyde and the boatswain turned towards the speaker, a young quartermaster, named Hythe, who was pulling the bow oar in Clyde's boat. "Why—how's that?" asked the boatswain. "Just wait till we are picked up or get into Rio, Len," was the answer; "there are things we know that want some piecing together, and then the light comes." At that moment the "Helen" gave another lurch, and in full view of all in the boats sank in the waters of the South Atlantic.

The weather continued fine, and good progress was made towards Rio Janeiro, which was seen by Clyde in nine days after leaving the "Helen."

In the meantime he had lost sight completely of the other boats. A few small craft could be seen between his boat and the coast, and there was also a steam-tug cruising about. In a few moments it was noticed that she was coming towards the boat, and soon she was within hail. "Where are you from?" came a cheery voice from the tug. "'Helen,' wrecked in mid-ocean." "All right," and the next minute the tug was alongside. Two of the crew lowered themselves into the boat and lifted the cramped and wearied occupants to the vessel, which rapidly made for the harbour. Everything possible was done for the comfort of the boat's crew after their trying experiences, and, in answer to Clyde's enquiries, the tug-master explained that the boat in charge of the "Helen's" Captain had been picked up by a passing vessel, and her crew brought into Rio Janeiro two days

before, and that the British Consul, on hearing the story of the wreck, had sent the tug in search of the other boats, and that she had picked up the Third Mate's boat on the previous day, and that the only one now missing was the Chief Officer's.

Upon her arrival at Rio, the tug was boarded by Captain Frankston, who was overjoyed at seeing young Clyde and his crew safe in port.

Arrangements had been made by the Consul for housing the crew, and Captain Frankston took Clyde to his hotel. The Third Mate was staying with a relative in the town.

After dinner, the Captain and Clyde sat in earnest talk concerning the events of the voyage, and particularly the mysterious movements of the Chief Mate.

Clyde was relating to the Captain the discovery of the holes in the "Helen's" side, and the Mate's hasty call to him to keep in line with the Captain's boat, when a waiter entered, saying that two sailors were below asking permission to speak to the Captain. These were admitted, and proved to be the boatswain and the young Quartermaster Hythe. The Captain greeted the men kindly, and expressed his pleasure at their safe arrival in harbour, but spoke regretfully of the missing boat, saying that he hoped she and her crew were safe and would be picked up by the tug and come to port soon. "Not here, sir," said the boatswain; "not here leastways, if what Hythe here have been a-telling of me is correct, and I believe it is." "Why?" asked the Captain, "what is to hinder her coming in as the others have done?" "That's

it, sir, that's what we've come to you about. You see, it's this way, some of us didn't altogether like what we see of the Mate's doin's, and Mr. Clyde here, and me and Hythe, we kept our eyes open, when some of 'em thought they was shut, and Hythe and Bill Martin, my mate, we see him go down into the hold more nor oncet, and Mr. Clyde and me had our doubts when there was knocking as we couldn't make out, and when Mr. Clyde called you the night the old 'Helen' sprung a leak, we had just seen someone go to the officers' quarters, and I says to myself, I says: 'Len, old man, that's queer,' and I follows him quick; but he was too smart for me, whoever it was, and he got away; but what I wants to know is, how is it the Mate's door was fast when I got to it, when it was open a few minutes before; and what did he want with these 'ere in the cabin, and what's this as I picked up when I came away after I lost sight of the chap, what Mr. Clyde here and me see?" So saying, the boatswain laid on the table three pear-shaped pieces of wood. "These 'ere two was in his cabin, and this 'ere one I picked up on the deck. I shouldn't have went into his cabin at all if all hands hadn't been called, and no one answered when I sung out, and I opened the door and there wasn't anyone there, but these was; and if they aint plugs for stopping holes till Beelzebub's time for making sure work had come, then all I've got to say is, as I should like to know what is, and what made the holes in her side for these to fit into?" The Captain and Second Mate carefully examined the specimens, and the latter

remarked that one of them was broken and that this could not have been done without great force. "That's it, sir; that's it," said the boatswain. "You see, the weather wasn't rough enough to make her spring a leak, and it's my belief that the demon that made them holes was waiting for a bit of a storm to come, and kept the hole plugged with these 'ere innercent looking bits of wood till he could find his chance and then draw the lot out and sink her." "But how does that account for the broken piece, boatswain?" asked the Captain. "Why, bless yer innercent heart, sir, I've heard of the likes afore. He have been driving this one, when Mr. Clyde here and me 'eard the knocking, and he broke it in the inner skin of the 'Helen,' and the water what me and Mr. Clyde 'eard came rushing in, and the fiend didn't know how to stop it; so he pulled the rest out to make sure work of her; and, sure enough, he did."

The Captain examined the broken plug, and then said: "Well, boys, you have done your duty in coming to me, and I will do my best to have justice done; no matter who may be the culprit."

"That aint all, sir; that aint all," said the boatswain. "Hythe here has something to say about the cargo what was signed for as bein' aboard." "But the cargo was all stowed by the men under Mr. Clyde; surely nothing was missing there." "You remember, sir," said Hythe, "when you sent Martin and me down to see what caused the knocking, before the 'Helen' sprung a leak. Well, we could see nothing to account for the noise, and Martin was shifting a bale marked

'Revolvers,' when it slipped and came down with a big crash, and the cover burst, and while I was trying to put it right Martin said: 'What's this?' and there were no revolvers, but only bags. We tried one to see what was in it, and it was nothing but salt, and Martin prised up two more covers, and we found just the same, and when we came up you were speaking to the Chief Mate, and I got no opportunity to tell you or Mr. Clyde here, and we had no chance to see more into it, for the old 'Helen' went down next day, and I am here because I was in Mr. Clyde's boat, thank goodness; but where Martin is is more than you or I can tell, for he was one of the Chief Mate's crew, and that's how it was that the boatswain said, 'Not here,' when you hoped the other boat would get in safe, for Mr. Cranbourne knows a thing or two, and he won't steer for this port, but I should like to know that Martin is safe."

The Captain and Clyde were impressed with the evident sincerity of Hythe, and were startled by his extraordinary statement. They were agreed that action must be taken at once, yet the position was one of extreme delicacy, and required careful handling.

After enquiring as to the comfort of the men and finding that they were perfectly satisfied, the Captain arranged that they should come to him the next morning, and promised that the matter would be thoroughly investigated, and they took their leave.

The officers consulted together, and decided to seek the British Consul and lay the case before him.

V. THE CONSUL

A FEW minutes' walk brought the Captain and Clyde to the Consulate, and they were ushered into the presence of a shrewd-looking man, who received them courteously and enquired what he could do to serve them.

Captain Frankston entered, without much introduction, into the circumstances connected with his appointment to the "Helen," and of his suspicion of the Chief Mate, on account of what he had learned of his previous career and of his actions while on the "Helen." He produced the log, showing that no weather had been experienced during the voyage of sufficient severity to cause the ship to spring a leak in mid-ocean. He also told all things with reference to the launching of the boats and of the mate's anxiety lest the one in command of Clyde should get into such a position as would enable the sailors to see that part of the hull in which holes were afterwards discovered, and of the order the mate had shouted to Clyde, which would have had the effect of drawing the boat out of the line of vision. The Captain detailed the report of the men given that day, and alluded to the fact that the Chief Mate's boat was the only one that had not reached Rio.

The Consul listened attentively, and agreed that the matter was one requiring investigation, and arranged to see the two officers with the boatswain and Hythe next day. These latter came to the Captain's hotel, according to appointment, in the

morning, and the four men proceeded at once to the Consulate.

Upon being admitted, they found that there was already a visitor present. Sitting at a side table, near to the Consul, was a man who evidently was not a sailor. Alert and shrewd-looking, with keen searching eyes, he scanned the four carefully without a movement of his clean-shaven face; and the Captain, accustomed, as he was, to gauge the character of men, at once concluded that the Consul had engaged the services of a criminal investigator, to assist him at the enquiry. His surmise proved correct, for the Consul introduced the visitor as Mr. Webb, agent in Rio Janeiro for Rodetzki, the famous English enquiry officer.

Without delay, the Consul proceeded with the investigations, and read over the notes he had made on the previous day.

Webb asked that a shorthand writer should be called, so that everything said might be taken verbatim. One of the stenographers was called into the room, and took his seat by the detective.

Captain Frankston related the circumstances of his engagement by Graham, Butler & Company. Of Graham, he said, he had seen nothing; Butler appeared to be the managing partner; and he and Marston, the junior member of the firm, had made all arrangements with him. The Captain told of his suspicions of the Chief Mate on account of Butler's remarks concerning him and of subsequent confirmation of these from enquiry as to his previous character. He produced the log, showing that no heavy weather had been encountered during

the voyage, and told of his having been called during the Second Mate's watch on the night of the disaster to the ship; of his attempt to find the cause; of the sudden inrush of water; and of the efforts of the crew and their labour at the pumps; and of his finally deciding to get out the boats, when all hope of saving the ship had been taken away; and of his reaching Rio Janeiro.

Ernest Clyde was next examined, and deposed to the fact of noises having been heard, as of knocking, and of his watching with the boatswain to try and find the cause, and also of his having seen a figure pass from the main deck to the officers' quarters. He could form no idea of his identity, but Leonard Row, the boatswain, had followed him closely, and would, Clyde said, be able to give some clue. Besides this, the Second Mate had little to tell, except as to the suspicious conduct of Cranbourne after the boats had been lowered and the one of which he was in charge had drifted somewhat astern of the ship and into such a position as would enable the crew to see the hull of the vessel very distinctly as she rolled before settling down, and that some of them had cried out that there were holes in her side.

Now, for the first time, Webb, the detective, spoke. He elicited from Clyde the fact that he had reason to be suspicious of the Chief Mate's actions on many occasions, and that, when the knocking was heard in the hold, Cranbourne was not in his cabin, nor on deck.

The statement of Leonard Row, the boatswain, was listened to with great attention by the Consul

and the detective. He told, in his own way, of his having spoken to the Second Mate about the suspicious noises, as if from the hold of the vessel, and particularly of the sudden inrush of water, and of his having seen someone moving towards the officers' quarters, and having followed him just before the Captain was called on the night of the wreck.

Being asked if he could identify the person, he replied:—"No, sir; but as I told the Captain yesterday, the Chief Mate's door was fast when I got to it, and I'll swear it was open a few minutes afore, and when 'All hands' was called and I knocked and got no answer, I opened the door, and no one was in. But I picked up these two plugs on the floor, and this 'ere one outside, just in the track of the man I see run by." So saying, the boatswain laid on the table the three pieces of wood previously shown to the Captain. These were carefully examined by the Consul and the detective, and the latter questioned the boatswain as to the position in which they were found.

Henry Hythe, the quartermaster, was next examined. He repeated what he had previously stated with reference to William Martin and himself having been sent into the hold by the Captain, and to the bursting of the case marked "Revolvers" and their finding in it only bags of salt. This was considered by the Consul and the detective of great importance, as it showed, not only an attempt to defraud the underwriters, but also that there was no intention that the "Helen" should

reach Peru, but that she should founder on the voyage.

These statements had occupied a long time, and after the Consul had cautioned the two men not to discuss the matter outside, the boatswain and Hythe were dismissed, the Consul telling them not to leave the town for the present. He still believed that the Chief Mate's boat would arrive at Rio, when the evidence of William Martin could be taken, before deciding upon further action.

Much discussion followed between the Consul and the detective with the Captain and Second Mate, and a further meeting was arranged. It was decided that Webb should communicate with his chief in London as to the charge relating to the cargo, so that he might take such steps as he considered necessary to secure the punishment of those implicated.

The Captain and Clyde now returned to their hotel, and after dinner a waiter announced that a seaman was waiting to speak to the Captain. This proved to be Alec Harvey, a forecastle hand. He had not been a favourite with his shipmates, and there was some suspicion as to his conduct on board. When it was his watch below he would frequently be missed from the forecastle without any reason being assigned for his absence. More than one had noticed that he was often speaking to the Chief Mate under circumstances not usual between officer and seaman, and that he would sheer off upon seeing that he was observed. He was one of the crew of the Third Mate's boat.

The man, upon being admitted to the Captain's

room, stood uneasily shifting from one leg to the other; he never raised his eyes to his listeners while he was speaking; and there was an air of secretiveness about him which did not impress the Captain and Second Mate favourably.

"You wish to speak to me, Harvey," said the Captain. "Yes, sir. You see, it's just this 'ere way. Here's me and my mates being looked after as well as may be, perhaps, but what we want to know is how long are we goin' to be kept in this 'ere place earnin' nothin', and can't we be shipped home so as we can get berths somewhere. It aint no manna of use our just gettin' enough to eat and all our kits gone. What we wants is our clothes and a ship home, and we wants to know what's goin' to be done about it?"

The Captain assured the man that the owners would do all that was possible for the crew, and that the Consul had promised to provide passages for them as soon as possible, so that they might get to London.

The man, who, while the Captain was speaking, had been eyeing the Second Mate, expressed a grumbling assent to this arrangement, and retired.

"What are you thinking about, lad?" asked the Captain of Clyde, when the man had gone.

"I was just trying to puzzle out what all this means," was the answer. "Here we have been no time in Rio yet, and the men are well looked after; there has been no complaint, and now Harvey comes demanding a passage home; and, from what I know of him, I am pretty sure his mates would not send him with a message on their

behalf. I saw him hanging round the Consulate, too, when we went in this morning. There was something not quite clear about him on board, too; and Row and I believed he was about the deck on the night the 'Helen' sprung a leak, and the thing's not to my taste. If there were foul play, there must have been more than one in it."

After discussing the matter for a little, the Captain decided to ask the boatswain whether he had heard anything of Harvey having been deputed by the men to come with this complaint. The rest of the day was spent in correspondence for the out-going mail.

VI. THE PLOTTERS

ON the evening of the day on which Captain Frankston and Clyde had interviewed the British Consul, two men sat conversing in a low tone in the back room of a liquor saloon in Rio, known as the Southern Cross.

One, by his garb and speech, was evidently a sailor. He was about the medium height, well set and active looking. He had a nervous, shifty way of turning himself as he talked, and never looked his companion straight in the face. His age was clearly not more than 30 years, and yet he had all the bearing of one who had seen much of men and knew something of characters.

The other was a low-class ruffian, such as may be seen at any time hanging about the outskirts of a city, having no regular occupation and always ready

to take an odd job provided that it did not entail any hard work and that there was a tolerable certainty of good pay attached to it. He was now past middle life, and his features, scarred in many places, told that in his struggle for existence he had not always attained his object by quiet or peaceable means. In fact, his career for many years had entailed encounters of all sorts, and the police records showed that he had many times been convicted of deeds of violence, and that his acquaintances were not of a desirable type. Among his intimates he was known as Plugger Bill, by the officers of the law as William Smith, with many aliases assumed by him when brought in conflict with justice.

His companion in the liquor saloon was no other than Alec Harvey, the forecastle hand, referred to in the preceding chapter.

It was clear that the matter on which the two worthies conversed was of no ordinary import, for they spoke in earnest, though low, tones, and carefully guarded against interruption.

Harvey had met Smith at one of the sailors' resorts, and the acquaintance had been cemented after sundry drinks; and the Plugger's character was soon gauged by his new friend.

"I tell you," he was saying, "the young 'un'll have to be quieted, and I don't care how it's done, whether he's stretched stiff or only laid up for a few weeks, till I get out of this hole; he knows too much; and what was him and the Captain doin' in at the Consul's for three solid hours? It don't take that long to fix up our passage home, do it? He's got hold of the story about the old tub bein'

bored, and he's goin' to fix up the mate right enough. He don't know as I was in the job, and it would have been right enough, too, but for the plug breaking the way it did, and I was fool enough to drop the broken bit as I cleared round to the mate's cabin after the boatswain spotted me while he were talking to the young 'un; and it's my belief as they've got the broken piece, and it'll go hard with the mate if they cop him, only he won't make for this 'ere port 'cos he knows a thing or two. I'd have been in his boat, too, right enough, only for my having particler business in the skipper's cabin when she shoved off."

"You're a knowing one, you are," put in the Plugger at this point. "'Taint much the skipper would have seen of any vallibles in his cabin after you'd done your perticler business there."

"Well, he didn't, Bill, he didn't; you see, there's always things overlooked when a ship's left in a hurry like, and, besides, what 'ud the skipper want with these 'ere if he went down to Davy Jones?" So saying, the worthy Alec produced a gold chronometer and a bag of sovereigns, which had been placed in a secure part of the cabin for immediate use on reaching port, if required.

"Now," he continued, "you lay young Clyde out any way you like, and half of this 'ere bag goes into your dirty pocket. There's no risk neither, for he always takes his stroll down at the beach afore he turns in, and me and you can do the job quiet and comfortable like. Are you on?"

Plugger Bill, as a rule, was ready for any villainy that would bring in enough to satisfy his craving

for strong drink. He knew, too, by a method of his own, he could, without much risk, do all that Harvey required of him. His conscience did not trouble him either, for he had long since laid that aside as a useless and inconvenient encumbrance. The only thing that stood in the way of his working the will of his friend was that he was by no means sure that Harvey could be trusted to hand over the promised reward, or to refrain from betraying him in the event of justice overtaking one or both of them. He, therefore, began to argue with his tempter. "You see," he said, "this is a job I don't care about; this young fellow has not injured me, and murder's a thing I never had to do with. There's plenty, in your line, that you can get for the job, and I cry off from it."

Harvey was a little taken aback by this reasoning, but was by no means disposed to let the matter rest at this point. He knew something of the character of men like the Plugger, and rightly judged that only a little careful handling was required to induce his companion to undertake the piece of villainy proposed. So he pressed his case. "Look 'ere, Bill," he said, "there needn't be no murder in it, at all; you just put him so's he'll be in hospital for a month or two, that's all I want, and the money's yourn, and easy earned, too, at that."

"Dun'no, dun'no," was the Plugger's answer, as if thinking the matter over. "Lemme see, where did you say this 'ere Second Mate's to be seen?"

Harvey saw that he was near to winning his point, and he decided to offer the Plugger so good a

reward that he would hesitate no longer. So he replied, without appearing too eager:—"Any evening, down by the pier, he strolls there mostly by himself, and you can easy follow him till you pass the bend, and the thing's as good as done, and there's twenty-five quid in your pocket right away."

"Make it thirty, and it's a bargain," was the answer.

"Right you are, my beauty. When is this nice little game of yours to come off?"

"Name your own time, and I'm on it."

Finally it was agreed that the two worthies should meet at the same saloon the next evening, and that the Plugger should carry out the scheme forthwith; and after more drinks and many words of counsel, the plotters parted for the time.

Now, while everything seemed so perfectly arranged that nothing would, by any means, happen to thwart the scheme so carefully planned, or cause trouble to the plotters, there was one little detail that had escaped their notice.

Nemesis comes clothed in many garbs—nor is it necessary for him to wait till the great day of reckoning to punish the schemer or reward the good. And, though no winged being from the Unseen World came into the Rio saloon to unmask the evil-doers, yet was the great unveiler there, though in such disguise that even his best friend could, by no means, recognise him.

Leonard Row, erstwhile boatswain of the "Helen," was not exactly the man to be denominated a saint, nor did he profess to have any near

relationship with those of the higher sphere. He was rather well inclined to indulge in the good things of this world, among which he regarded strong drink as the height of perfection. He had never been known to refuse proffered hospitality in this respect, and there was no limit to his capacity for consuming liquor other than the length of his entertainer's purse.

Now, it had leaked out that there was a mystery connected with the loss of the "Helen;" and this had not escaped the notice of the keen-eyed editor of Rio's chief daily paper. By some subtle means, known only to the members of the Press, this worthy had learned that visits had been paid to the British Consul by officers of the sunken vessel, and that, in at least one instance, a detective had been present, and the conference prolonged, and that some of the crew had been examined. Already the *Herald's* news headings had contained startling headings, such as "Unravelling the Mystery of the Sea," "Great Secrecy Observed," "The Press Excluded." More than one letter had appeared in the correspondents' column, asking if Rio Janeiro had gone back to the days of the Star Chamber and allowed trials to be held in the absence of the accused persons. And the *Herald's* editor had fully made up his mind to unravel the tangled thread and to present to the readers of the greatest of journals a full report of the sinking of the "Helen" and the suspicious circumstances attached to it. To think this to be an impossibility would be to leave out of the picture the great factor in the person of the indefatigable editor.

Should this mystery be allowed to baffle him? Perish the thought. Fortune favoured the brave investigator. As he strolled through the main street of Rio he was jostled by a stranger. The man turned to apologise, and the champion of literature found himself face to face with a bluff British seaman. "Beg pardon, gov'ner," said the man, "aint got my land legs yet as much as I thought I had; fetched up agin you 'fore I knew where I was, in the dusk." "All right," was the answer; "no harm done. I suppose you have only just come into port." "That's me, gov'ner. Row's my name; boatswain of the 'Helen' I am, leastwise was, till the old girl went under a bit ago. Mebbe you've heard of it afore."

Here was the great writer's opportunity—the opening he had thirsted for. He would extend a real Rio welcome to the shipwrecked mariner. He would invite him to the saloons; he would pour drink after drink into him till his brain was muddled and his tongue loosed, and get him to declare the whole mystery of the sunken ship.

"Ah! and you are the boatswain, are you?" he said. "Come along and we will drink to better days and better luck."

Nothing loth, Row followed the editor into the "Southern Cross" saloon. The house was well known to the great writer, and, without any hesitation, he passed to the back room, used only by habitués of the place.

The boatswain was following readily enough, when, suddenly on the threshold, his guide paused; then Row discovered that the room was

already occupied by two men, who were no other than the Plugger and his mate, Harvey. The latter was seated with his back to the door, and did not notice the intrusion until warned by a sign from his companion. The editor was already retreating with a muttered apology, and neither of those within had noticed that he was not alone.

The few moments that this episode had occupied would have meant nothing under ordinary circumstances; in the present instance they meant a great deal.

Leonard Row, though not a genius, had wits about him that had been sharpened by contact with all sorts of people and by many startling adventures. He never failed to recognise a face, once seen, or a voice, once heard.

He had met the Plugger before, and had heard many stories of him. The figure of Harvey was too well known to his old shipmate to be mistaken; and as the editor entered the room, Row stood spellbound at the open door. What could these two be so deeply interested about as to cause them to seek the seclusion of the sanctum known only to the regular denizens of the house? And what meant the words just uttered by the Plugger before he was aware of the editor's presence? "Where do you say this Second Mate is to be found?" And Harvey's reply, "Any evening down by the pier, you can follow him to the bend, and the thing's as good as done." No more than this was heard or seen by the bluff boatswain, but this was enough to set his thoughts going with more than ordinary interest; and he determined

that, at any rate, he would be one at the meeting of his officer, Clyde, with the notorious Plugger. "Any evening, down at the pier, at the bend, and the thing's as good as done," he was muttering, as he followed the editor to the front bar. "The thing's as good as done, is it, Mr. Harvey? Well, well, it may be if Len Row isn't in it. But, Len, old man, you will be in it; and what thing is it that's as good as done?"

"What did you say, boatswain?" asked the editor, as, having ordered drinks and cigars, he passed with his new friend to another parlour. "Me, gov'ner, me sayin'? Why, nothin', only that there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and lip, that's all, gov'ner; and 'ere's your very good 'ealth and long life to the 'Southern Cross.'" So saying, the burly son of the sea drained his glass and set it down with a good sound tap, which seemed to invite it to refill itself as quickly as might be. The editor readily took the hint, and the glasses were refilled without delay, for Len Row was not the man to allow so good an opportunity to pass of refreshing the inner man, and he made no shadow of protest when time after time the replenishing was continued. His companion was not so accomplished in the art, and despite every effort to keep pace with the worthy Row in the matter of honouring every conceivable person and place while draining his glass, he had not succeeded when closing time came in reducing the boatswain to the condition that might have led him to disclose any particulars of the loss of the "Helen." And Edward Wilson, editor and part

owner of the greatest of all journals south of the Equator, who was to do so much for the world at large by his magnetic influence, reached his office at midnight under the guidance of the boatswain, assisted by an officer of the law, to whom he was known.

VII. COUNTERPLOT

MEANWHILE Row, with head as clear as if he had not imbibed enough liquor to render an ordinary man incapable of thought or action, pursued his way to the quarters assigned to the crew of the "Helen."

"Wonder what that writer fellow's game was," he muttered, as he walked. "He didn't shout all them drinks for nothin', and yet he seemed a decent enough sort of a cove. What was he a-drivin' at 'bout the 'Helen,' and 'bout how could she spring a leak and go down suddint like? Anyway, he didn't get nothin' out of me. Len Row knows a thing or two. I've met that same sort afore. Some fool's been blabbin', sure 'nuff, and Mr. Editor thought he had a soft thing on when he met me. But his head was softer, I reckon. Anyhow, it took two of us to see him home, and I can find my way right 'nuff to-night, and to-morrow night, too, for that matter."

Thus soliloquising, Len Row reached his quarters and turned in. The day's adventure had no effect on his rest, and the morrow found him alert and active for anything requiring his attention.

Careful consideration made him decide to seek his friend Hythe and confide in him as to what he had learned at the liquor saloon, and consult with him as to the best means of defeating the scheme of Harvey and the Plugger.

It was no difficult matter to find Hythe, and, after breakfast, at Row's suggestion, the two friends strolled to the beach. Hythe found his companion singularly quiet and morose, and twitted him on being home-sick. " 'Taint that, Harry, 'taint that," was the reply; " but me and you's got more to do than I can tell you easy, and that's how 'tis I wants you with me on the quiet like."

" Go ahead, shipmate," said Hythe, " you and I have gone through a few things together, and I'll stand by you in this or anything else."

" I know, Harry, I know; but this is for more nor me and you to-night. I know my way 'bout here right enough, and this is the very spot where me and you must be to-night."

The two friends had now reached the place indicated to the Plugger by Harvey, as the one where the Second Mate could be found on almost any evening; and with every precaution againgst being overheard, Row confided to his friend the story of his adventure with the editor and of his having stumbled so opportunely upon Harvey and Plugger Bill.

" Harvey and Plugger Bill," cried Hythe, now really interested, " why, I saw them together last night, leastwise Harvey, I did, and the man with me said his companion was known as Plugger, and a nice sort of a gentleman he looked, and no error.

But what do you want me to do with them, Len? I'm with you." And the speaker proceeded to fill his pipe and settled himself comfortably to listen to the story his friend was burning to unfold.

" Well, mate," answered the latter, " it's this way. I was takin' a constitutional last night, when up I bumps agin a swell cove with a bell-topper and all. Well, off goes his topper, and I picks it up and 'ands it to him respectful like, with a beg pardon, when, 'stead of bustin' out at me, as I was expectin', he was quite civil, and asked me if I was new to the port; and I says as how I was one of the ' Helen's ' crew, bo'sen aboard of her. And he took me into one of their bar-places to have a drink. He knew all about the house, and was just a-goin' into one of the rooms, when he finds two men there afore him, and he draws back with a ' beg parding,' and takes me to another room wot he knows of. The swell didn't know who the men were, but I spotted Harvey as I stood at the door; and look 'ere, mate, I 'eard these 'ere words. The cove what they call Plugger was sayin' :— ' And where is this Second Mate to be found?" he says. And t'other answers :—" Down by the pier, any evenin', you can get him, and lay him out,' he says. Then the swell closes the door, and neither of them inside didn't see me, and the swell, he goes to the other room what I told you of, and shouts cigars and drinks no end, and he turns out to be a writer chap on one of these 'ere papers. And he tries all he knows for me to tell him about the old ' Helen ' goin' under. And it was every time, ' 'Ave another drink, Mr. Bo'sen,' and I had

as many as he liked to shout, but my tongue didn't get no looser, and he never got no forrider with what he wanted, and, 'stead of his gettin' me tight, me and a cop had to 'elp him home, he was that bad himself, and he a-jabberin' like anythin' 'bout there bein' ten stars in the 'Southern Cross' 'stead of five, and how I was a jolly good fellow and oughter be in his perfession. And I goes 'ome to bed and says to myself, I says, Len, old man, I says, you're one too many for some of 'em, I says; and if Harry Hythe and you can't stop their little game, then it'll be a rum old go, I says."

Hythe thought for a few moments, and then asked if his friend had made sure of the time and place referred to by Harvey. "The time don't matter to me and you, Harry; we can wait," was the answer, "and Mr. Clyde won't go to the beach till he has seen if all us chaps is right for the night, and Harvey, he knows that, right enough, and he'll pretty sure wait in till then. And he and his handsome mate'll come down ahead of him. What they want is to spoil his chance of tellin' what he knows to the Consul, for fear that swab Cranbourne should be run in for the scuttlin' and Harvey along with him, and if they was both hung this minute it wouldn't be no loss to any of Her Majesty's subjects, Harry. And, as for the place where the two beauties are goin' to lay up for Mr. Clyde; why, it's here for certain, 'cos Harvey, he says: 'Down by the pier,' he says, 'at the bend to the right by the rocks, you can meet him and lay him out.'"

"Len, old man," remarked Hythe, after a pause

during which both men had smoked in silence, after the manner of their craft when confronted with a problem which they would describe as one that wanted thinking out; "Len, old man, I'm with you, and if we can't lay those two beauties by the heels and save our best friend from their clutches, well, we don't deserve ever to get out of this port alive, and that's saying a good deal."

"Right you are, Harry; we can do another scrap, me and you, and Mr. Harvey may look out for himself to-night."

The two men, who had gone through many hardships and faced many perils together, were prepared for any difficulty which might confront them, and were fully determined that no harm should come to the man who, while Second Mate of the "Helen," had endeared himself to them and to all on board; and now that their plan for the evening was matured, they agreed to part company for the present and to return separately to their quarters, lest suspicion should be aroused by either of the plotters noticing their too close companionship.

VIII. THE ATTACK

THE meeting at the Consulate that had been arranged when first an inquiry was held took place in accordance with the agreement made. There was little to add to that already recorded.

Webb, the detective, reported that he had communicated with his chief, Rodetzki, but that no

reply had yet been received. This was probably due to the defective cable arrangements. He stated, however, that there could be no doubt as to Rodetzki taking the matter up, and that it was not unlikely that proceedings had already been initiated with a view to the complete unravelling of that which was, at present, enshrouded in mystery.

No tidings had been received of the boat commanded by the Chief Officer, and this was the more to be regretted, because Martin, who could have corroborated the evidence of Hythe, was one of her crew. Very little, therefore, could be done, and it was decided that the Consul should call the whole of the witnesses together if any word should come of the missing craft, or if Webb heard from his chief in London.

The Captain and Clyde had plenty to occupy them for the remainder of the day, and at nine o'clock Clyde remarked that it was time for him to go and look up the men and see that they were in the quarters allotted to them. This had been his habit every evening since his arrival at Rio, and the Captain fully concurred in it, knowing that there was no greater danger to any man to get himself into trouble than to an idle seaman.

On this night, however, for some reason he could never account for, he tried to dissuade his officer from setting out.

The sky was overcast with clouds, there was not a breath of air, and everything portended a violent storm. The men were satisfied with their quarters, and there was no word of complaint; and Captain

Frankston remarked:—"Don't mind to-night, lad, the men have been always at their quarters in the evening, and there has been no trouble; why risk a wet jacket for nothing?"

It was not this, however, that caused the stern disciplinarian to try to dissuade another from doing that which he had considered a duty, but that indescribable intuition that has come to men sometimes, particularly to those who have been much alone, or who have made the unseen world the study of their lives.

No danger, surely, could await the young officer on this night more than another, and yet, ever whispering to the heart of the Captain, were the words of warning he repeated to Clyde—"I had better go, Captain," was the answer; "we never know what may be wanted, or how danger may be averted by seeing to these things every night." So saying, the young man took his oilskin and sou'-wester and prepared to face the elements, as he had done so many times on shipboard.

Whether the Captain's words had made an impression on Clyde's mind, or whether some voice from the undiscovered country whispered to the spirit of the officer, or that communion from soul to soul among those who study to understand hidden mysteries passed from the chief to his subordinate, who shall say? But to the ear of the young man came ever the warning voice as from the unseen world:—"Not to-night, lad, not to-night," till, becoming impatient of his own thoughts, he would angrily shake himself free of all foreboding and step out with firmer tread on the

way to the Sailors' Home. Yet ever, borne by the waves as they beat upon the shore, carried by the boisterous wind above everything that night, at other times have attracted attention, sounded again and again the words:—"Not to-night, lad, not to-night."

As he passed to the sailors' quarters, a man, coming out of the shadow of a building, brushed against the officer, and with a muttered ejaculation of apology or a curse passed on his way, and borne back upon the wind as he slunk off came the words to Clyde:—"Not to-night, lad, not to-night."

In the dining-room of the home assigned to the shipwrecked seamen several were gathered, discussing the chances of their getting berths on outgoing vessels. Only two were missing, the boatswain and Hythe. These, the men explained to Clyde, when he called in, according to his usual custom, had gone out after supper, but would probably be back shortly.

Alec Harvey was not with the groups of men, but sat, moody and alone, near the door of the room. Clyde passed from group to group, giving a kindly word to one and another. He had greeted Harvey as he entered. As the officer reached the end of the room farthest from the door, Harvey rose quickly from his seat and went out.

Just as the warning voice from the unseen world had come to the Captain and his officer, and had made them wary, even though they knew not whence it came, so now, from the realms of darkness, the words were hissed into the ear of Harvey, "Now is your time; go forth to your evil work."

And from the lighted room and the company of innocent men passed out into darkness and solitude the one who had decided to injure or kill a man of whom he knew nothing, and who certainly had done him no wrong. But he was not to be alone for long, and, as he slunk into the street, he was greeted by the man who had jostled Clyde, with the words:—"So you've come at last, have you? You didn't care how long you kept a pal in the dark and wet, did you? 'Pon my honour, I had a great mind to leave you to do your own dirty work, and a fine mess you'd have made of it." "Hush, fool," came the answer, "do you want all the town to know our business?" "Fool, is it? And what are you, then, I'd like to know? Haven't I got enough to put a hemp collar round your dirty neck; and I've pretty well made up my mind to do it, too." "Made up your mind," answered Harvey, "didn't take you long, I reckon; there aint much of it." But, for all his bravado, the man who had planned the deed now fully recognised how completely he had put himself in the power of the ruffian whom he had taken into his counsel, when afraid to work the evil by himself; and he was anxious to placate his partner in crime as best he could.

"Anyhow," he said, "me and you aint no call to fall out over it. Come and have something hot, and let's get down to the place afore the mate gets there."

Nothing loth, Plugger Bill (for the reader will have surmised that Harvey's companion was no other than he) followed his partner into the nearest

bar, and the two worthies solaced themselves with more than one compound. Then, lest they should miss their chance, they hurried off to the spot where they expected to intercept Clyde.

The tempest had now abated, the air was clear, the sea calm, and quiet reigned around, and the two plotters pursued their evil way amidst pleasant surroundings.

Now that the coveted prize was so near and the desired end so certain of being gained, one would have imagined that they would be happy in their bearing to one another, but the reverse was the case. Each seemed wrapped in his own gloomy imagination and to prefer the solitude of his own thoughts to the companionship of the other.

" Can't yer say nothin', old ' Beelzebub,' " the Plugger at length found time to grumble.

" If I was you," came the answer, in the same surly tone, " I wouldn't say much neither. If Old Nick was here, he wouldn't care about talking to the likes of you ; he'd look for better company nor yours, it strikes me, and you aint in it with him ; he's got you right enough, and it aint worth his while to hunt for them wot he's sure of havin' in brimestone by and by."

" Shut your ugly mouth, will you, for here's the place I was lookin' for, and my beauty may come along any time."

" But what's your ugly head contrivin' now?" he added, as the Plugger drew from his pocket a long narrow bag and proceeded to fill it with the sand at his feet, as he sat near his comrade on a flat piece of rock, part of a large reef that rose up in

places to a great height forming a complete hiding place from the passers-by.

" If I was to tell you," was the answer, " you'd be as wise as me, and would put me away, too, if it suited you, and you got a chance to save your ugly neck through it."

" I'm in it as thick as you are, Bill," answered Harvey, " and, anyways, it aint for me and you to quarrel now that the job's as good as done. What's the thing you've got there, anyway?"

" This 'ere's a sandbag, if you must know," was the answer, " and one wipe with this on the head'll lay the smartest out, and won't leave no cut or bruise, and the empty bag in the pocket don't teli no tales."

The filling being completed, Bill handed it to his friend, saying :—" Try the weight of that." Harvey examined the weapon, weighed it in his hand, and passed it back to his companion without comment of any kind.

Ernest Clyde completed his duty at the sailors' quarters, and finding that the storm had ceased, took his way towards the pier, intending to walk back to the hotel by a track which, leading along the beach for a quarter of a mile, would bring him very near to his destination. He almost regretted having put on his oilskin and sou'-wester, for the night had become fine and no cloud was to be seen. There was no need to hurry, and all his depression had passed off. He was thinking of home and calculating how long it would be till his father received the letter he had posted on his arrival telling of the wreck and the crew's experiences. Soon he

came to some reefs hidden at high tide, but plain enough to be seen now that the sea was low.

Clyde stepped along, still engaged in his own thoughts. There was no sign of any creature about, and silence reigned everywhere. Suddenly, as he was passing the point of a high reef, while all seemed secure and calm, he received a blow on the head which rendered him unconscious. The next moment a terrific struggle was taking place between the boatswain and Plugger Bill. Row and Hythe had reached the spot where they expected the two ruffians would carry out their despicable scheme, and had lain in hiding, prepared to defend the Second Mate should the assault planned by Harvey and the Plugger be attempted. After waiting some minutes, they had heard footsteps, and the two miscreants reached a place within a few feet of them. The two watchers dared not move, lest their presence should be detected. In this position they remained, awaiting the coming of their officer, being well assured that they would be able to protect him. Thus they had been the unseen listeners to the conversation of the plotters.

The two parties were so close to each other that Row and his friend dared not change their position nor make the slightest sound.

Row strained his ears to the utmost, so that the footfall of the officer might be heard as soon as he was approaching the spot, feeling certain that he would be able to avert the blow that it was evident the Plugger intended to aim at him. In a few minutes steps sounded on the shingle, and the figure of Clyde could be discerned. The next

moment the arm of the Plugger was raised to strike, but before the blow could be delivered, Row rushed forward to intercept it. As he did so his foot caught on a projecting piece of rock, and thus his calculation was, to some extent, upset. His sudden appearance so startled the ruffian that, instead of the weapon he used striking the back of the officer's head, as he had intended, when it would have proved fatal, it fell on the spot most protected by the sou'-wester, and thus was far less serious in its results.

As the officer staggered under the injury, Hythe caught him in his arms, and, thus encumbered, he was unable to assist the boatswain, who was left to a hand-to-hand struggle with the desperado.

Plugger Bill wrenched himself free from his antagonist, and, raising his right hand, in which he still grasped the murderous sandbag, aimed a fearful blow at Row's head; but ere the weapon descended, strong arms seized him from behind, and he was hurled with terrific force to the ground.

The whole scene had occupied but a few seconds, and, as Hythe turned to help the boatswain, his astonished gaze rested on the well-known form of Captain Frankston, who was holding the Plugger's arms, while another man was deftly affixing handcuffs on his wrists. This having been effected, the attention of the rescuers was given to the Second Officer, who still lay unconscious where Hythe had placed him when he had gone to Row's assistance.

The Captain drew a brandy flask from his pocket and poured some of the contents into the unconscious man's mouth. Under its influence Clyde

opened his eyes and looked in bewilderment on those about him.

" How do you feel now, lad?" asked the Captain kindly. " Not very bad, Captain," was the answer, " but what happened me, I can't remember." " Never mind now, lad," said the Captain, " you've had a bad knock on the head, but, thanks to Heaven and Len Row, it was not as much as this scoundrel here intended," and he intimated the Plugger by a contemptuous jerk of his thumb.

With the assistance of Hythe, Clyde could walk fairly well, and the party reached the hotel without further adventure.

The Captain having sent Hythe for a surgeon, assisted Clyde to undress. A careful medical examination showed that the patient had escaped serious injury, though the doctor declared that, but for the protection of the sou'-wester, there would certainly have been concussion of the brain, which would, in all probability, have proved fatal.

Upon being asked by the medical man if he had any idea what sort of weapon it was that had caused the injury, the Captain handed to him the sand-bag, explaining that he had taken it from the Plugger as he made the blow at the boatswain after Clyde had fallen.

" Ah !" said the doctor, " I have seen one of this sort before; none but the most dangerous ruffians know the use of them. They are made of strong canvas, and, when not in use, can be emptied and carried in the pocket, and the character of them would not be suspected."

The doctor showed that the weapon differed from

the ordinary bludgeon in that, while it was even more deadly in its effect, it was the only class of tool known that would leave neither cut nor bruise, and that it was never used by any than the most desperate footpad. He then asked the Captain how it was that the blow, which was evidently intended to prove fatal, had been diverted.

Captain Frankston explained that the officer had set out on his ordinary round of inspection, and that, by some intuition which he could not account for, he had feared that mischance awaited his friend, and had set out to seek him. Finding that Clyde had left the sailors' quarters, he followed the track that he knew the officer frequently took; that on the way he overtook Detective Webb, who was known to him, and who was returning from duty, and that the two came upon the scene of the attack just as the ruffian aimed his blow at Clyde, that the boatswain had prevented the weapon striking a vital part by throwing himself upon the would-be murderer, and that the Captain and Webb had then secured the villain.

A waiter now announced that two men were anxious to see the Captain. These, on being admitted, proved to be Webb and the boatswain. The latter now recounted his visit to the tavern with the editor of the *Rio Herald*, and of his having seen Harvey and the Plugger there, and of the words he had accidentally heard exchanged between them. He explained that he and Hythe had decided, in consequence, to go and protect the Second Mate from the assault that was intended to be made on him; and that, but for his foot striking a jutting

rock, he would have saved the officer from injury. He also told that the Captain and Webb had arrived on the spot just in time to secure one of the ruffians, but that the other had made good his escape. Webb and the boatswain had conveyed the Plugger to the police station, and Hythe had gone in search of the other miscreant, who had already been clearly recognised as Harvey.

The detective asked if the weapon with which the blow was struck had been found. This was handed to him by the Captain without comment. Webb examined it carefully, and remarked that he had never seen a more perfect weapon of its class.

The two visitors asked anxiously after the wounded officer, and were assured that he would soon be perfectly recovered from his injury; and after the detective had arranged that all parties should be at the Police Court at noon next day, he and the boatswain left the hotel. The latter, on arriving at the sailors' quarters, found that Hythe had already returned, but that all efforts to trace Harvey had been unavailing, and, despite the activity of the police, he was never discovered, nor was anything heard of him thereafter in Rio. Vague rumours of his having been seen on the pier in earnest conversation with a strange man on more than one occasion prior to the attack on Clyde were received, but nothing beyond this; and it was evident that he had contrived to make his escape from the State.

IX. THE POLICE COURT

ERNEST CLYDE, though still suffering much pain, made good progress towards recovery.

Row, the boatswain, called at the hotel with Hythe on the next morning to inquire after him, but the doctor had left strict orders that no one should be allowed to see him. The men, however, remained with the Captain till it was time to attend the Court House. There the proceedings were conducted according to the law of Rio Janeiro.

The prisoner was ably defended by a young lawyer who had been engaged by friends of the accused.

Plugger Bill was wofully cast down as he took his place in the dock. The end of all his scheming was so totally different to that which he had expected, and he had not been told whether his victim had died from the effect of the blow or no. Then, too, there is some consolation in companionship in misfortune, and he had quite expected to see Harvey also in custody. To his surprise, he stood alone to answer the charge read over to him by the Clerk of the Court:—

"That you did feloniously assault Ernest Clyde with intent to murder him," etc., etc.

There was a grain of comfort in the words, "with intent"—for did not this show that his intended victim had not been killed?

His counsel asked that all witnesses should be ordered out of court, whereupon Captain Frankston and the others who were to give evidence

retired, and the State Attorney opened the case for the prosecution.

He briefly outlined the matter of the loss of the "Helen," laying stress on the suspicions formed with reference to the Chief Mate and Harvey, a forecastle hand.

Here counsel for the prisoner vigorously objected. His client, he contended, was not on the "Helen," and could not be charged with any alleged offence thereon.

The State Attorney did not press the matter, but contented himself with saying that he was prepared to prove that Harvey, who had been one of the crew of the vessel, had been seen in conversation with the prisoner, and that some remarks of his would be deposed to, that pointed to the fact that a plot had been formed by those two men to murder one Ernest Clyde, who had been the Second Mate of that vessel; that on the night this diabolical scheme was to have been carried out Mr. Clyde had visited the shipwrecked crew at the home provided for them by the British Consul; that the accused had been seen close to the sailors' quarters just before Mr. Clyde entered; that two men who had grave suspicion of an intent to murder that officer had proceeded to a spot on the beach where they believed the crime was to be attempted, and waited there for the purpose of frustrating it; that Mr. Clyde had reached the spot a little after, and that the accused, who was accompanied by the forecastle hand, Harvey, had sprung upon him and aimed a murderous blow at his head with a weapon known as a sandbag; and that one of those in waiting to

protect Mr. Clyde had succeeded in diverting the blow so that it did not prove fatal, but had caused great injury, from which the officer had not yet recovered. He further stated that Mr. Clyde was stunned by the blow and would have fallen had he not been supported by one of those who had set out to defend him; while the other was engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with the prisoner; that the former Captain of the "Helen," with a well-known detective, had most opportunely arrived on the scene and assisted to arrest the accused, while Harvey had succeeded in making his escape, and every effort since to trace him had proved unavailing.

A medical certificate was put in stating that Ernest Clyde was too weak to leave his room.

Counsel called Albert Webb, who stated that he was a private detective employed by Victor Rodetzki of London, and had been commissioned to investigate the circumstances connected with the sinking of the ship "Helen;" that he had watched the movements of one known as Alec Harvey, a former member of the crew, and had seen him often in company with the prisoner, who was known to him as an associate of men who had been convicted; that he had seen the prisoner and Harvey enter the "Southern Cross Hotel" together on the evening of the day on which an inquiry was being held at the Consulate concerning matters connected with the loss of the "Helen," and that the former boatswain of that vessel and the editor of the *Rio Herald* had gone into that tavern immediately afterwards.

Webb further stated that, on the night of the

assault on the Second Mate, he had seen the accused hanging about the Sailors' Home, where the men who had been members of the crew were housed, and that Harvey had joined him soon after Mr. Clyde had entered the home; and that, soon after he had left, Captain Frankston spoke to the witness and went with him to a place an the beach where some rocks would hide a person from the passer-by, and saw the accused and Row, the boatswain, engaged in a fierce struggle, and that Captain Frankston was just in time to avert a desperate blow aimed by the accused at the head of his opponent.

Webb was subjected to a severe cross-examination by the counsel for the prisoner, but this failed to shake his evidence.

Captain Frankston deposed to having known Alec Harvey as a forecastle hand on the "Helen;" and that he had come to him with some complaints after the crew had been housed at the Sailors' Home by the British Consul. The Captain stated that he had seen the accused in the company of Harvey on the day previous to the attack on the Second Mate, and had gone with Detective Webb on the evening when the assault was made to a part of the beach which he knew Mr. Clyde was in the habit of passing when returning from his visits to the Sailors' Home, and had seen the accused make a violent blow at the boatswain with the sandbag produced; while Hythe, a former member of the "Helen's" crew, was supporting the Second Mate in his arms.

Captain Frankston corroborated the evidence of Webb as to the arrest of the accused and as to the

escape of the man whom he believed to be Harvey.

The Captain was not cross-examined; and the State Attorney next called Leonard Row, who stated that he had been boatswain on the "Helen" and knew Alec Harvey as a forecastle hand, and had, since coming to Rio, seen him in the company of the accused, and that, on the night previous to the attack on the Second Mate, he had gone with the editor of the *Rio Herald* to the back bar of the "Southern Cross" tavern, and had been entering the room, but found that it was already tenanted by Harvey and the accused, and had heard the latter ask:—"Where is this Second Mate to be found?" and receive the reply:—"Any evening, down by the Pier, by himself, you can follow him to the bend, and the thing's as good as done."

The witness added that it was in consequence of his having heard this scrap of conversation that he had his suspicions aroused, and had sought for Hythe, who was known to him, and had gone with him to the place indicated by Harvey, and awaited the coming of Mr. Clyde; that, just as that officer appeared, the accused and Harvey, who had both been in hiding behind a rock, sprang out and attacked him, the accused aiming a violent blow at the officer's head with the sandbag produced, and as the witness sprang forward to assist Mr. Clyde and prevent the blow falling on his head, his foot had struck a jutting piece of rock, and he had, thus, only been able to divert it and lessen the force of the stroke.

Row corroborated what the previous witnesses

had said with reference to the arrest of the prisoner and the escape of Harvey.

Counsel for the accused rose to cross-examine the witness.

"What was your business at the 'Southern Cross' tavern when you allege that you heard those remarks by my client and Harvey?"

"Business—why, to drink as much as the gentleman who took me there would shout." "What gentleman was that?" "The one sittin' at the table there writin'." So saying, Row pointed to the editor of the *Rio Herald*, who assumed a look of virtuous indignation on finding himself thus referred to.

"Well, and when you had finished spying on these men, what did you do?" "Spying! Me spyin'; Why, I've sailed the seas, man and boy, for nigh thirty year, and no one ever said as Len Row spied on any man. I weren't spyin'. I was a-goin' in with that there gent, and who should I see in the room but the prisoner there and Harvey, and 'fore I knew where I was I heard the t'other blackguard and your friend there," pointing to the prisoner, "and I didn't stay; but me and this 'ere gent, what know'd all about the house, went to another room. Me spyin'! If I gets you outside I'll very quick put you so's you won't do no spyin' for a month or more, anyhow."

The Magistrate cautioned the witness to be more careful of his language in the Court.

"Beg parding, your Wash-up," was the answer, "only I aint goin' to be called a spy by none of

them lawyer chaps, leastwise, not by the likes of he."

"Well, now," said the indignant counsel, "I suppose you were pretty well drunk before you left the house, eh?" "Not me; that there gent thought I would be, and I suppose that's what he took me there for. It weren't me what was balmy, but he was, and it took me and a peeler all we knew to get him home and sit him on the doorstep, let alone that he saw ten stars 'stead of five in the 'Southern Cross,' and would have it they was all twins. Me, drunk! Why, I'd put him and you under the table with half-a-dozen like you, and walk home comfortable. You look as if a drop o' hard wouldn't do you no harm, anyway."

Finding that he could do nothing with the witness, counsel resumed his seat, and the State Attorney called Hythe, the former quartermaster of the "Helen," who stated that he had gone with the last witness to a part of the beach where some jutting rocks would make a hiding place for anyone desiring concealment, on the preceding night, and that he had witnessed the assault on Mr. Clyde; the severity of the blow aimed at him having been lessened by Row's action in rushing in on the assailant. He deposed to his having caught Mr. Clyde as he fell, and to the arrival of the Captain and Detective Webb, and the arrest of the prisoner, whose accomplice, Alec Harvey, had made his escape. In cross-examination the witness said that he had known Alec Harvey for some weeks, having sailed with him on the "Helen."

The State Attorney asked the Court to commit

the prisoner for trial at the Criminal Sittings, which would commence the next week, stating that nearly all the witnesses were awaiting a passage home, and that the victim of the assault could be called at the time of the trial. To this no objection was raised, and the prisoner was committed to the next Criminal Court Sittings on a charge of attempted murder.

X. RODETZKI INVESTIGATES

THE English Consul was a man of great resource, and one prone to act with promptitude in any matter requiring attention.

He was impressed with the urgency of the case of the " Helen," and caused the whole of the evidence to be transcribed and forwarded to the Home Secretary, together with the report that Albert Webb, agent in Rio for Rodetzki, a well-known detective in England, had been entrusted with the investigation of the matter.

The Home Secretary communicated with the Attorney-General and with the Chief Commissioner of the City of London Police, and Rodetzki was instructed to investigate the matter.

There was complete harmony between the Detective Office and Rodetzki, and his ability to cope with matters which were outside the ordinary police routine was recognised. Rodetzki agreed to take the matter in hand, and he informed the Detective Superintendent of the steps already taken to test the truth of Hythe's statement at Rio as to

the cargo of the " Helen " consisting of salt and not of arms, and also of the fact that Graham, the senior partner of the firm, had been away from London during the whole of the time that the " Helen " was loading, and that Butler and Marston must alone be held responsible in the event of criminal proceedings being taken.

Indeed, as it stood then, the case had very little to rest on, until the arrival of Hythe or Martin, and there was certainly nothing of sufficient importance to secure a conviction.

Rodetzki interviewed the maker of the cases which had been marked as containing revolvers and other arms, and ascertained that they had been ordered by Butler to be conveyed to a firm of ship chandlers, that there they were filled with salt in bags, and conveyed, unmarked, to the office of Graham, Butler & Co.; and that they were declared at the Customs as containing revolvers, and passed.

Hence, while it was clear that fraud had been committed and that two or more persons were in a conspiracy to defraud the underwriters, there was not sufficient evidence to justify an arrest at present.

Rodetzki had been trained for his profession in the best of schools. A Pole by birth, he had, while a lad, been placed in the service of the Russian Secret Police, had reached an important position, and had been entrusted with matters requiring great caution and intelligence.

While engaged in the investigation of a case involving robbery and murder, he and those with him fell into an ambush laid for them by the mem-

bers of the gang implicated. Rodetzki and those with him determined to sell their lives dearly, and overcame their opponents during the encounter. Rodetzki received a severe wound in the leg, which rendered him incapable of actively following his profession, and he was allowed to retire, while fair compensation was made to him.

He then journeyed to England, and, as soon as he had sufficiently recovered from his injury, obtained employment with a private detective. His ability and thoroughness attracted the attention of men of influence and position, who procured for him a suite of chambers, and in course of time he became recognised as one of the most astute investigators in London. He worked much by deduction. The smaller the clue, the more intently did he work upon it, and often at night would he rise from his bed to hastily scribble a line or two in his notebook, as the result of his waking thoughts in the still hours: thoughts which had their fruit when he rose at early dawn to continue the work entrusted to him.

In the case of the loss of the "Helen," it was clear to him that deliberate fraud had been committed, both with reference to the heavy insurance effected on her cargo, and in the fact of her having foundered when no violent storm had been encountered, and while she was in the open ocean, when no rocks or other dangers of the sea could have caused damage to her.

But Rodetzki's careful investigation revealed also that which to the ordinary man would probably have meant nothing. He had no difficulty in learning from whom the vessel was purchased, and, by cautious enquiry, he found that she was not in such a state of repair at the time of sale as would justify her being taken on the enterprise for which she was ostensibly intended; and that no repairs had been effected prior to her sailing. And, therefore, that those who were responsible for sending her on this errand could not have had any honest intention of attempting to run a blockade.

Further, Rodetzki learned that the Chief Mate had been more than suspected of scuttling a vessel previously in very similar circumstances. Much care and thought had been bestowed on this matter since first Rodetzki had received from his agent, Webb, the account of the case as it had been disclosed at the enquiry in Rio by the British Consul.

Few men could have made so much out of the meagre details so far supplied; but Rodetzki had done more than gather these together ready for the opportunity to use them whenever it should occur. He had communicated with his agents at every port at which it was likely that the Chief Mate might effect a landing. Rodetzki's organisation was so perfect in every detail that very little time was occupied in carrying out these arrangements. And now, at any rate, there must be a period of waiting until the crew of the "Helen" could arrive in London. And it would not be prudent to show any more of his hand than was absolutely necessary for the maturing of his plans.

XI. TRIAL OF " PLUGGER BILL "

MEANTIME, the days dragged wearily on to the shipwrecked crew in Rio. True, many had obtained berths in vessels sailing for England, but others were prevented from leaving; among these were Row and Hythe, who must remain until the trial of " Plugger Bill " had ended. The inaction of the men was becoming more and more irksome. Ernest Clyde had now completely recovered his strength, and no ill-effects followed the savage assault made on him. And he and the Captain were as eager as any to be afloat again. They could have obtained passages more than once, but both were, of course, required as witnesses. The trial was fixed for the twentieth of the month of August.

Clyde had been of great help to Webb in his investigations, and now at length the Criminal Sittings of the Supreme Court of Rio Janeiro commenced.

The cases were brought forward in the order of committal, and, after many had been disposed of, William Smith was placed in the dock. He had not been informed as to whether Alec Harvey had been arrested or not. Several reports had been circulated to the effect that he had been captured in another part of the State and would be placed on his trial with the other accused man. Indeed, twice had arrests been made of persons believed to be identical with Harvey, but in each case the witnesses had shown that a mistake had been made; and it was now generally believed that Harvey had

succeeded in making his way to some other part of South America, or had reached another country. This would not be a very difficult matter to a man of Harvey's occupation, especially when it is remembered that he was by no means without funds. The tale he told to Smith at their interview in the back room of the " Southern Cross " was perfectly true, and, despite the fact that sailors are careful in cases of shipwreck to take to the boats as little that would impede their efforts as possible, Harvey had looted the Captain's cabin and had taken a gold chronometer and other articles, besides a large sum of money, which he had concealed about him. With this he would be able to get a passage to another port, and it would not be very difficult to bribe one of the numerous fishermen to convey him to some port where he could board a vessel. It would make little difference to him where the destination was, so long as he could escape from his present dangerous position. At any rate, so much time had now elapsed since the arrest of Smith, " The Plugger," that all hope of securing his confederate had been abandoned by the Rio authorities, and there was no reason to delay the matter of bringing Smith to trial.

The prisoner presented a forlorn and miserable appearance when he was placed in the dock. All hope seemed to have left him, and his eyes roved restlessly round the Court, as if in search of someone who would shew him any sympathy. But even among those who had been his partners in previous offences not one now appeared to care for his fate.

The counsel who had been assigned to defend

him, and had done all in his power to help when he was before the Magistrate, again appeared on his behalf. The witnesses who had been examined in the Police Court were called for the prosecution, and related the circumstances of the assault and arrest. The cross-examination failed to shake their testimony in any detail.

Ernest Clyde was then called. He stated that he had never seen the accused, so far as he knew, that he knew a man named Harvey who had been a forecastle hand on the "Helen," but had never had a quarrel with him, nor received any complaint concerning him. He had seen Harvey at the Sailors' Home on the night of the assault, but had noticed that he was not in the building when he (the witness) left.

He deposed that he himself, after finishing his inspection, had started to return to his hotel by a track that led along the beach, and that when he was about to pass a line of rocks close to the sea two men had suddenly sprung up from behind this shelter, one of whom made a violent blow at his head; that at the same moment Row, who had been boatswain of the "Helen," had appeared from behind a reef and had struck the arm of the man attacking him; that he remembered no more until he found himself being supported by Hythe, a quartermaster, while the Captain and Detective Webb were holding the accused. The witness deposed that he had been for three days under medical treatment, and unable to leave his bed after the assault.

In cross-examination, he stated that he had not

seen his assailant until after he was struck, but that the man who was being held by Row when he came to himself was the accused. He could form no idea as to why the assault on him was committed.

The only witness called for the prosecution was Edward Wilson, editor of the *Rio Herald*, who deposed that he had been with Row, the former boatswain of the "Helen," on the evening of April 4th at the "Southern Cross" saloon, and that his companion and he had been about to enter one of the rooms when they found it already occupied by two men, one of whom was the accused, whom he had seen many times before, and who was known as "Bill Smith." He was in earnest conversation with the other occupant of the room, and before the witness had been noticed by either of them he heard the accused ask:—"Where do you say this Second Mate is to be found?" And his companion answered:—"Down by the pier any evening." He had not attached any importance to the remark at the time, but when he learned of the assault committed on the witness Clyde he had considered it his duty to place the matter before the State Attorney, and had been called as a witness.

The prisoner's counsel cross-examined the editor, with the view of shaking his ability to recognise his client, but the witness was quite certain that the man in the dock was one of those whom he had seen in the saloon, and that it was he who had asked where the Second Mate could be found.

This closed the case for the prosecution, and the counsel for the accused made a strong appeal to

the jury on behalf of his client, contending that it was not he who had struck the blow, and that there had not been sufficient proof of identification. It was clear, however, from the outset that he knew his case was hopeless, and that he was fighting in a bad cause. No witnesses were called for the defence, and the Judge occupied but a short time in summing up the case to the jury. Their retirement to consider their verdict was little more than formal, and in accordance with prevailing custom where so serious a matter as one of attempted murder was being tried.

Little sympathy was felt for the prisoner, who had a very bad record in Rio Janeiro, and whose career had been one repellent to all law-abiding citizens. Now, however, a scene was enacted in Court which caused everyone to start with wild excitement. The prisoner had been provided with a seat in the dock during the absence of the jury, a warder standing by him. The Judge still remained on the bench. Suddenly from the door of the Court nearest to the dock there came loud cries and the sound of a scuffle. The officer in charge of the door was heard exclaiming :—" I tell you, you can't pass in without an order." " Yes, I say he is my son, and I want to see him before I die," came the answer in wailing tones as the scuffle still continued. Every eye was now turned towards the entrance from which the sound proceeded, and which was that provided for counsel and persons who were concerned in any case that might be before the Court. The prisoner stood up, and leaned excitedly over the bar.

Then, still struggling and exclaiming, an old man made his way towards the dock, despite the remonstrance of the officer. " Your Honour," cried the old man, addressing the Judge, " look at me. I'm eighty years old to-day, and my boy has been away from me for twenty years, and I've walked all through the State to find him to give him his mother's dying message. Let me see him, your Honour; let me tell him, for the love of Heaven; I will do no harm." The sentences were jerked out, as the poor old man, feeble and emaciated, exerted all his remaining strength in struggling towards his son.

Everyone in Court pitied the poor father, whose white hair straggled about his shoulders, and who was in abject distress. Even the officer, though aghast at the breach of discipline, relaxed his hold, and the old man, grasping at the bar behind which his son stood, fell with a dull thud on the floor of the Court.

All now looked on, horror struck, at the scene, and the prisoner, with a frenzied bound, leaped over the rail and knelt beside his prostrate father.

So sudden had been the appearance of the intruder, and so wild the excitement of the whole scene, that even the warder in charge of the prisoner had been for the moment off his guard.

" Father, father," cried the prisoner, " what is it? Tell me what she said; tell me quick, before they take me away." " Oh, Will, Will, my boy, my dear boy, is it here I am to find you? Is it this, that it has come to? Oh, why didn't you stay when she begged you to?" " Yes, yes, but what

did she say, father? Tell me what she said to me."

Even the officials who had crowded round the pair stood a little back, awe-struck, as the son, supporting the poor old father's head, knelt in bitter agony beside him.

" Say, Will, say," gasped the old man in broken accents, " say, she said, there is—there is—there is joy among the angels—the angels—that was it—that was it, Will,—the angels over—over one sinner—that—that—repents." The last words were uttered in so low a tone that only the prisoner and those close beside the pair could catch the meaning of them, and, as the last syllable issued from his lips the old man, with one long lingering look of love at his erring son, ceased to breathe.

The prisoner, kissing his father's face, reverently knelt over him. He turned, as the officer touched him on the shoulder, and half rose as if to take his place again in the dock; but even as he did so, his face became ashen white, and a crimson stream issued from his mouth.

Assistance was called, and the saintly father and the guilty son were carried from the Court to the Gaol Hospital. The Government Medical Officer was called, and, after a hasty examination, pronounced the father dead. The son's case was a very serious one. His irregular and licentious life had caused one disease after another to lay hold on him, and, despite his heavy appearance, he was in an advanced state of consumption. The excitement caused by his father's sudden appearance, and the exertion of leaping from the dock, had brought on a serious attack of hemorrhage of the lungs, already

in a diseased condition, and it was not possible to stem it.

" It's more a case for the parson than for me," said the bluff old Gaol Surgeon. The imploring look cast by the dying man on the Governor, who stood by, caused him to bend over the bed. " What is it, my man?" he said, not unkindly. " The chaplain," was the whispered answer. And in a few moments more the grey-haired and kindly clergyman was kneeling by the bedside repeating the office for the visitation of the sick.

" Sir," whispered the dying man, " sir, tell me—is there—is there—another chance for me?" " God's mercy knows no end," was the kindly answer, " and there are many mansions, and He will receive all who come to Him." " Have I—a chance then, sir,—one more chance in the other life—to begin again?" " Yes, I can assure you of it if you repent, my poor fellow," was the answer. " That's it, that's what she said," exclaimed he. " Yes,—that was it. There is joy with the angels—joy with—with the angels—over one—one that repents." And with the last word scarcely audible " Plugger Bill " passed from the world.

Who shall say what is the limit to the mercy of One Who accepted the cry for pardon of a crucified murderer?

In the cemetery of Rio Janeiro the bodies of father and son rest together till He shall come.

The verdict of the jury in the case of " The State *versus* William Smith " was never given. When the prisoner was called on, the Gaol Governor from the barristers' table briefly answered, " Dead, your

honour." The Medical Officer was called, and deposed on oath that he had seen William Smith in the Court under trial for " assault with intent to murder," and that he had afterwards attended him in the Gaol Hospital, where he had died of consumption, and that he had identified the body, having had every opportunity of seeing the same William Smith, both before and after death. This was accepted as sufficient discharge of the case before the Court, and the jurymen were excused further attendance.

The *Rio Herald* published a long account of the trial of a well-known criminal, and of the death of the accused. It was a nine days' wonder in Rio, and was thereafter forgotten in the hum of life.

XII. RODETZKI TAKES ACTION

NOTHING remained to delay the officers and crew of the " Helen," and passages were secured for them to London. Detective Webb secured a berth on the same vessel.

On the 2nd of September those of the crew of the " Helen " who had not previously secured berths for themselves embarked for England.

Nothing eventful occurred during the voyage home, and in due course the " Caduceus " was berthed in the London Docks. Among the first to come on board was Captain Clyde, who heartily welcomed his son and his old friend upon their return.

A fine looking man, clean shaven, and with rest-

less grey eyes, which seemed ever to be reading the life's history of everyone with whom he spoke, also came over the side. He looked sharply round, and, without hesitation, passed to where Detective Webb stood on the quarterdeck. They exchanged greetings, and, after a few hurried words in an undertone, crossed over to the side on which Captains Clyde and Frankston were standing. Webb introduced the stranger to the two captains as his chief, Ludovic Rodetzki. After some conversation, it was agreed that these four, with Ernest Clyde, should meet at Rodetzki's office the next afternoon, and discuss fully the details of the wreck and the events subsequent to it.

Captain Clyde insisted on his old friend accompanying him and his son to his home, and there the events of the past few months were related in detail.

The disappearance of Alec Harvey, and the fact that the boat in which was Martin, who, it was believed, could give much important information, had not been heard of since the foundering of the " Helen," were matters of grave consideration, especially as the Chief Mate had the command of her, and it was well known that the latter had a grudge against Martin on account of several matters that had transpired during the voyage and had caused suspicion to fall on the mate.

It appeared that little could be done to bring justice to bear until these men could be found. But one thing was certain, all were determined to leave no stone unturned that would tend to bring this about.

The next day, as appointed, they called on the famous detective, and found that Row, Hythe, and Webb had already arrived and were awaiting them.

Rodetzki listened attentively to every detail his visitors had to communicate, carefully marking the fact that some of the crew, including the boatswain and quartermaster, had distinctly seen the holes in the side of the " Helen " before she went down; and he also noted their account, supported by Ernest Clyde, of the suspicious movements of the Chief Mate during the voyage. He asked particularly about the circumstance of Hythe and Martin having found that the cases that had been passed as containing revolvers were filled with salt. The broken plug that had been picked up on the deck of the " Helen " was carefully examined, and Rodetzki considered this to be an important piece of evidence.

There was, however, very much to be unravelled before a criminal charge could be laid against the suspected persons. The difficulty was increased by the absence of Martin, and the fact that the Chief Mate, Cranbourne, had not yet been heard of.

After much deliberation, the party was about to adjourn for that day, when one of Rodetzki's assistants came to the room and announced that a sailor had called and had asked to see Captain Frankston. Upon learning that the visitor was waiting, the Captain excused himself and retired.

In a few minutes he returned, bringing with him a bronzed weather-beaten sailor, who stood for a moment in the doorway, as if overwhelmed by the distinguished appearance of some of the company

assembled. It was only for a moment, however, for the next instant Hythe had rushed forward and seized the right hand of the newcomer in both his own, exclaiming rapturously, " Why, Joe, old man, where have you sprung from? I had given you up long ago as gone to Davy Jones."

" It's me, right enough, mate," was the answer, " and if ever a man missed that same Davy by the skin of his teeth it's me, and it was not by fair means neither that he was near getting me, but by the scheming of the biggest scoundrel out of hell this day, that is if old Beelzebub hasn't put him in to stoke for them that's not half as bad as himself."

While this was being said Ernest Clyde had stepped forward, and, regardless of all disparity of rank, had warmly shaken hands with the sailor, saying, " This is a pleasure, in more ways than one, to see you again, Martin, and, indeed, what Hythe tells you is true : we had given you up for lost."

Captain Frankston, as soon as the excitement caused by the entrance of the visitor had subsided, introduced him to Rodetzki as Joseph Martin, formerly a forecastle hand on the " Helen." Rodetzki made no effort to hide the satisfaction he felt at seeing the man upon whom so much depended, and immediately re-opened his notebook, and, after bidding Martin be seated, asked him to recount his experience on board the " Helen."

Martin was able to give a very graphic description of all that he had noted on the ill-fated voyage of the " Helen," and Rodetzki very soon realised that he was one of those who would be described by counsel as " a very good witness."

He told, without circumlocution, of the suspicions he had formed of the Chief Mate on account of his movements on board, and of the noises heard below on more than one occasion, and of his having seen the Mate near the hatchway at night when there was nothing to warrant his being there, and when it was supposed that he had " turned in;" and of that officer having always appeared to hurry off when he found that he was observed.

He fully corroborated that which Hythe had told of the circumstance of a case which had been described as containing arms having been accidentally broken, and of the discovery made by him and Hythe that there was nothing in it but bags of salt, and gave a graphic description of the discovery by the sailors of holes in the hull of the " Helen " when they had left the vessel and had taken to the boats.

His experience after the boats had separated formed a thrilling narrative of itself, and pointed to the fact that Cranbourne had purposely left the company of the other boats, after having called out to the Second Mate that the Captain had given orders that they should keep together. The behaviour of Cranbourne thereafter was full of suspicious circumstances; and Martin declared that more than once the officer had attempted to bring about an accident that would have wrought serious injury or death to him; and that he had deliberately steered clear of the wake of passing vessels, bringing the boat finally to one of the Abrodhas Islands. More than once members of the crew had remonstrated with him on account of the course he was

steering, but they were answered with curses and the repeated retort, " I am in charge, and I know what I'm about."

Upon the boat being beached, Cranbourne had ordered Martin and one of the other hands to go inland and find water and seek out some inhabitants. As the Mate alone had the chart, the men could not at the time form any notion as to where they had been put ashore. They, however, travelled over the country, which was almost entirely devoid of vegetation, vainly seeking some sign of an inhabitant.

It was noon when they had set out, and, towards evening, they found themselves at a fishing village on the east coast of the small island they had traversed. Food was supplied to them, and two of the men of the settlement accompanied them on their return journey. Every foot of the place was well known to their guides, and the coast was quickly traversed to the spot where they had been put ashore. Now, however, a fresh difficulty arose: there could be no mistake about the landing place, for the sand was torn up where the boat had been run up, and there were traces of feet having recently passed over the wet ground. But not a sign of boat or men could be discerned. Consternation filled the hearts of the two seamen. They were stranded on a land utterly unknown to them. They looked at one another and at their guides in an agony of despair; and it seemed as if they were fated to see their former comrades no more. A closer examination of the beach revealed the fact that the boat, which had been left high up on the

shore when they started on their wanderings, had been run out to sea again.

That Martin and his companion had been deliberately left in this desolate spot was clear enough; and they realised that they were victims to the treachery of the Mate. All was clear to the two men. Both of them had had suspicion of Cranbourne. He knew that they had watched him, and that they had been foremost in the remonstrance as to the course he was steering. He had deliberately selected them for the journey inland, and had caused them to be practically marooned, thus ridding himself of two who would have been able to give evidence against him in the event of an enquiry into the circumstances of the loss of the " Helen." And he knew there would be very little hope of their finding any inhabitants, or of their reaching the mainland, at any rate for months to come.

The British sailor is not very long in despair, and Martin and his companion soon began to consider how best they could battle with their new trouble. Providence had, so far, defeated Cranbourne's scheme that they had found hospitable men on the island, and these now suggested that the stranded seamen should stay at their settlement until an opportunity offered for them to reach the mainland.

This offer was readily accepted by the marooned men, and an empty hut was assigned to them and rude beds constructed, while the few settlers did all in their power for their comfort. It might be weeks, the men told them, before a vessel of any kind would touch at the island, for the work of those at the settlement consisted in catching fish,

which they dried and packed, and a cargo had been taken off a few days before and stores landed for those employed.

Martin and his companion soon settled down, and were able to give great assistance in the work. It was not until eight weeks had passed that an opportunity came for the castaways to reach the mainland. A vessel called at the island for cargo. The circumstances of the two strangers were explained to the captain, who consented to carry them to St. Salvador, where the office of the Fishing Company was situated. And as soon as the lading of the ship was completed they were taken on board and given a passage, being well recommended to the company for the work they had done on the settlement.

They were liberally treated by the merchants, who paid them the full amount of wages for the time they had been employed at the island, and arranged for free passages for them to England. Martin and his comrade had only arrived in London that day, and the former had immediately sought the address of his late Captain, and, upon finding that he was engaged with Mr. Rodetzki, had come on to his office, while the other sailor had gone to his friends.

Martin's appearance put a new complexion on the matter under investigation, and, after the evidence adduced before the counsel at Rio Janeiro had been detailed to Rodetzki, that gentleman decided that there was sufficient evidence on which to commence criminal proceedings against the late owners and the Mate, who would probably be re-

turning to England now that he believed Clyde and Martin safely disposed of.

XIII. THE SHADOW

ARMED with the new weapons in the shape of information received from Martin, Rodetzki lost no time in pursuing the enemy, who, it was now fairly clear, had caused so many troubles.

Before those who had supplied particulars as to the loss of the " Helen " had reached their homes, warrants had been applied for and issued for the arrest of Charles Butler, Edward Marston, and George Cranbourne, on a charge of having conspired to defraud the underwriters by falsely pretending that certain cases forming part of the cargo of the ship " Helen " contained arms, they well knowing the same to be filled with salt; and also with conspiracy to scuttle the ship " Helen."

Rodetzki had made a long study of the case, and was well acquainted with every detail. He had ascertained that George Graham, the senior partner in the firm of Graham, Butler & Co., was not in London at all during the time of the lading of the " Helen," nor for some months prior to her being chartered for the purpose of carrying arms to Peru, and that he could not have been a party to any alleged conspiracy.

The firm had decided to open a branch at Hull in response to repeated applications from clients, who could not always make it convenient to do their business with the London office. Graham had been chosen by the partners to take charge of this

new agency, as being the one most suited for the class of business likely to be brought into it, and he had assented to this, and had left London for Hull very shortly after the " Helen " had been purchased, and had not since visited the Metropolis at all.

There was, as yet, no report as to the whereabouts of Cranbourne, yet the detective had his name included in the warrants, feeling sure that he would not long remain absent from England, but would, at an early date, visit the office of Graham, Butler & Co. to obtain the reward of his nefarious services in the destruction of the " Helen," or to lay blackmail on the owners, who were now apparently in his power.

But of the other two mentioned in the warrants, it seemed evident that their arrest could be effected at any moment. They had, indeed, been practically under surveillance from the time that Rodetzki had been first communicated with by his agent at Rio Janeiro, and their movements were well known to the astute private detective. He deemed it wiser, however, to await the return of Cranbourne before executing the warrants on the two principals. No effort was spared to effect his arrest, and the passengers and crew of every incoming vessel were carefully scrutinised by those in the employ of Rodetzki.

Untiring as were the efforts made, nothing was accomplished, and Rodetzki determined to proceed with the case against the two conspirators. The efforts to secure the arrest of Cranbourne were still

by no means abated, and these were to be rewarded with success at an early date.

On the 18th of October a passenger ship from Australia was berthed in the London Docks. Among those who stepped on shore was a young man of medium build, who had the appearance of an ordinary clerk, with nothing about him to betoken the sailor. His black hair was cut very short; he walked with a brisk step; and had a restless way of glancing from side to side, as if he were suspicious of everyone who happened to pass him. He turned in the direction of the City, and, as he walked, there was always the same anxious glance from the small blue eyes, which were noticeable from the contrast in colour to his dark hair. "Buy the *Evening Star*, sir," cried a rough-looking youth, as he thrust a paper nearly into the hand of the traveller. "No, clear out," was the curt reply. "Clear out, is it?" muttered the purveyor of papers. "Clear out, is it? That's what you've done many a time before to-day, you bet, and if I haven't seen your ugly mug before to-day, then call me a Dutchman. Clear out, is it? Why, the street is as much mine as yours. Or have you and the Lord Mayor gone halves in owning the City for yourselves?"

Meanwhile, the subject of his reflections was striding at a rapid pace towards Lime Street, happily unconscious that his abrupt refusal to purchase an evening paper had so much disturbed the peace of mind of one of Her Majesty's liege subjects, who was still pondering the common rights of man to the City streets, and following the steps

of the traveller as if bent on a further attempt to find a customer in him. It was evident that something out of the common was passing through the mind of the youth: he would pause abruptly in his walk, pass his hand across his brow, and then he would start after him at a rapid pace until he had come nearly abreast of him, and then, pausing again, he would continue his soliloquy:—"Look here, Charlie Hancock," he muttered during one of these pauses, "you must smarten up your ways a bit, my boy; you're not as keen on the scent as you used to be; you've seen that swell before, and you've got to think out where it was and when it was, or you're not fit for your work any more than that cove's fit to be Prime Minister, and that's saying a good deal. Let's see now, where was it? He's not a landsman, that's certain, though he's pretty well got up to look like one; but that doesn't take in Charlie Hancock.

"That's just what I said to the boss," continued Charlie in his soliloquy, "you may have men who are up to the mark as far as height goes, I said, or who think they can find out the end of a mystery and can track down a man that's wanted. But have they served their time before the mast, same as I have, or been used to the ways of sailors on shore? Not much, I said. You show me a sailor, any time, and let him be got up anyhow you like, and I'll sort him out for you, and that's how it is that I hawk my papers on this round instead of taking 'em where there's more coming and going.

"Now," he continued to himself, "look at that swell, trying to look as if he had never drunk lime-

juice, nor stuck his fork in a bit of salt junk. Did you ever see a landsman swing himself round a lamp-post like that? He hasn't got the trick of it. That swell's been out in rough weather on the briny, same as I have, and on quarterdeck too, and knows how to catch on in a squall, and swing himself round the mizzen, he does; he can't pass any sort of a post without trying it; and that's just what I'm just thinking out: where did I see him do that aboard, that's what I want to know, and when was it that he and I were together. Below middle height, he is, not more than five foot five; that's about it, same as I am. Clean shaved, black hair—not so sure about the hair, though.

"Can't rightly remember where I was with a mate that was five foot five, and black hair. That's just what I was saying to the boss. I said, 'You just give me the points of the man you want.' I sailed with one of that name, anyhow, more than two years ago, in the old 'Osprey,' and she went down mysterious like, just the same as the 'Helen,' and he was pretty well suspected then, he was. Pity, too, for a better sailor never stood on quarterdeck, and that's where he was; and Old Bill, the Boatswain, he said, 'Wherever he learned his work, Lord knows; down in Beelzebub's locker, I reckon, but he's up to it,' he said, 'he's up to it, he is,' for none of us liked the Mate, and after the old ship went down we all believed that he had a hand in sending her to the bottom."

"Paper, sir, evening paper?" he called to the next passer-by, and ever, as he repeated the call and kept on his way, Charlie had a watchful eye on

the man who had so much excited his indignation and his interest.

"Thought so," he muttered, as he saw him turn into Lime Street, "bound for Graham, Butler & Co., sure enough. Trust Charlie Hancock to guess the port you're steering for, eh? Black hair, is it? He never got that from his mother, nor his father neither, and *red* it was when he knocked me off the foc'sle of the old 'Osprey,' when he found I was looking too much into the hold, where he had done his dirty work at night, making ready to send the old ship down to Davy Jones; broke my right arm, he did, and made me a cripple for more than a year; and I'd have gone down with the old tub if it hadn't been that the bos'n carried me into the last boat, just as she was shoving off from the side. And if the mate had had his way I shouldn't have been following that same at this moment." And Charlie turned an anxious glance across the street, as the man he followed approached the office of the former owners of the "Helen."

As no one seemed to be on the spot he was scrutinising, the newsvendor crossed over, still with the old cry, "*Evening Star, Evening Star,*" as if the street were crowded with purchasers.

XIV. ARREST OF CRANBOURNE

CHARLIE, having crossed to the side opposite to the office of Graham & Co., went on a few paces till he reached a building, in a window of which was a card bearing the announcement, "This Office

to Let." Here he paused, and carefully scrutinised the exterior, read and re-read the notice, as if desirous of ascertaining whether it would be a suitable place in which to start some big mercantile venture in the shape of a stationery business or depot for evening papers.

And as he turned, now this way, now that, a careful observer might have noticed that he scraped with his foot on the pavement. No casual passer-by would have paid heed to this. But now, from within, there sounded that which might have been taken for the echo of the shuffling made by Charlie on the footpath. He walked slowly, and stopped as each passer-by bought or refused his wares. "Here, boy, paper," called a man from behind. "Here y'are, sir," was the answer, as Charlie handed the article over. "Anything fresh to-day?" asked the purchaser, as he took it. "Yes, a lot," was the reply, as Charlie surveyed the questioner, who had the appearance of an ordinary merchant's clerk in fairly comfortable position. "Yes, a lot; a great lot, Mr. Foulger. He's just gone into the office. I followed him for half-a-mile or more. He's altered himself, he has, but it's the same face, and the same eyes, and there's the same hands that chucked me off the foc'sle. He can't take me in, not he; and 'Get out,' he said to me, he did, just the same as when he threw me off, as if I'd been a dog."

"What are you driving at, Charlie?" asked the questioner, as the two turned back towards the office of Graham, Butler & Co. "What are you driving at, lad? That wasn't Butler that went in just now.

I kept at the window all the time, and couldn't miss him if he passed, and he's not been along this day, anyway. Besides, he never chucked you off any foc'sle. You're getting balmy surely, lad." "Balmy, is it?" came the indignant retort. "Balmy, am I, and whoever said it was Butler who chucked me, and how could I swear to Butler by the bit of photograph you showed me, and who said anything about Butler going in? 'Twas no Butler at all who went in, but Cranbourne, the mate of the 'Helen.' And you can go and hunt for Butler if you like, and let the biggest hound of all get clear off."

By this time all the energy of Foulger was fully awake. He was one of Rodetzki's staff, and had been told off to watch for Butler's return to the office and to arrest him. For this purpose he had obtained leave to wait in the untenanted office opposite to that occupied by Graham & Co.; and Charlie Hancock, who could make-up in any character, had been appointed to watch passengers from incoming vessels and pedestrians on the way to Lime Street, in the hope that Butler or Cranbourne, or both, might thus be discovered and placed under arrest, as they would almost certainly seek the office.

Charlie had for this purpose provided himself with a stock of daily papers, and, with great patience, had gone his rounds, waiting till he should meet with one or the other of the suspects. The fact of his having previously sailed with Cranbourne and been roughly handled by him added zest to his task, and, despite the former Mate's

disguise, he had recognised his voice and carefully followed him. As soon as Cranbourne had entered the office, Charlie had crossed the street for the purpose of giving to Foulger the signal they had mutually agreed upon.

Now the two passed to the office of Graham & Co., and Charlie Hancock walked up the stairs and into the first floor office, and found the object of his quest speaking in loud and bullying tones to the youthful clerk, who was the only other occupant of the office. "Paper, sir; evening paper, sir," said Charlie. Turning savagely upon him, Cranbourne (for he it was) seized the newsvendor by the back of his collar with both hands and shook him violently, at the same time exclaiming, "Clear out, you vermin; who wants you?" But the sentence was hardly finished before two sharp clicks were heard, and the former mate of the "Helen" turned to find himself confronted by Detective Foulger, who, while Cranbourne's hands were together on the neck of Hancock, had deftly snapped the handcuffs on his wrists. "Who are you, and what do you mean by this outrage?" cried the prisoner fiercely. "Oh, it's all right, George Cranbourne, here's the warrant for your arrest, all made out in due form. You're my prisoner, and, if you take my advice, you'll come quietly and make no fuss." "Come quietly, is it?" said the prisoner, "come quietly! I'll show you about that," as he kicked and struggled to get away. "I tell you, you shall answer for this. My name's not Cranbourne, nor anything like it, and I'm here on business. I'll make you smart for it.

Who are you to assault a man, I should like to know?" and he clutched with his manacled hands at the counter. "Now come," said the officer, "none of that. I'm one too many for you, and am not going to stand any of your bluster. You're my prisoner, and anything you have to say you can tell to the Inspector at the station." "Station, is it?" answered the prisoner, "I'll give you station," and he kicked savagely at the officer. But at that moment his elbows were seized from behind, and the kick never reached its mark. "All right, Mr. Foulger," called the sturdy voice of a uniformed constable, "he won't kick much while I've got the grip on him. Charlie Hancock fetched me off the street, and he's gone to get a growler now, and we'll have this gent. snug and safe inside in a jiffy." At the same moment the grating of wheels against the kerb told that the four-wheel cab commonly called a growler, was already at the door.

Further resistance by the prisoner was useless, and, preceded by Foulger, and firmly gripped from behind by the constable, he was compelled to descend the stairs and to take his seat in the vehicle between the two officers of the law.

By the time the police station was reached, the man had become quiet, and the charges against him of conspiring with others to defraud the underwriters and of scuttling the ship "Helen" having been duly entered by the Inspector, the prisoner was removed to a cell. He now applied for writing materials, which were supplied to him, and soon afterwards, at his request, a letter was conveyed to

a well-known solicitor, and that gentleman visited him at the police station without delay. A long conference ensued between them, and the solicitor promised to appear for him at the Mansion House Justice Room on the following day.

In the meantime Foulger and Hancock had not been idle. The former went to the office of Rodetzki, and reported the arrest of Cranbourne; while Hancock was detailed to keep a strict watch at the office of Graham & Co. from the spot formerly occupied by Foulger, and to report immediately if either Butler or Marston should appear.

Captain Frankston had called on the detective with reference to the case, and was in the office when Foulger was announced. He was naturally much pleased at the course events had taken, and both he and Rodetzki were warm in praise of the result of the day's work by Foulger and Hancock.

But a great deal still remained to be done. It was very necessary that Marston and Butler should be brought to judgment, and in the meantime Rodetzki's solicitors were communicated with, and one of the partners attended the conference of the detectives and Captain Frankston, and it was decided that this gentleman should appear at the Court on the following day and apply for a remand of the accused man.

XV. AT THE MANSION HOUSE

THE next day dawned cold and dreary—a heavy fog hung over London streets. 'Buses were crowded with grumbling passengers, who complained of everything. Business was not half as good as it used to be; there was no chance of pushing trade. The 'buses were too cold for anything. Those inside were jammed together; everyone's legs seemed in the way of those of everyone else. Outside, dripping umbrellas caused angry imprecations from those who were so unfortunate as to receive the spray inside their collars. Conductors " beat the booby " to get a little warmth into their benumbed hands, and moved aside with ill grace as the passengers pressed down the iron ladders to go to their respective offices.

It was a day to make one feel that life was not worth living—and that conduced to fill public-houses, where the landlords were shrewd enough to have fires in the well-lighted bars.

Those who had work to do went about it, generally, in a resigned manner, as if it were too melancholy a thing to earn the wage which was a necessity for daily food. Those who had no business crowded upon others who had, and haunted every public office or place where they could in anywise be entertained without charge.

The slightest matter, in the way of any sensation, was eagerly sought after, as a means to distract the thoughts from the miserable surroundings.

Often luxury, wretchedness, and poverty may be found in close proximity with each other. Never more so, perchance, than in the case of the Mansion

House, the official residence of London's Chief Magistrate.

The magnificent structure stands in the midst of the most busy part of the City. Yet no building is in actual contact with it. The front facing Cheapside presents a most imposing appearance. A flight of stone steps gives access to the first floor; a wonderfully contrived balcony adds to the comfort and grandeur of the structure.

On the right is the entrance way to the Lord Mayor's private apartments, and through this have passed, from time to time, Emperors, Kings, Royal Princes, members of the aristocracy, and the highest Ministers of State on their way to the sumptuous entertainments to which they have been invited, and which are unrivalled in magnificence.

Within, the highest art of the designer and decorator is displayed to the full. The tables groan under the weight of golden vessels, filled with the choicest viands; and all is brightness and splendour.

Can there be misery and suffering in the same City, or is there such a thing as squalor, and wretchedness, and crime within hailing distance of such magnificence as this? Aye, even under the same roof, and almost in touch.

The splendid array of steps to the front, the grand entrance way at the one side, the magnificent equipages that dash up to it from time to time, the disguished personages that alight therefrom, the grandeur of the Banqueting Hall with its massive table furnishings: these have all their exact contrast in the same building and in its approaches from the other side, as if set there in very irony,

or as if some great artist would display on the one canvas the height of happiness and the depth of misery.

The noble steps to the first floor do but conceal the basement cells, in which are confined those awaiting Magisterial examination for alleged crime; the cups and dishes of wrought gold, with their luxurious dainties, serve but to compare with the tin mugs and plates bearing cold water and dry bread to the wretched inmates of the temporary prison.

The grand equipage, drawing up to the one side, does but show up in more dismal colour the dark and gloomy-looking police van as it backs to the grated door on the other, and deposits its passengers one by one to be consigned to the gloomy recess of the gaol till his turn shall come to stand in the Justice Room dock.

The gaping crowd that cheers as each guest is obsequiously ushered into the grand entrance hall by powdered footmen in resplendent liveries has again its counterpart in Mansion House Place, as the prisoner slowly issues from "Black Maria" and is escorted by the red-collared gaoler through the dingy corridor to the cell, and is greeted by his waiting "pals" with cheering words.

So life and death, splendour and squalor, happiness and abject misery, have their home beneath the same roof and between the same walls.

And on this particular day there was no exception to the ordinary rule, so far as the latter aspect of the case was concerned, except that perhaps the crowd was somewhat greater as the van turned into

the narrow way of Mansion House Place; for news is quickly spread abroad among the idle and sensation-hunting, and word of the arrest of a notorious scuttler had found its way into the columns of the London dailies, and many had gathered in the expectation of catching a glimpse of the suspect as he stepped from the van.

But those who knew more of the police methods were aware that he would not be an inmate, for he would be brought direct from the police station, to which he had been taken on the previous day.

So, when at ten o'clock the prisoners stepped from the gloomy passage between the cells into which the van is divided, and passed into the doorway of the Mansion House, people pressed eagerly forward with cries of "That's him," "There he comes now."

But when the last unfortunate had been received by Hubble, the gaoler, and the van had gone its way, the crowd quickly dispersed; and an hour later a four-wheeled cab passed to the cells entrance, the dignified Hubble came to the doorway, and there alighted, first Detective Foulger, then the accused Cranbourne, and last a constable in uniform. Hubble received the prisoner and escorted him to the grated cell, the door of which closed with a sharp clang, and was double-locked. The constable returned to the cab, which was driven rapidly away, and none knew that the prisoner who had caused so much excitement was within the precincts of the Police Court.

At noon the Lord Mayor, clad in the purple robe

of his office, and preceded by the Crier, entered the Court and took his seat on the Bench.

The clerks and other officials rose and did obeisance, the Court was formally opened, and the long list of summary cases disposed of. There was nothing of interest to the spectators, and, in most instances, only a very small fine was inflicted. The weather seemed to have a most depressing effect upon everyone. The Chief Clerk, as he took notes of the evidence, was fuming and complaining that the witnesses would not speak up. The Assistant Clerk was terribly agitated and worried over the commitment papers. The Interpreter was in a complete fog as to his intellect, and seemed to be doubtful as to the nationality of each witness called in a case of common assault, and excitedly asked "Etes vous francais," "Bist du Deutschen," and floundered in a most unusual manner in his attempt to convey to the Court the nature of the evidence given, and whether the accused had assaulted the complainant, or the complainant had murdered the accused's grandmother.

At length the mystery was cleared, and the case dismissed. And the cheerful-looking van gaoler ushered into the dock the prisoner Cranbourne, announcing, as he did so, "Number seventeen, my lord."

The Lord Mayor glanced at the charge book before him. The Chief Clerk adjusted his pince-nez. Detective Foulger took his place beside the prisoner. The Lord Mayor bowed to the solicitor, who opened the case for the prosecution. His remarks were not lengthy; he contented himself

with stating that the ship " Helen," bound for one of the ports of South America, and owned by Graham, Butler & Co., of Lime Street, had foundered at sea; that it would be proved that the weather had been fair during the voyage, and there was nothing to cause such a calamity. That the prisoner, George Cranbourne, was the mate of the vessel, and that his movements on board had aroused the suspicions of many of the crew; and that, when the Captain had ordered the boats to be lowered, and the sailors had taken their stations in them and were leaving the side, holes had been seen by them in the hull, which proved that there had been foul play, and the vessel had been scuttled. It would further be conclusively shown that the cargo, insured as valuable arms, consisted of nothing but salt, and this could have been for no other purpose than to defraud the underwriters. And also that the prisoner, who had charge of one of the " Helen's " boats, had not obeyed the instructions of the Captain as to the course to be steered, but had made for some other port, and had disguised himself and reached England by stealth, and had only been discovered by the astuteness of the detectives in whose hands the matter had been placed for investigation.

Mr. Lewis concluded by saying that he purposed now to call only such evidence as would justify a remand, and intimated that, in the meantime, others who were believed to be parties to the crime would in all probability be brought before his Lordship.

He called Ernest Clyde, who deposed to the circumstances with which the reader is familiar.

The prisoner's solicitor cross-examined the witness, asking him his relations with the prisoner, and endeavoured to elicit from him that there was jealousy towards his client. This Clyde denied, stating that there was nothing between him and the prisoner of an unfriendly nature, and that their intercourse had been simply that of brother-officers.

The solicitor then produced the prisoner's log, and endeavoured to shew that the evidence of the witness as to the weather having been calm during the voyage was not correct, but he failed to shake his testimony.

Leonard Row was next called, and corroborated the evidence of the Second Mate as to his having heard suspicious noises at night on board the " Helen," and as to his having seen a man, who he believed to be the prisoner, come from the direction of the hold, and that he had followed him but had lost sight of him near the officers' quarters, and had picked up the pieces of wood produced, and had shewn them to the witness Clyde.

Foulger, who deposed to the arrest of the prisoner, was the next witness; and then the Lord Mayor was asked to grant a remand for eight days in order that an opportunity might be given for the arrest of other suspects. The Lord Mayor granted the remand, and refused to accept bail.

XVI. WHERE WAS MARSTON?

WHILE these events were occurring every effort was being made to bring to justice the persons charged with complicity in the offence alleged against Cranbourne.

Butler had not been at the office in Lime Street since the return of Captain Frankston, and every effort to trace him had failed. The detectives believed that he had suddenly taken alarm when he had learned of the proceedings before the British Consul at Rio, and had fled the country. Marston had been in attendance at the office of the firm daily, until the warrant for his arrest was issued. Since then nothing was known of him. The clerk employed by the company had transacted all the business of the London branch, and had been in regular communication with the head of the firm at Hull, but he could give no reason for the disappearance of the other two members, and it was clear that he knew nothing of them.

Mr. Graham was now communicated with, and he returned to London at once and waited on Rodetzki. He was, naturally, much concerned to learn of the disappearance of his partners, and also to find that the business of the London office had suffered severely by their absence. His time had been fully occupied with affairs at the Hull branch, which had prospered beyond all expectations. He had left a confidential clerk in charge there, and now devoted himself to the attempt to bring into order the business of the London office. He was able also to assist the detectives in their search for

Marston by giving them the address last known to him as that of the missing junior partner. On enquiry there it was found that Marston had not been seen at the house for two weeks, that he had then left at his usual time in the morning for the purpose of going to the office, and had not returned in the evening. This disappearance was much to the chagrin of Rodetzki and his assistants, and at the same time increased the suspicion of his guilt in connection with the wreck of the " Helen."

Marston was a well-known man, and the fact of his being considerably above the average height and of striking appearance, would make it very difficult for him to escape from the country without being recognised. His was not the face or figure that would readily lend itself to disguise, and it seemed impossible that he could have left England without some of his acquaintances having seen him or been made aware of his intention. His mother, who had been entirely dependent on him, had recently died, and his sisters were married and had left the part of the suburbs in which they had lived, so that it was the more difficult to glean any tidings of him. Both ladies were evidently astonished and grieved to learn that he was missing. No further reason was given to them for enquiry concerning him than the anxieties of friends on account of his disappearance.

Among those thus in suspense and trouble in this matter, none felt so keen a pain as the handsome girl who sat wearily waiting in the drawing-room of a well-appointed villa at Henley, or paced restlessly the terrace overlooking the garden path

leading to the road to the station, a short distance away. Her dark hair, dressed in simple folds, surmounted a brow of more than ordinary breadth, showing intelligence and force of character. Her eyes were of that clear grey that always betokens truth and faith. Every feature was regular and well proportioned; the fine figure, with its graceful lines, told of careful training, and of that high culture which is at ease in every class of society. Even the restless movement resulting from her present distress and anxiety had its peculiar charm.

Edith Hammond, the subject of this sketch, was the only child of a merchant who had acquired a large fortune in business, and was highly esteemed in commercial circles for his probity and ability. Her mother had died when Edith was little more than a year old, and her father had devoted himself to his little daughter, and had filled the place of both parents. He had never re-married, and lived in comparative seclusion with his child. The nurse who had been in the service of his wife had remained in charge of the little girl, and still continued as her faithful attendant. Every advantage of education and careful training had been secured for his daughter by Mr. Hammond. He had engaged masters and governesses for her of the best standing, but had not permitted her to be sent to school, dreading even a temporary separation from her. And Edith had well repaid her father's loving care, and was as devoted to him as he to her.

Beautiful and accomplished, she was not without admirers who would have sacrificed everything for

her; but her love for the father who had so dedicated himself to her had prevented her giving encouragement to any of them, and hers was not a nature to be easily wooed or won.

In the course of his business Mr. Hammond had been intimately acquainted with Edward Marston. He had marked the intelligence and business capacity of the young shipping merchant, and had been instrumental in assisting the firm with which he was connected to extend the trade in which it was engaged. Circumstances had occurred which had materially strengthened their intercourse and friendship, and Marston had become a frequent visitor at the house which Mr. Hammond had purchased at Henley soon after the death of his wife. It thus happened that the two young people had been much in each other's company, and their acquaintance had ripened into firm friendship. Almost unwittingly a mutual attachment had arisen between them, and the woman who had refused all offers, and believed herself absolutely devoted to her father, now found that there was no peace for her mind when Marston was absent. The pure love of her soul had no passion in it, and she simply idolised the man who had won her heart

Mr. Hammond noted, not without pleasure, the growing attachment of the young couple. He knew that a time must come when his daughter would need a protector, and there was no one to whom he would more readily consign her for whose welfare he was so anxious.

As to Marston, he had no tie now to prevent his offering his heart to the one on whom his affections

were completely set; but he scarcely dared hope that his love could be returned, and he doubted whether her father would approve of an engagement with one who had yet to make his way in the world. His prospects had improved of late, and there was every reason to believe that the firm with which he was connected would, in the near future, be one of more than ordinary standing in the commercial world. Still, his income for the present was not large, and Marston was not the man to seek to promote his pecuniary position by marriage. He knew that his life's happiness depended on his love being reciprocated: yet he would, as far as possible, absent himself from the object of it lest he should be induced to declare himself, and thus, perhaps, lose the hope that had taken firm hold upon him.

Thus months had passed, and no declaration had been made. Mr. Hammond had not failed to observe that his young friend had not been so frequent a visitor of late, and wondered at the change that had passed over him.

Soon after Graham had left for Hull, Marston had occasion to seek the merchant's advice in an intricate matter of business, and had been pressed by him to return to Henley after office hours, and further discuss the subject. When this matter had been settled, and Mr. Hammond had retired after dinner to consult with another visitor on some local subject in which they were mutually interested, the young people had gone together on the terrace, and in the quiet evening their pent up love had been disclosed, and their engagement sealed.

Mr. Hammond had given a ready consent to the

betrothal, and Edward Marston had again become a regular visitor at the house of the merchant, who was much attached to him. He even desired that the marriage should not be long delayed, and suggested that when it occurred Marston should make his home with them.

The meetings of the lovers from this time had been much more frequent, and seldom did an evening pass without a visit from the young shipping merchant.

Suddenly, however, these happy times had changed, and Marston had ceased to call at the villa. No reason could be discovered for his absence, and it was but natural, as day after day passed and no word came from him, that Edith Hammond's anxiety and trouble should increase. Her lover had always confided in her, and there had been nothing that she could conceive of to account for his silence.

Added to this, there came to the ear of her father rumours of Graham & Co.'s connection with the "Helen," which were anything but reassuring. Inquiry at the Lime Street office failed to give satisfactory explanation, and only brought to light the fact that both Butler and Marston had disappeared.

Anxiety was now changed to positive alarm, and when a fortnight had passed since Edith had seen her betrothed, she was more distressed than she would have cared to allow anyone to know. Returning from her vigil on the terrace she seated herself in the drawing-room, and vainly attempted to allay her agitation by poring over a volume of

poems which she and Marston had been reading together.

Her quick ear suddenly caught the sound of a well-known step on the verandah, and, rising, she passed to the still open front door, and the next moment was clasped in the arms of her lover. Her agitation was readily noticed by him, and, leading her gently back to the room, he seated her in the chair from which she had just risen. "What has happened, Edward?" she cried, as soon as her agitation would permit her to speak. "Father and I have been so anxious about you, and we could learn nothing to account for your being absent from us, nor could we gain any tidings of you." "Did you not get my letter, my sweetheart?" was his reply. "I wrote, and sent my note by hand, to tell you that I was called away by urgent message, and should not be back for some days. It was a fool's errand on which I was sent, and I have only now returned, and have seen no one, and have called nowhere till this moment."

Further explanation revealed the fact that, on the day following the one on which he had last been at the villa, Marston, on arriving at London Bridge station on his way to the office, had been met by a man who was frequently employed by his firm, and who brought a note from Butler stating that a vessel chartered by the firm had put in at Hamburg for repairs, having met with heavy weather, and suffered severely, and that it was imperative that Marston should proceed to that port at once in order that he might arrange for the work necessary to be done: and that, if he caught the next out-going train from

London Bridge, he would be able to take the steamer for Hamburg that same day. Realising the great import of this matter, Marston had, he explained, written a hasty note to Miss Hammond on a leaf of his pocket-book, and had entrusted it to the care of the messenger, with instructions to deliver it to her personally at once, and that he had just time to catch the train referred to, and had sailed for Hamburg as instructed. On landing there he found that no vessel had sheltered at that port for repairs, and, realising that some mistake had occurred, he had taken passage by the next steamer for England, and had only that evening reached London, when he had immediately set out for Henley.

Mr. Hammond, who had been detained in the city, where he had vainly tried to gain some tidings of Marston, arrived at the villa at this moment, and the facts of the case were repeated to him, as they had just been related to his daughter. He was, naturally, mystified, and not a little troubled by the account. He said nothing of the news he had learned in the city of the arrest of Cranbourne, and the allegation of conspiracy by some members of the firm of Graham & Co., lest Edith should be alarmed for the safety of Marston. But, when she had left the room, and the two men were alone, he related the full details to his intended son-in-law. The latter was evidently taken completely by surprise, and Mr. Hammond was convinced that, whatever might be the true history of the case, Marston was not guilty of any dishonest part.

The men were now called to the dining-room for refreshment, of which, after his long journey, the

younger was evidently in need. The meal was partaken of in silence : a cloud seemed suddenly to have come to the house, and to hang ominously over it.

When Marston rose to leave, Edith, as was her custom, accompanied him to the gate. Her usual happy manner when with her lover had changed to one of dejection, and Marston in vain tried to dispel the gloom that he could see had taken possession of her. He was far from feeling at ease himself. Mr. Hammond did not know the length to which matters had gone with reference to his intended son-in-law, but that which he had told him was sufficient to cause the young man serious uneasiness. He had not been without suspicion of Butler for some time, but he had never conceived that such a crime as that hinted at by Mr Hammond could have been alleged against him, and he was naturally most anxious to know all the circumstances of the case, and was not a little disturbed as to possible contingencies.

Nevertheless, he loyally tried to cheer the heart of his betrothed. " I cannot help it, Edward," was her answer to his attempt to raise her from her gloomy forebodings. " The past fortnight of suspense has been so terrible to me, and now that I have you I cannot keep from my mind the presentiment that I am to lose you again. All the while you were absent I was trying to persuade myself that it was only some urgent business that kept you from me : but always there was upon me the thought of coming trouble : and now it has returned with even greater force. I have ever with

me the dread of something that I cannot account for, and nothing can take it from my thoughts."

Notwithstanding the depression in the mind of Marston, he tried to speak lightly and cheerfully in reply, and promised to come to the villa as soon as he could leave the office on the following day. With this assurance the lovers parted, Marston to return to his home, and Edith to retire to her own room, and vainly seek for sleep, that she might banish from her thoughts the gloom that had so fully settled upon them.

XVII. ARREST OF MARSTON.

THE promise of Marston to visit at Henley made on the evening of his return from Hamburg was destined to remain unfulfilled. On meeting his housekeeper that same evening he found the good woman in a state of great excitement on account of his absence. She assured him that people had been at the house day after day asking all sorts of questions about him, which she had been unable to answer, and that she could not rest at night for thinking of him and wondering what could have happened to him. She seemed to imagine that he had suffered personal injury through his mysterious disappearance, and that she was herself suspected of being in some subtle way connected with it. Her volubility could not be restrained, and she poured forth her complaint at such a rate that there was no possibility of Marston explaining himself. At any other time he would have been amused by her

fluency of speech, and her exaggerated account of the enquiries and innuendoes which he was assured had been made with reference to him. Now, however, he was much too engrossed with his own thoughts, and with the information given him by Mr. Hammond, to feel any amusement. He contented himself by explaining, as briefly as possible, that he had been called away on urgent business, and had not had any time or opportunity to communicate with her. His abrupt manner, so different to that which was usual to him, more than ever astonished her.

Marston, upon retiring to his room, passed a restless night, and in vain endeavoured to dispel from his mind the anxious thoughts that the last few hours had engendered. He partook very sparingly of breakfast the following day, and took an early train for town. "Paper, sir, *Morning Star*, sir," cried a youth, as he alighted at the terminus. Marston bought a copy, and turned over to the news column. He was reading the account of the arrest and remand of Cranbourne still walking on his way to Lime Street, when he was accosted by Detective Foulger. "Mr. Marston, I believe," said the officer. "My name is Marston," was the reply, "but I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance." "I am an officer of the police," came the answer, "and I hold a warrant for your arrest on a charge of conspiracy to defraud the underwriters in connection with the scuttling of the ship 'Helen.' This is the warrant, and I must ask you to accompany me to the police station."

Completely staggered by the blow, Marston made

no reply, but proceeded with the officer in the direction indicated.

At the station the charge was duly entered, and the prisoner was consigned to a cell to await the opening of the Mansion House Police Court at noon.

Marston realised now the serious position in which he was placed, and, at his request, a message was sent to Mr. Hammond at his office. That gentleman had come to town somewhat earlier than was his usual custom, and had intended visiting Marston at Lime Street, being anxious to learn the latest particulars concerning the case. Though much troubled by the news, he was not quite unprepared for it from the course of events occurring during the last few days. Before proceeding to the police station, he called at the office of one of the leading solicitors in the City, and related to him the circumstance of Marston's arrest, and requested him to accompany him and undertake the accused man's defence.

Together they set out for the place of the young man's imprisonment, and the solicitor readily undertook to appear for him at the Court.

The taking of all the particulars that Marston could give in the matter occupied some time, and this was scarcely completed when the door of the cell was opened, and Foulger appeared and announced that it was time to proceed to the Mansion House. Mr. Hammond had already engaged a cab, and was permitted to accompany the prisoner and his solicitor to the Court.

"Number eight on the list, m'lud," cried the Gaoler, as the accused was placed at the Bar. All eyes were at once turned towards the prisoner, who stood quietly beside Detective Foulger in the dock.

The same solicitor as in the case of Cranbourne appeared for the prosecution, and stated that the prisoner was charged with having conspired with George Cranbourne, who was already under remand, and with another who had not yet been arrested, to scuttle and cast away the ship "Helen" for the purpose of defrauding the underwriters. He purposed on this occasion to produce only sufficient evidence to show that the prisoner was a member of the firm of Graham, Butler & Marston, that the vessel referred to had been purchased by them, and her cargo insured for a large amount; that the said cargo was alleged to consist of arms destined for one of the South American Republics; that the vessel was lost at sea, and that no cause could be discovered for the calamity, and no rough weather had been experienced; but that suddenly the ship was found to be leaking badly, and every effort to keep the water under had been unavailing, and that the Captain had been obliged to order the boats and abandon the vessel, which had shortly after been seen to sink, but not till after the sailors had distinctly seen holes in her side, which could not have been made except by the wilful act of some person on board, and that suspicion had fallen on the Chief Mate, who had been arrested and remanded by his lordship; and that it would be shown in evidence that the cases insured as containing arms were filled with salt, and, further, that the accused was concerned with one, Butler, who was still at large in effecting the insurance, and that he had been seen with him on many occasions on board the "Helen" while the lading of the vessel had been proceeding, and had signed the agreement of insurance of the cargo as revolvers and other arms.

The learned gentleman concluded by stating that he would call the witnesses who had been examined in the case against Cranbourne, and also the clerk to the underwriters, who would depose to the fact of the accused having signed the bill of lading, and he would then ask his lordship to remand the case to the same date as that on which the other prisoner would be before the Court, so that the charges against both men might be taken together.

The witnesses who had previously given evidence were sworn and their depositions taken, and, after the fact that Marston had signed the bill of lading had been deposed to, the remand was applied for.

The solicitor engaged on behalf of Marston strongly opposed the application, and urged that there was no evidence that his client had any knowledge of the alleged fraud, and that he had acted in good faith throughout, and also that he had never made any effort of concealment, and that his actions had not been those of a guilty man, and he was actually on his way to the office of the firm when he was arrested.

The Lord Mayor announced that he had decided to remand the accused to the date asked by the solicitor for the prosecution, and, in reply to an

application for bail, he stated that he could by no means accede to the request.

Marston was, therefore, consigned to the cells below, and subsequently conveyed with the other prisoners to Newgate.

XVIII. ON REMAND

MR. HAMMOND returned to his home that evening in great distress of mind. His knowledge of Marston had been gained by long intercourse, both in business relations and in private life. In both he had always found him strictly honourable. He could not believe that this man could be guilty of the atrocious crime with which he was charged. The conspiracy to defraud, bad though it was, sank into comparative insignificance beside that of the alleged scuttling of the "Helen," in the procuring of which Marston was accused of participating. Morally, this amounted to murder, for those on board must have been in imminent peril of death when the vessel foundered on the high seas. There could be no palliation in this case. It was impossible to set it down to a sudden temptation; the whole scheme must have been carefully thought out and executed with the utmost care. If Marston were guilty, he must be a man utterly lost to all sense of honour and unworthy even of pity. He had forfeited every claim to the sympathy which might be felt for any man falling into crime by dire necessity or by sudden impulse. Could this possibly be so with Marston? Mr. Hammond would

never believe it. There must be an explanation of the whole matter, which would be forthcoming when the defence was entered upon. And yet the evidence was clear that he had been seen in constant companionship with Butler, that he had been actively engaged in the purchase and fitting of the "Helen," and that he had actually signed the bill of lading, and had been with the Mate in the hold of the vessel on more than one occasion before she left the docks. The solicitor who had been retained for the defence had said very little in response to the anxious enquiries which Mr. Hammond had made, and had left the impression on the mind of that gentleman that it would be a very difficult matter to clear his client. The situation was exceedingly grave, and one to cause very anxious thought. Yet Mr. Hammond was not the man to readily change his opinion of one so well known to him, and on whom he had relied implicitly. He would, at any rate, believe in him until the evidence on his behalf should be brought forward, and there had been an opportunity to explain that which now appeared to be so much against him.

So lost in thought was he as he revolved first one point then another, that he did not realise that the station had been reached until he saw a white scared face at the window of the carriage and recognised his daughter anxiously awaiting him. Then he more fully felt the awful trouble that had come so suddenly upon them both. How was he to break the awful trouble to her? And what could he say to soothe the anguish of mind that was

betrayed by the face of his only child? His own bitter grief was, for the moment, laid aside in his deep love and pity for her.

"You should not have come here, my dear girl," he said, as he gently drew her arm within his own and stepped out with her towards the villa. "Father," came the reply, in broken, trembling utterance, "I could not help it. The suspense is killing me. Tell me all: anything will be better than this torture. What has been done with him to-day?" "The case is adjourned, my dear," said Mr. Hammond, as he gently pressed the hand that trembled on his arm. "The case is adjourned for a week. I trust that all will be well. Let us hope for the best. I have done all that was possible for his sake and for yours." "Oh, father, father!" cried the anguished girl, "have they, then, arrested him? Why is he not with you? Take me to him. Let me see him. I know he is innocent. Oh, what has been done with him?" "Calm yourself, my dear girl; all will yet be well. I have arranged for his comfort so far as I could," answered Mr. Hammond, as he assisted his daughter up the steps of their home, which they had now reached; and, half carrying, half leading, the almost prostrate form of his daughter, he proceeded with her to the drawing-room, and tenderly placed her on a sofa. At this moment Edith's faithful attendant entered the room, and, seeing her young mistress apparently lifeless, passed swiftly to her side. Restoratives were soon administered, and Edith was soon able to sit up. She gazed wildly round for a moment or two, and then, by force of

will, overcame the weakness which had prostrated her, and again begged of her father to tell her everything.

Mr. Hammond broke the news to her as gently as possible, explaining that Marston had been arrested on his arrival in the City, and that he had been charged at the Police Court with conspiracy to defraud, and that the case was remanded for a week, bail being refused. The fact of his absenting himself for some days having militated against him, and that he was in prison, but that arrangements had been made, so far as the law allowed, that he should have every alleviation of his captivity.

With this explanation Edith was compelled to be satisfied. Her strong mind to a certain extent overcame the depression which had affected her when first she had learned of the terrible calamity which had befallen her lover. Hers was not a nature to allow a thought of self to obtrude on her solicitude for others, and she realised that, while she must submit to the inevitable, her father needed all her care and attention, and that his trouble also was hard to be borne. Dinner being now announced, she went with him to the dining-room, and attended to his comfort, though unable to take anything herself.

The evening passed sadly, and neither Mr. Hammond nor Edith could shake off the feeling of depression which overshadowed them. Both were relieved when the hour for retiring came, and they sought their respective rooms.

Edith slept little, and only in that unresting way which leaves its traces on the face of one thus

troubled; and Mr. Hammond could not but mark at breakfast the alteration in his daughter. She seemed to have grown years older in the one night, and he vainly tried to soothe and comfort her.

When M. Hammond was preparing to leave for his office, Edith begged him to allow her to accompany him. "I must go to him, father. Do not, I beg of you, refuse me. I cannot bear to think of him in his loneliness and suffering. I promise you that I will be brave, and will not betray my feelings to anyone. You know that I can conceal my own pain for his sake, and I want him to be sure of my trust in him whatever may happen."

Mr. Hammond was perplexed. He felt that there were many difficulties in the way of his acceding to his daughter's wish, and that the projected visit must be one of great pain to her. Yet, on the other hand, to refuse it might be to cause her even more suffering; and, while the evidence against the accused man seemed for the present to be overwhelming, still he had hope that he would be able to clear himself, and Edith's firm faith in her lover's innocence was a means of strengthening his own belief in the man whom he had loved and trusted. At any rate, he could see no good would come of his denying her request, and, after some demur, he yielded to her solicitation, but was firm in his resolve that her old nurse should accompany her.

Thus it fell that when Mr. Hammond left his home the two women, closely veiled, set out with him, and took their places in the train for the City.

On their arrival at London Bridge a cab was engaged to convey them to the office of the merchant, and here they waited while an urgent message was despatched to the solicitor for the defence begging him to come as quickly as possible to their assistance, and in a few minutes that gentleman arrived. The matter was explained to him, and he was full of sympathy, and prepared to do all in his power to further the object in view. There were some difficulties to be overcome, as only on certain days and between prescribed hours could prisoners on remand be visited, except by their legal advisers. This, however, could be overcome if an order were obtained from the Lord Mayor, and the solicitor undertook to secure this. To prevent delay, the whole party set out together for the Mansion House. After some preliminaries had been arranged, the authority was granted, and a start made for Newgate.

Edith strove to control herself as the grim official scrutinised the order, and, with a gruff "Follow me," preceded the party to the cell where Marston was confined. On entering, they found him seated on a rough bench and in a very depressed state. He rose upon hearing footsteps, and came quickly forward to meet his visitors, vainly trying to conceal his agitation.

The time allowed for the interview passed all too rapidly, and the drawing of a bolt from the door was followed by the appearance of the warder. Edith was the last to leave the cell. As the others passed into the corridor, she turned to her lover, and, throwing herself into his arms, all the pent-up feeling of her heart burst forth in one passionate

wail of anguish as she cried, "My darling, my darling, remember always, whatever happens, that I believe in you and will be faithful, and that nothing will ever be able to come between us." The warder had turned impatiently when he found that the time had passed, and still he was delayed, and was prevented from following the strict routine of duty. Yet even a warder has a heart beneath his uniform that may be stirred from the cold stern exterior of the man; this one differed in no wise from others of his class, and, for the moment, the official was brushed aside and the human nature assumed its sway; he allowed the cell door to swing to, and a keen observer might have noted that there was small occasion for the profuse application of the dirty red handkerchief to his face; he jingled the keys of office, and fumbled with the bolt of the cell door. The next instant, Edith had passed through, and the prisoner was alone. "Well, well," was the muttered soliloquy of the man, as he turned solemnly to his seat, after escorting the visitors through the corridor, and to the outer gate of the prison. "Well, well, there's one thing for the poor chap to take to himself through it all: he's found what most men miss in the world, and there's one true woman after all among the lot that's bad."

XIX. DARK DAYS

WHEN Marston was presented at the Mansion House the following week, he stood side by side with Cranbourne, the ex-mate of the "Helen."

The whole day was occupied with the taking of evidence for the prosecution, and this had not been completed when the Court rose. The same solicitors appeared for the Crown and for the defence respectively as on the previous occasions, and again a remand was asked for a week. This was vigorously opposed by the legal gentleman who represented the accused, but the Lord Mayor, without hesitation, granted it, and refused bail.

For five weeks this same scene was enacted, and on each occasion the two men under remand were conveyed, with other prisoners, to Newgate. The object of the prosecution in thus delaying matters was twofold. First, it was desired that further evidence should be obtained, if possible, as to the conspiracy between these two. Again, it was highly important that Butler should be arrested, and placed on his trial with them. Every effort had been made to learn of the whereabouts of this man, who was regarded by the detectives as the most guilty in the matter; but no trace of him had yet been found, and no clue discovered that could lead to his apprehension.

The time of suspense to the two accused had passed wearily enough. Cranbourne, accustomed to rough life and hard fare, had borne his trouble the more easily. He had no intimate friends to grieve for him, and had not been visited in Newgate, except by his legal adviser, and a man who had formerly sailed with him and had been connected with him in some adventures which brought little credit to him or to Cranbourne. The two were, however, sworn allies, and were not without

the mutual honour which has often been shewn to exist among those who, false to everyone else, will be true to those with whom they have been connected in crime.

Like some faithful hound, this man had come at the first chance he had to see Cranbourne in Newgate, as soon as he had learned of his trouble. On every visiting day he might be seen waiting at the door of the gaol long before the hour had come for the admission of the friends of prisoners; and as far as prison regulations would allow, he had supplied food for his friend and such other comforts as he was permitted to pass into Newgate. Cranbourne knew that he could safely trust him, and all matters connected with his solicitor had been negotiated by this means. There was not much, therefore, that the ex-Mate had to trouble him, except the fact of his detention, and the prospect of conviction and the long term of imprisonment. All money matters he had left in the hands of his old comrade, and every detail entrusted to him he knew would be faithfully discharged.

With Marston, all was different. Accustomed at all times to refinement and to be treated with respect, the imprisonment and discipline became almost unendurable, and the rough duties which even a prisoner on remand must discharge pressed heavily upon him. But more than anything was the sense that he lay under suspicion of a foul crime, and that the evidence was strong against him. The degrading experience of the prison van, and the loading and unloading at the Gaol and

Mansion House respectively, with the jeering remarks of the populace assembled at the latter place, wounded his sensitive nature. He became broken in health, and in the few weeks of his imprisonment he seemed to have aged many years. He longed for an end to all this, and looked anxiously for the day when he should be brought to trial.

Mr. Hammond, though shaken somewhat in his confidence by reason of the evidence already produced against the accused, remained faithful to him, and did all that was possible to lighten the burden of trouble that had befallen him; while Edith refused to believe a word against one whom she regarded as above suspicion. Her father had withdrawn all objection to her visiting Marston in prison when he saw that she was more likely to suffer by the deprivation than by the gratification of her wish; and now every visiting day found her at the gate of Newgate, accompanied always by her faithful nurse. And the solace of the few minutes' interview with his betrothed was the one break in the dreary period of his detention.

As week after week passed, and there seemed to be no prospect of the case approaching a conclusion, Marston became more and more depressed. Urgent were the appeals made on his behalf that he should be released on bail, but to one and all the Lord Mayor was completely deaf. He had formed his own conclusions with reference to this case, and nothing could make him believe that either of the accused was anything but guilty, nor could he be persuaded that if he allowed bail the

men would surrender to their recognizances. Had not one of them completely disguised himself, and the other remained away from his usual haunts for two complete weeks? Was it likely that now their guilt had been so fully proved these evil-doers would deliver themselves to justice? So it fell out that both men had to pass many weeks in gaol without an opportunity being given of calling evidence to refute that brought against them.

Meantime, Charlie Hancock searched in vain for the missing partner, Butler. The role of newsboy was no longer assumed by him. Yet still he hung about the wharves, and carefully scrutinised every person boarding or leaving the vessels lying there; and more than once innocent travellers were followed to distant suburbs by a gentlemanly-looking young man " made up " to represent, now a ship's officer, now a mercantile clerk, and again an express messenger.

Nothing came amiss to Charlie in the way of disguise, and often he had been met in the street by Inspector Foulger, and even by Rodetzki himself, and had passed unrecognised by either; and it was his delight to recount to one or other of these worthies the story of the work done or the route taken by them in their day's work, and to mark the astonishment caused by his accurate knowledge of matters they had believed to be known to no one but themselves.

Every such triumph on the part of the young detective was recorded by his employer with marked appreciation. Success seemed to follow in every case entrusted to him, except this one

mystery, which he had so great a desire to elucidate.

Such is the experience of very many who have never adopted the role of detective. The world presents to each one some special ambition, which he is never to attain. Everything else he may have and welcome; but that one is to be denied him, beside which all the rest pale into nothingness.

Perchance the Great First Cause has designed this, so that in the world His creatures may each one have within him the yearning for some happiness beyond that attainable here, and may have his thoughts more fully set upon an existence on some higher plane designed for those who faithfully discharge their trust in this present life. And, whatever may have been the moral derived by the cogitation of Charlie Hancock upon this subject, certain it is that neither his efforts nor those of his employer could solve the mystery of Butler's disappearance, and the missing man was never arrested.

The weary succession of remands in the case of conspiracy alleged against Marston and Cranbourne at length came to an end. For the last time the two accused stood in the dock at the Mansion House Justice Room.

No change marked the appearance of Cranbourne. He had, in the course of an adventurous career, seen many sides of life, and had learned to take every kind of experience as it came. He had lived in luxury while money jingled in his pockets, and had shipped as an able seaman when that was exhausted, and borne all sorts of hardship in many parts of the world. Poverty had driven him to

yield to one temptation after another, and he had learned to stifle conscience and to go with any knave who would entice him into crime, so long as he might serve to fill his pockets when occasion required it. There was scarce a coast on which he had not been cast, and he had suffered every kind of privation. By the exercise of great ingenuity he had until now escaped the arm of the law, and, such was his buoyancy of spirit, that nothing came amiss to him, and he still believed that he would find a loophole of escape from his present difficulty. So he stood unabashed in the presence of London's Chief Magistrate, and assumed an air of jaunty insolence during the whole of the tedious proceedings of the Police Court, and looked with pitying contempt on the man beside him in the dock, who stood dejected and ashamed in the presence of Justice.

Marston's delicate refinement of character made his position ten times more unendurable than it otherwise would have been, and, except when his legal adviser stepped to the Bar to ask some question of him with reference to any portion of the evidence, he never raised his head, but remained dejected and despairing. His confinement in Newgate had considerably altered his outward appearance, and he could hardly be recognised as the erstwhile prosperous young city merchant.

The reading over of the evidence in the drawling monotone of the Assistant Clerk was painful in the extreme, and it came almost as a relief when the final question was put: "Have you anything to say why you should not be committed for trial?" and,

advised by his solicitor, he replied in tones hardly audible: "I reserve my defence." Cranbourne, on the other hand, answered boldly and almost insolently: "I know nothing about it."

The Lord Mayor committed both the accused for trial at the ensuing Sessions of the Central Criminal Court, and, as before, refused to accept bail; and the prisoners were removed to the cells below. The large audience of Court loafers and idlers gradually filed out. The commitment papers were duly filled up and signed, and the case, so far as the Mansion House was concerned, was at an end.

Mr. Hammond was allowed to visit Marston in his confinement, and remained with him until the departure of the prison van for Newgate. Then, perplexed and troubled, he returned to his home, to impart such comfort to his daughter as was possible, and to wait with as much patience as he could command.

XX. AWAITING TRIAL

MEANTIME, the two accused remained in Newgate. Like all prisoners awaiting trial, they were allowed certain privileges. Their friends were permitted to see them frequently, and to provide them with meals. Cranbourne suffered little. His one faithful friend came regularly to see him, and many were the plans discussed by the two worthies as to the future. They were by no means without hope that, if the worst came, the prisoner would yet be able to effect his escape. Both men had been in

difficult places before, such as no ordinary mortal would have dreamed of being freed from; yet the means had come when things were at the worst. The hands of both had been stained with blood, and would be again, if by this means one could aid the other.

If Cranbourne should be convicted, he would certainly be sentenced to a long term of penal servitude, and would be probably sent to the Convict Settlement in West Australia. Here was more than a gleam of hope, for there was no part of the Australian coast that was not well known to both, and the experience of the past would be invaluable if Cranbourne should be sent to that part of Her Majesty's dominions.

His friend and partner, Joseph Casey (better known as " Joe, the Bos'n "), had been in hospital when Cranbourne sailed in the " Helen," and had thus been prevented from taking the berth that had been secured for him. He sailed in another vessel, and had not long returned to England when Cranbourne landed at the London Docks and was tracked down by the astute Charlie Hancock. Through an evening paper Bos'n Joe learned of Cranbourne's arrest. He secured a front place at the Police Court, and stood behind the dock waiting patiently while the night-charges were being heard. And when Cranbourne was placed at the Bar, a peculiar whistle made him turn, and the accused man knew then that he was not friendless, for his old ally raised his hand and signalled in his well-known style. " Who is that whistling?" cried the Chief Clerk. " Clear the Court if it be repeated."

But the Court Orderly was busy at his desk, and the incident passed without further notice. And on every occasion of the accused being before the Court the faithful Joe waited throughout the tedious proceedings, and when the prisoner was removed to the cells he was permitted to see him, and cheer his loneliness.

He had been well paid for the voyage home, and had, besides, acquired a little means, by ways that he knew well how to avail himself of, and that might not bear strict investigation. He had been in constant communication with Cranbourne, and was always doing his best to serve him. He had also had interviews with the accused man's solicitor, and had been able to secure the services of counsel for the trial. So the long detention in Newgate was not without alleviation.

But to Marston the long hours had dragged on wearily enough. It was evident, too, that his solicitor was far from being convinced of his innocence, and that the evidence against him was overwhelming.

Mr. Hammond continued to work on his behalf, and did all in his power to lessen the irksomeness of his imprisonment. He had withdrawn all objection to Edith's visiting him in his trouble; and no day passed without her passing within the gloomy walls of Newgate. Still, his distress was keen, and even his bodily health suffered.

Marston's absence from the country for so long a period prior to his arrest had made it more difficult for the efforts to obtain his release on bail to

be successful, and the most fervent appeals in this direction had failed.

As the time of the Central Criminal Sittings drew near the efforts of the detectives to arrest Butler were redoubled; but nothing could be learned of him. Suicide was at first suspected; but this opinion was dispelled when it was ascertained that, on the day of his last appearance at the office of the firm, he had visited the bank and had withdrawn therefrom, in cash and notes, all there was to his credit and that of the firm. Thenceforth no movement of Butler could be traced, and all search for him was unavailing. There was, therefore, no reason for delay in bringing to trial those already in custody.

XXI. THE TRIAL

THE day at length arrived when the Central Criminal Court was opened for testing of every sort of charge in the monthly calendar of offences. And on Monday, December 15th, 1868, the proclamation was duly made by the Court Crier that "The Session of Oyer and Terminer" (and a great deal more that neither he nor anyone else understood) "was now open." The handsome and kindly Russell Gurney, Recorder of London; Thomas Chambers, Common Sergeant; and Commissioner Kerr, preceded by the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Sheriffs, with all the retinue of Sword and Mace Bearers, City Marshal, and other officials, without whom London's Chief Magistrate would

lose more than half his dignity, stood while the proclamation was shouted forth, ending with the prayer, "God Save the Queen." Then the legal functionaries took their seats in the Courts allotted to them.

The Grand Jury, having completed the work for which its members had been called together, were thanked by the Recorder, and retired. A "true bill" had been found in the case of Marston and Cranbourne, and their trial fixed for the following Wednesday, when one of Her Majesty's Judges would be in attendance.

The strain on Marston's mind during the long period of waiting had reduced the once robust man so much that his friends could scarcely recognise him in the emaciated figure that stood in the dock beside Cranbourne on the 17th of December, 1868, and, in a voice scarcely audible, pleaded "Not guilty" to the charge against him, contrasting so completely with the insolent indifference with which his companion in the dock replied to the same question.

A strong Bar had been engaged on both sides; and counsel who have since made their mark in the history of the British Empire rose and bowed to the Bench.

For the prosecution, Hardinge Gifford appeared, wearing the silk gown and bag-wig of a Q.C. for the first time, and who afterwards for many years occupied the coveted Woolsack. With him, Poland, since known as Senior Public Prosecutor.

For Marston, Serjeant Ballantyne and Montague

Williams, well-known members of the profession, appeared.

For Cranbourne, Campbell Sleigh, soon to be famous as Serjeant Sleigh, and his son, Warner Sleigh, held briefs.

The importance of the case caused the Court to be inconveniently crowded. The strength of Hardinge Gifford lay more in his ability to compress into small compass the most important parts of a case, rather than in oratorical display. He now proceeded to put to the jury the salient points of the evidence that it was intended to be put before the Court.

He would prove, he said, that Marston, one of the prisoners at the Bar, was a partner in a well-known firm of shipping agents and merchants, in which were two other members, George Graham and Charles Butler. That a certain vessel, known as the "Helen," had been purchased by the firm, ostensibly for the purpose of voyaging to Peru, in South America, a country that was then at war with the neighbouring State of Chili. That Mr. Graham, the senior partner, had been led to believe that the object of the enterprise was to run the blockade and carry arms to Peru. By an ingenious device Mr. Graham had been induced by his partners to leave London and settle in Hull at the very time of the "Helen's" purchase. "No doubt," the learned gentleman added, "the two other partners had then conspired to commit a gross and awful crime, with the aid of the prisoner, Cranbourne, and they had contrived this scheme to keep him in ignorance of it. But, like many other

frauds, the means they took to assure their own safety had been the most active to convict them, for the prosecution intended to call Mr. Graham as a witness. This they could not have done if he had conspired with his partners, or had been in their confidence, for he would have been standing in the dock with them, and the Crown would have been deprived of his evidence."

The learned Counsel further stated that he would be able to shew the Court that the prisoner Marston had conspired with the remaining partner, Butler, to defraud the Underwriters by means of spurious Bills of Lading, which purported to show that certain cases contained arms, whereas they were filled with bags of salt. It would be shewn that Marston had signed these documents, and that he and Butler had been together at the Insurance Offices when they were produced to the Underwriters. And, further, that Marston and Butler had disappeared together, and had eluded the vigilance of the detectives, who had eventually succeeded in arresting Marston, but that Butler remained at large, and that the capture of Marston immediately after that of Cranbourne, who had been arrested at the office of the firm, shewed that the men were acting in consort, and had arranged to meet at that place for the purpose of dividing the spoils. Mr. Gifford added that he intended to call the Captain of the "Helen," who would depose that he had seen the two accused conversing together previous to the time of sailing, and that the movements of Cranbourne during the voyage had aroused suspicion. He would also call the Second Mate and other members of the crew, who

had seen Cranbourne coming from the hold of the vessel at times when he had no business in that part of the ship, and that on those occasions they had been puzzled by sounds from the hold, and that they had seen a man, whom they believed to be Cranbourne, coming from there, and going hurriedly to the officers' quarters : and that plugs, such as would be used to conceal holes in the fabric of the ship, had been found by them, some in the Chief Mate's cabin, and some in the track lying between that and the hold : and holes had afterwards been seen by them in the hull of the ship, which could not have been made by accident, but had been designed to destroy her.

The details of the foundering of the " Helen " were related by Counsel, and the fact that, after the greater part of the crew had arrived at Rio Janeiro, the Second Mate was savagely attacked by two men, one of whom had been a forecastle hand on the " Helen," and had been suspected of complicity with Cranbourne in the scuttling of the ship, with the object, evidently, of preventing that officer from giving evidence before the Consul at Rio, who had opened an inquiry concerning the alleged scuttling.

It was also contended that, while it was admitted that the Chief Mate was a thoroughly competent navigator, and the orders of the Captain after the " Helen's " boats were launched were that they should keep well together and make for Rio Janeiro, the one of which Cranbourne was in command had never reached there, and he himself had not been seen nor heard of until he was arrested at the office of Graham & Co. completely disguised.

Mr. Gifford concluded an able address by dilating

on the awful crime of scuttling, and he called upon the Jury to convict the two prisoners, who were a menace to those having business on the seas.

Counsel now called George Graham, who deposed that he was a shipping agent at Lime Street, London, and at Hull, and that he had two partners, Charles Butler, and the prisoner, Edward Marston, and that at the beginning of the year his firm had bought the ship " Helen," and that Butler had strongly advocated the purchase on the ground that the vessel could be well fitted up as a blocade runner for the purpose of carrying arms to Peru, which country was then at war with Chili. He remembered Butler bringing to the office the prisoner Cranbourne some time in the month of January of this same year, and that Butler stated that he had known him for a long time, and that he was a capable sailor holding a Chief Mate's certificate, and was an applicant for the position of First Officer of the " Helen." And that the prisoner Marston accompanied them to the office : that Cranbourne had received the appointment, and the three men had left the office together on the way to the Docks as the Chief Mate was to go on duty at once.

The witness stated that he knew nothing more of the matters relating to the " Helen," as it was agreed that he should proceed to Hull for the purpose of opening a branch office there.

In consequence of information he had received, he returned to London a few weeks previous to the trial, and found that Marston and Butler had disappeared.

The next witness called was Ernest Clyde, who

stated that he held a Chief Mate's certificate, and was Second Mate on the " Helen." He joined the ship at the same time as the prisoner Cranbourne. It was the duty of the witness to see to the lading of the vessel. Cranbourne was daily on board while the " Helen " was at the Docks, and examined every article of cargo.

Butler and the prisoner Marston were on board every day. They came together, and took great interest in the articles of cargo. Cases marked as containing revolvers and other arms were passed into the hold, and he had often seen Butler and Marston conferring with Cranbourne, and, on one occasion he had seen Marston present showy-looking revolvers to some friends of Butler who were visiting the ship. These, Marston said, were samples of those in the cases. Marston and Butler had gone to Plymouth on the vessel, and he had often seen them in the hold with Cranbourne, and also in his cabin. During the voyage witness had often heard a distinct knocking sound coming from the hold at night. He had, with others, unsuccessfully tried to find the cause of the sounds. These noises were very distinct in the night preceding the foundering of the " Helen," and, in consequence of something that Row, the Boatswain, told witness, he watched carefully. Suddenly, the noises ceased, and there was a sound of rushing water in the hold, and witness turned with the object of calling the Captain. At that moment Row pointed to a man passing rapidly from the direction of the hold towards the officers' quarters. He could not say positively who this was, but in build he was like the prisoner Cranbourne.

Row followed the man, and returned shortly afterwards, bringing with him the pieces of wood produced. They were such as would be used for plugging holes.

Clyde further stated that, when the Captain came on deck, every effort was made to keep down the flow of water in the hold, and, when this did not succeed, he ordered the boats to be provisioned and launched.

Witness was in command of one, and, when the boats left the side, the attention of witness was drawn by the sailors to holes in the side of the vessel, which could not have been caused by accident, but must have been bored from the inside.

The boat of which witness was in command reached Rio Janeiro, but the Chief Mate's boat did not arrive there.

Leonard Row, the Boatswain of the " Helen," and William Hythe, a quartermaster, gave evidence as to the mysterious knocking sounds coming from the direction of the hold, and as to their having seen a man resembling the prisoner Cranbourne coming from the direction whence the noises proceeded, and going towards the officers' quarters. And Row further deposed to having picked up the wooden plugs produced, some on the way to the Chief Mate's cabin, and one just outside of the door leading to it. And also that they had noticed the holes in the hull of the ship after they had entered the boats.

Hythe also stated that, when he and a forecastle hand named Martin had been sent to the hold earlier on the day of the foundering of the ship a case was accidentally broken, and that, while it was marked

as containing arms, they found there was nothing therein but bags of salt. And that the prisoner Cranbourne, before there was any opportunity to report the matter, had ordered them both aloft, and the next day the ship foundered.

Joseph Martin, a forecastle hand, deposed that he had frequently seen the two prisoners in the cabin of Cranbourne, who was Chief Mate of the "Helen," in company with another man, whom they addressed as Butler. He had seen the cases marked as containing arms placed on board, and was present when Marston signed the Bills of Lading. He corroborated the evidence of Hythe as to the discovery that one case was broken and was found to contain only salt. He was in the Chief Mate's boat after the "Helen" was abandoned, and had seen holes in her hull that could not have been caused by accident. The Chief Mate had steered the boat, and had so altered the course that, instead of reaching Rio Janeiro, they had landed on one of the Abrodhas Islands, and that he and another hand had been sent by Cranbourne to find water; and that, on their return to the beach they could find no trace of the boat or the crew, and he had not since seen Cranbourne until after his arrest: and he believed that he and his companion had been wilfully abandoned in order to prevent their giving evidence in the case.

Further evidence having been given as to the charges of scuttling and of conspiracy, Foulger and Hancock were called, and gave evidence as to the measures taken to trace the two accused, and as to their arrest: and the case for the Prosecution was closed.

Counsel for the prisoners made able appeals on their behalf, urging that there was nothing in the evidence to connect their clients with the scuttling of the "Helen," or with any conspiracy to defraud the underwriters.

On behalf of Marston, Serjeant Ballantyne explained that his absence from the office for the few days prior to his arrest was caused by his having received a telegram calling him away from England, and that, on his return, he was on his way to the business place of the firm when he was taken into custody, and that his whole conduct was that of a man perfectly innocent of any offence.

Mr. Sleigh urged that his client was absolutely guiltless of the charge against him, and was the victim of the jealousy of some of those on the "Helen," who had schemed to ruin him.

The learned gentleman assured the jury that his client was a most honourable man, who had served his Queen with distinction during the Crimean War. "Look at this, gentlemen," exclaimed Mr. Sleigh, as he produced a medal bearing his client's name. "Does Her Majesty allow a trophy of this kind to be pinned to the breast of one who would hurl her liege subjects to destruction?" Much more was urged by counsel on behalf of Cranbourne, who closed with an urgent appeal to the jury for his acquittal.

The Judge reviewed the evidence in an impartial manner, and the Jury retired to consider their verdict.

Mr. Hammond had been in court during the trial, and he now left for the purpose of seeing his

daughter, who was awaiting him at the chambers of Marston's solicitors. She had nerved herself for the great ordeal through which she had to pass while the case was proceeding, and came forward eagerly as her father entered the room. Her face showed little of the burning desire within her for any grain of comfort that her father might have to impart. Mr. Hammond well understood what was passing in Edith's mind, and, while himself in the most intense anxiety with reference to Marston, he did all that was possible to comfort her, and to put as bright a construction upon the case as he could.

His daughter, however, could discern only too plainly that he had grave fear as to the result of the trial, and implored him to take some refreshment himself, and then to return to the court and await the verdict of the jury.

Mr. Hammond had no inclination to eat or drink, but, in order to allay Edith's anxiety as far as possible, he joined her in the light repast which her faithful attendant now put before them; and immediately set out on his way to the Old Bailey. He had become well known to the officers of the court, and had no difficulty in gaining admission. When he entered, another trial was proceeding, and he took a seat with the witnesses in waiting.

Two weary hours passed, during which Mr. Hammond was in a state of feverish anxiety, taking no notice of his surroundings, but always tortured with dread on account of the terrible ordeal through which he knew that his daughter must be passing. Next to him upon the seat upon which

he had cast himself was a finely built man of the rough sailor class, who seemed a prey to some anxiety. Now he would glance hastily towards the solicitors' table, beside which the legal advisers in the scuttling case were seated, awaiting the verdict, and again he would look with anxious eye towards the door of the jury room. He was ever on the alert for the slightest sound that might betoken the return of the jury with their verdict. Presently he whispered low to Mr. Hammond:—"A long wait, sir; a long wait. But it's all in our favour, and perhaps they won't agree at all." Glancing almost indignantly at the man who thus intruded on his melancholy, Mr. Hammond recognised the seaman whom he had often seen waiting in Newgate for admission to Cranbourne when he himself was visiting Marston. There is much in a fellowship in trouble to draw sufferers together, and Mr. Hammond turned with more sympathy as he found a companion in misfortune. "Yes," he whispered, in reply, "it's a tedious time for all of us. You are a friend of Cranbourne, are you not?" "Yes, sir," came the answer. "Twenty years we've been pals, boy and man. We've been through tougher things than this together, and I'm going to see him through whatever comes. I've lived in all parts, and if they send him out, it'll be nothing for us to——" The remarks were brought to a sudden end by the sound of a smart tap, and the eyes of all the court were at once focussed on the door from which it emanated, and immediately this was thrown open, and the twelve good men and true, comprising the jury in the scuttling case, filed in,

and were marshalled in front of the jury box in which those were seated who were engaged on the trial then proceeding, the Clerk of Arraigns turned round and whispered to the Judge, who directed that George Cranbourne and Edward Marston should be brought into court; and almost immediately the alleged scuttlers, preceded by a janitor, appeared at the bar.

"Answer to your names, gentlemen," said the Clerk, addressing the jury who had just entered. This formality having been complied with and the other tedious routine completed in a rapid monotone, occupying about half-a-minute, which seemed like an hour to those so deeply interested, there came the momentous questions, "How say you concerning George Cranbourne?" "Guilty on all counts," was the answer. "Guilty, so says your foreman, so say you all." And the man sitting by Mr. Hammond shifted noisily on the seat, and then glanced at Cranbourne in the dock, who returned his look, and then made a slight movement with his right hand towards the dock stairs. His friend nodded his head in token that he understood. While this was proceeding, the formal question was put to the jury, "How say you concerning Edward Marston?" "Guilty, my lord," was the answer. A loud cry, as of one in anguish, came from the back of the court, and the next moment Mr. Hammond saw his daughter being carried out by two men. Edith, unable to bear the suspense longer, had obtained access to the court, and, upon hearing the verdict, had collapsed from sheer sorrow.

The whole episode had lasted but a few moments. To the usual question, "Have you anything to say why sentence should not be passed on you," Cranbourne gave an almost defiant reply asserting his innocence, while Marston merely shook his head, being too overwhelmed to speak. All eyes were turned upon the Bench, as the Judge proceeded to pass sentence on the two men.

"You, George Cranbourne," said the Judge, "have been convicted of the most atrocious crime that could be conceived of. You were in a position of great responsibility, and the safety of those sailing with you should have been your care. Instead of this, for the sake of gain, you conceived a scheme for sending them in a moment to almost certain death. In the depth of night you stole from your cabin to the hold of the ship, on board of which you held important office, and there caused so much damage that the foundering of the vessel in mid-ocean ensued. Had it not been for the merciful interposition of Providence, by which a plug which you had prepared was broken, and the inrush of water discovered, there can be no doubt that the ship would have gone down so suddenly that many valuable lives would have been lost. You had no pity for anyone, and so long as you could make provision for your own safety you would have preferred that your shipmates should perish rather than that the evidence of your crime should be discovered by them. The Court can feel for you no sympathy, but only horror and contempt, and the sentence upon you is that you be transported for twenty years."

"As for you, Edward Marston, your early training and education should have taught you to restrain rather than to encourage a crime compared to which murder is almost as nothing. You became associated with the man beside you, and, with one other, who for the time at least has evaded the arm of the law, you three have clearly conspired to enrich yourselves at the cost of the lives of others. It may be that you had not so clearly calculated the cost of your crime as your fellow-prisoner, and you had no actual share in the scuttling, and this the Court takes into consideration; but it cannot do less than pass upon you the sentence of fourteen years' transportation."

The effect of the sentences on the two prisoners was remarkable for the contrast between them. Cranbourne, the bold and hardened criminal, raised his head in a manner almost defiant, and stalked to the stair leading to the cells with a nonchalant air, nodding in an offhand way to his friend Casey, who stood close to the dock. The man's past life had been full of adventure and of crime; he had had many narrow escapes from the position in which he now found himself; he knew the resourcefulness of Casey, and relied upon him even now to extricate him from the difficulty with which he was faced; he knew, at any rate, that he was not left entirely alone, but that all that human brains could devise would be used on his behalf; and the sense of companionship in trouble buoyed him up.

With Marston it was very different. His present surroundings were most painful to him. Throughout the trial he had been supported by the hope

that his character would be cleared. The verdict was a heavy blow to him, and, now that the dread sentence had been passed, he was prostrate in mind and body. He reeled, and would have fallen but that the warder at his side supported him. He was carried below, and it was a considerable time before consciousness was restored to him, and Edward Marston awoke to find himself a convict under sentence of transportation.

XXII. "BEYOND THE SEAS"

MEANTIME, Edith Hammond had been conveyed by her father to the office of the solicitor, which she had so imprudently left in order that she might attend the Court. She was quite unfit to be moved for some hours, and then her father, assisted by her faithful attendant, conveyed her to London Bridge Station, and thence to their house.

For some weeks she lay at death's door, having been stricken with fever, in addition to the terrible shock she had received.

Mr. Hammond himself felt the strain upon him almost more than he could bear. His faith in Marston had been complete, and now, despite the evidence to which he had listened and the verdict of the jury, he could not believe that this man had been guilty of the crime of which he had been convicted.

Again and again did he review the whole of the circumstances in his mind, and he was determined to make every effort possible to obtain some miti-

gation of the sentence, or to bring about further investigation with a view of clearing the character of Marston.

In this he was in no way encouraged by the legal gentlemen who had been engaged for the defence at the trial. With these Mr. Hammond had more than one consultation, but they could hold out no hope that anything more could be done, and he had the mortification of seeing that they were convinced of Marston's guilt.

Meanwhile, the two convicts were detained in Newgate pending arrangements for their deportation with a large number of prisoners to West Australia. In the case of both men, the gaol rules with reference to the visits of friends were slightly relaxed on account of the long term for which they were to be transported; and Cranbourne's old ally and faithful friend, "Bos'n Joe," was permitted to see him more than once in the presence of a warder. Under such surveillance, it was not possible that the two pals could make any definite plans as to the future beyond those previously discussed when the probability of Cranbourne's conviction had forced itself upon the minds of both before the trial commenced. The ingenuity of Casey, however, proved fully equal to this emergency, and, by a code of signalling, to which both men had accustomed themselves in bygone days, Cranbourne was assured that he would not be left to sink, but that his pal would be in Australia as soon as the convict himself. In fact, Casey had already ascertained the name of the vessel that had been chartered for the conveyance of convicts to the penal settlement, and

the probable date of her sailing, and was now actively bestirring himself to obtain a berth on board in any capacity. He was known to many captains and officers of the merchant service as a capable seaman, and his appearance was much in his favour. So that he had good reason to believe that his quest for a position of some kind on board would be rewarded with success, especially as convict ships were not altogether popular with seamen. Once aboard, Casey knew that many opportunities would present themselves of doing something to make his pal's position less irksome to him.

Beyond this, for the present, he had no settled plan, but trusted to the luck which had stood him in such good stead in the past to devise some scheme by which he might further help the man with whom, as he tersely expressed it, he had been "in many a tight corner."

The faithfulness of Bos'n Joe, when his own person was in jeopardy by the exercise of it, might well be taken note of by many who will not lift a finger to help a friend in need. It is a light thing to give your word, and the many will do this, and climb over the shoulders of the expectant recipient of something in fulfilment, but the height of the promiser, when he has used another to achieve his purpose, renders his victim too small for his eye to notice, and the poor friend may remain poor for ever for all the care his erstwhile patron will give to him.

Joe Casey was not a saint, nor had he intention of becoming anything of the kind. He was not honest in the general acceptation of the word. He

could lie without scruple to save himself or a friend, but his word given to that friend was a bond that was certain of fulfilment, and in this assurance Cranbourne during his long days of imprisonment in Newgate was filled with hope.

In Marston's case the hardship was much greater. A man always accustomed to command and to be obeyed, he found it irksome in the extreme to be subjected to the petty tyranny of the gaol officers, to be compelled to do all sorts of menial work, to be threatened with loss of marks and other penalties, under the plea that he was skulking and shirking his work.

Prison warders are of two kinds. There are those who have an innate refinement of character, which leads them to pity men who have fallen from some high station to the degradation of convicted felons, and to make their case as easy to them as discipline will permit; and there are those who have no feelings for anyone, but will rather gloat over the sufferings of those who have fallen, and will treat with greater harshness the man who once occupied a good position and whose very appearance and bearing prove delicate rearing and good birth.

To this latter class of warder Marston had the misfortune to be consigned. Nothing that he did was right, and he was always under punishment for some trivial offence or neglect of duty which he was not able to discharge to the satisfaction of the martinet under whose immediate supervision he found himself. There was, of course, no redress, and nothing remained but to bear with all the injustice and petty tyranny to which he was subjected,

until the very excess of his misery found its own remedy.

The gaol surgeon, on his rounds, had noticed this particular prisoner, and had also marked the treatment to which he was subjected, and, finding that Marston was in ill-health, he took the first opportunity of ordering his removal to the gaol hospital. There he had some relief from the strict discipline which he had previously undergone, and Mr. Hammond was permitted to see him more frequently: so that some alleviation came at last.

Thus three months passed by, and then those prisoners under sentence of transportation were conveyed to the convict prison at Portsea, and were soon afterwards embarked on the convict ship, "Dorset."

Marston had not seen Edith Hammond since his conviction, but her father had told him of her illness and of the tardy progress she was making towards recovery. At her earnest request, he had also conveyed a message assuring him of her belief in his innocence and of her undying love.

All was now bustle on board the "Dorset," while the final arrangements were made for sailing.

A company of infantry, under a Captain and Lieutenant, had charge of the motley crowd of convicts, who were confined below and were strictly guarded, rendering any attempt at escape hopeless.

Some delay was occasioned owing to the desertion of two of the sailors, who, when they found of what class the prisoners were and the large number on board, had taken the first opportunity that occurred to leave the vessel, preferring to remain idle for a

time rather than suffer the drudgery and risk of a berth on board.

The complement was finally made up by the agents sending two men to take the place of the deserters, and immediately orders were given to weigh anchor.

Both the new hands were in the second mate's watch, and both were known to many in the forecastle. One especially, a fine sturdy specimen of the British sailor, was hailed with many expressions of goodwill by his messmates, and cries of " Hallo, Joe, what brings you on board such a craft as this?" "And how's the world been using you, boatswain?" and " Glad to have you in the foc'sle, anyhow, lad, but would like better to see you with the whistle," showed that Joe Casey—for it was he—had not been one to incur the dislike of men with whom he had previously sailed.

Joe greeted each one with goodwill, and fell to the work assigned to him with readiness, showing that he was as good a sailor as he was staunch to his friend.

Nothing of any moment occurred during the voyage. The officers in command of the military were good-hearted and capable soldiers who knew their work and handled their men with tact and firmness, never permitting any breach of discipline and never imposing work merely for the sake of it. Hence the rank and file had respect for their officers, and showed a willing obedience for every call of duty.

The convicts were, as a body, well behaved and quiet on board, and the ship's officers found their

duties much easier to be fulfilled than had been the case on other voyages of a like kind.

Marston quietly resigned himself to his fate, and, while heartbroken at the thought of the misery and degradation to which not only he, but also those dear to him were reduced through his conviction, resolved to bear his trouble as a man, and so to conduct himself as to deserve the goodwill of those who were placed over him.

Already his quiet and refined bearing had made some impression on those in whose custody he was, and they did all in their power to make his position less irksome to him. His fellow-convicts, with that instinct which is often observed even among the most degraded criminals, showed signs of sympathy, and even of respect towards him. At the morning wash one bucket was always placed by itself for his sole use; and many other things were done which, trifling in themselves, showed nevertheless that a distinction was considered to exist between him and them.

As to Cranbourne, nothing seemed to trouble him. He had, by many hairbreadth escapes, learned to take the world as he found it, and the hard bed and coarse fare were regarded by him as part of an ordinary life's experience, and were a great deal better than he had had to endure in the course of a roving and not quite innocent past.

Surveillance was relaxed somewhat on board, partly by reason of the impossibility of escape and partly on account of the general good behaviour and discipline in all parts of the ship. Hence it often came about that there was opportunity for a

brief and whispered colloquy between Cranbourne and " Bos'n Joe," as his pal was still called by his messmates.

Joe had been rated as quartermaster by the captain, who found that he was one of the most capable seamen on board; so that while enjoying eight hours off, with only four on, and having other advantages, the most highly prized by Cranbourne and himself was the greater opportunity this gave for secret communication between them.

Thus Cranbourne was made more fully aware of many things concerning the probable experience of convict life in West Australia, and of Joe's plans for him, than he otherwise would have been; he also was much better provided with food, for Joe knew well how to placate the ship's cook and his assistants, and could obtain many delicacies intended for the cabin and pass them to a place agreed upon between him and his pal, to be secured by the latter as soon as opportunity offered.

Meantime, as the " Dorset " made headway towards the port whence the prisoners would be conveyed to the convict prison, a scheme was being formulated between the two worthies which gave new hope to the one and desperate resolve to the other, and, when the weary voyage drew near its close, the heart of Cranbourne beat with fresh hope, and he already felt that it would be but a very small part of the twenty years' sentence that he would have to serve.

There was no sympathy between him and Marston, and seldom was there a word spoken by one to the other, and then only a passing greeting, for

Marston kept himself aloof as much as possible.

Bos'n Joe continued to discharge his duty as quartermaster entirely to the satisfaction of the captain and officers, and no suspicion was aroused as to his connexion with any one of the convicts. His long service in all classes of vessels and his intimate knowledge of every part of a ship stood him in good stead, however, and he contrived to communicate still with Cranbourne.

Cranbourne had absolute faith in his ally, and knew perfectly that, however well he might be guarded and how impossible any rescue might appear, he would not be left to serve his long sentence if human ingenuity could devise a scheme by which escape might become possible.

To Marston, all unaccustomed as he was to the scenes which were being enacted, the misery of his present surroundings was intolerable. With the other convicts, he was confined below; so that any attempt to escape by swimming or otherwise, now that the ship was nearing land, might be made impossible. Consequently he knew nothing of the position of the vessel or of the progress made. In almost complete darkness, and without a friend among the wretched crowd around him, he sat, forlorn and hopeless. The coarse oaths and ribald songs of those near to him sank as molten lead into his soul. He was past all hope, so far as this world was concerned; and the more he considered his case and the horrible details of it, the more convinced did he become that the kindly efforts of Mr. Hammond and his friends to gain his release or any alleviation of his present sufferings would be fruitless.

The facts stated in court and the unhappy accident of his absence from England at a critical period, which had been made such a handle against him by those engaged in the prosecution, precluded all hope of any effort or appeal being successful.

In his anguish of mind his thoughts turned to his former happy experience, to the time when he first became connected with the firm of Graham, Butler & Co., and of his rising prosperity; and then to this disastrous ending of everything.

Strong man though he was, he gave way now to utter despair, and only desired that death might come to him quickly and that thus he might find a means of escape from what he could but believe was an endless misery.

His thoughts carried him back to the days of happiness that he had passed in the Hammond home, and thence to Edith and her misery at the calamity which had befallen him. He knew that she believed in his innocence, and that this would come to light in some way that she could not now define. But still he knew that her misery would now be even greater than his own.

He also remembered with bitterness the obloquy that must rest on her father as having been his intimate friend. And the thought of his name, once so well honoured, being coupled with that of a convict, brought deeper anguish to his soul.

All around him were curses and blasphemy, with occasionally a command from one of the guards to keep order.

Above was the rush of feet, as the sailors obeyed some command with reference to the taking in

sail; this was all that could be gathered by the men imprisoned below concerning their nearness to the land, and the impending years of confinement and hard labour. There was no consolation, except in the thought that the latter conditions could scarcely be worse than the present.

To Marston, alone among the crowd, there came no comfort, and his soul knew no hope.

The rough fare to which he had by this time become accustomed was now brought in, and, while the convicts generally devoured it with greediness, Marston merely picked at a piece of the coarse brown bread and scarcely swallowed a mouthful.

There was some commotion on deck as the pilot boat came alongside, and despatches were handed to the captain, and letters sorted and delivered to some of the officers. The voyage had been long and tedious, and the mail had reached Fremantle some weeks before the convict ship had been sighted.

The night passed with more than the usual miseries, and Marston arose with the previous day's depression redoubled.

As soon as the first gleam of light appeared the ship was got under way, and the early termination of the voyage infused a little interest even in the most careworn and depressed.

Little could be seen by the convicts of what was being done on deck, but they knew that rapid progress was being made through the water.

Marston almost envied the alertness of his fellow-prisoner, Cranbourne, who, while applying himself

vigorously to the consumption of the food served out to him, was in an attitude of constant listening, and was restlessly passing from one part of the " 'tween-deck " prison to another.

Marston, amidst all his misery, noted this, and began to take some interest in the man's movements. Presently he saw that Cranbourne paused in his restless wanderings, and appeared to be listening to a sound above him. Accustomed as he was to observing many kinds of signals, he became more and more interested, and was able to discover that the knocking that he heard was not of any casual kind, but that there was a method in it, which, upon careful attention, proved to consist of shorter and longer tappings, as those of the ordinary telegraph code. While engaged in attempting to decipher this, Marston's mind was drawn away for the time from the misery of his surroundings, and he was even able to read some portion of that which was being signalled and which was evidently so interesting to Cranbourne.

Marston had no intention of eavesdropping, but was merely embracing any opportunity of doing something to draw his thoughts from his present depression. As he became more interested, he found himself actually interpreting the meaning of the sounds, and could read parts of that which was evidently a message; the words " long jetty," " plan," " hide," and others, the meaning of which was not clear to him, though, from Cranbourne's attitude, it was plain that he had grasped the sense of all.

Marston's attention, however, was now drawn to that which more nearly concerned himself.

The ship was no longer passing through the water, but was clearly being manœuvred in such wise as to bring her alongside a wharf or jetty. Abruptly the telegraphic signs ceased. Orders were rapidly shouted, and there were sounds as of a hawser being passed over. In a little while there was the grinding noise well known to Marston, which told that the object had been attained and that the end of a tedious voyage had been reached, and the ship was being made fast to the jetty.

The usual examination and searching of the prisoners was now carried out, and they were marched to the gangway alongside the pier, and, closely guarded, began the weary march over the longest jetty in the world.

They were a poor dejected set of men, as a whole, who thus passed on towards the convict prison which was to be their living tomb for years to come, and no word passed between them. Once only was there a momentary break in the monotonous tramp, when, after a few yards had been traversed, Cranbourne, who was a little to the front of Marston, stumbled over a projecting bolt in the planking and fell heavily in the track near to the edge of the jetty. A warder roughly raised him, cursing his bungling, and Cranbourne, casting a look of hate upon him, held his hand to his mouth, as if suffering great pain. The band of prisoners moved on, passing over the jetty, towards the convict prison.

This was a massive structure, constructed in great part of the stone from adjoining quarries. A wall,

ten feet high, surrounded it. Large double gates were in the centre of the wall, and, in response to the knock of one of the guards, a warder opened a latchet. After a short parley the gates were opened, and the prisoners passed into the courtyard. One by one they were searched and subjected to medical examination. Each one was taken to a separate cell and locked up.

With one exception, they were a downcast, hopeless set of men. Cranbourne only, despite his long sentence, moved with light step, and entered his cell as if well content with his surroundings.

At five o'clock the prison bell sounded to call the prisoners to the evening meal. All were mustered in the corridor and marched to the long dining hall.

At the sound of the bolt in the cell next to that in which Cranbourne was confined, he put his finger to his mouth, and hastily took from it a small rolled packet, slipping it into his shoe. The next moment the door of his cell swung open, and he joined his fellow-convicts in the corridor. He ate heartily of the coarse bread and hominy provided, and rose with the others at the word of the chief warder. None noticed that, as he did so, he put his hand to his shoe and passed something from it to his mouth. Each prisoner was again searched before being locked up for the night. Nothing, however, was found, and Cranbourne passed to his cell. He put his back to the wall, and, standing in such a position as to hide himself from anyone peering in from the grating, he once more took the transferred packet from his mouth and intently

studied every mark upon it. The light was not very good, but he contrived to decipher the hieroglyphics it contained, which to any other reader would have been absolutely unintelligible.

He and Bos'n Joe had, however, for many years been accustomed to communicate with one another by signs and marks when in difficulties, or when it was advisable that their confidences should not be shared by others; and they had been at no little pains to concoct a system of stenography which they alone could understand.

Hence the mysterious tappings which had been overheard by Marston when on the convict ship. Hence also the stumble by Cranbourne on the long jetty, and the passing of his hand over his mouth as he recovered himself. In that moment he had received from the faithful Casey a slip of paper, carefully folded into the smallest possible compass, and the apparent injury to his mouth was merely feigned for the purpose of conveying to that receptacle the tiny scrap that meant so much to him.

The signalling taps had told the convict where his ally would be awaiting the passing of the gang over the long jetty; and Joe's astuteness had enabled him to reach the exact spot and there to lie concealed beneath the planking, and successfully to transfer to Cranbourne the promised package.

Now, all that the latter had to do was to avoid the ever-watchful eye of the warder on duty, and to decipher the writing and make himself fully master of the directions it contained. Small as was the paper, it contained a complete plan of the outer wall of the prison, showing the position of the road

beyond. Carefully inscribed hieroglyphics plainly told Cranbourne of the angle at which he was to expect aid from his pal, and a dotted line indicated the spot where he would find the rope which was to help him to freedom.

No date was given for the attempted escape, but the convict knew well that he would receive further communication from his friend, and a spot, marked on the plan, showed where this would be given.

So small was the scrap of writing that even Cranbourne, with all his previous experience of like communications, and no little difficulty in making himself master of the meaning. Time after time, as opportunity offered, was the missive stealthily withdrawn from its hiding place and laboriously conned over.

Meantime, the prisoners were daily taken, in charge of armed warders, to the places where road making or repairing required their services. Seldom were they brought back till the evening, the mid-day meal being served out to them at their place of labour.

Marston and Cranbourne were in the same gang, and each conducted himself in such manner as to gain the approbation of those who had charge of the prisoners. Even the warders, accustomed as they were to all sorts of men, and suspicious, as they had become of everyone under their control, felt some kind of sympathy for the former, who was always ready to obey every order, and had evidently resigned himself to a fate which it was hopeless to combat. As to Cranbourne, his good-humoured and even jaunty bearing, and the ease

with which he handled the tools entrusted to him, won for him the favourable notice of those who did not readily give a word of praise or encouragement.

Not often did these two prisoners pass a word to one another. Marston had no kindly feeling towards a man who was clearly guilty of an atrocious crime, and who was the cause of his own calamity; and Cranbourne despised his fellow-convict for a milksop.

As time passed, however, companionship in misfortune, distance from home, and the fact that neither had anyone else to speak to, tended somewhat to overcome these barriers, and the men became more communicative.

XXIII.—THE GAOL BREAKERS

THUS many days passed, no event of importance occurring to break the monotony of convict life.

Marston and Cranbourne were thrown much together, and, strange as it may appear to those who have never passed through the ordeal of prison labour and discipline, these two, ill assorted as they were, became familiar with each other.

Their work of road-making daily took the prisoners farther from the gaol. Thick fogs obscured the light, and those in charge often deemed it necessary to take the gang back to the security of the prison before the regulation time.

On one of these days, as Marston and Cranbourne turned in answer to the whistle of the chief

warder, the former being a few yards behind, there was the sound of a stone being moved; at the same moment Cranbourne stooped and adjusted his tools prior to leaving his work for the day. Then he stepped out and came up with Marston, and the pair answered to their numbers as the roll of prisoners was called. " Fall in. March," came the orders in quick succession, and the gang of men moved forward on their way to the gaol. Work was set for them about the yard, within the walls, until the whistle called them to supper. And, this over, the prisoners were sent to their cells for the night.

Cranbourne, before lying down, took from his shoe a small piece of paper, and, standing with his back to the door of his cell, listened carefully to the footfalls of the warder on duty in the corridor as he passed on his way, and then opening the precious scrap he read and re-read it with intense interest. To one unacquainted with code signs, or even those formulated by " Bos'n Joe " and himself, the few lines and dots, and the blur in one corner, could mean nothing. To Cranbourne these, being interpreted, told of bold adventure and a bid for liberty that only the hardiest of men would have considered for a moment.

The falling stone of the afternoon, as he and Marston turned in response to the warder's whistle, had been enough to show Cranbourne that his friend had taken advantage of the fog, and had signalled to him the spot where some communication could be found from his concealed but ever watchful friend. It had been the work of a moment for the

convict to secure and hide the missive as he gathered his tools together. And now, in the comparative security of his cell, he could without difficulty trace the meaning of the hieroglyphics. To him the blur represented the fog, which might or might not last for another day. The converging lines served to point out a certain angle of the prison wall. The half-dozen or more of dots told of the position of a rope, with reference to the yard. A few more hints made it plain to Cranbourne that, should the fog continue, an attempt at escape on the next afternoon must be made, and would be aided from without, and that horses would be in readiness at five o'clock.

This was enough for the long-sentence prisoner. Detection meant death; but what was that in the face of release from the durance to which he was at present subjected. So, with renewed hope and courage undaunted, Cranbourne screwed his tiny spark of promise into the smallest compass possible, concealed it in his clothing, and ere the warder's footsteps were once more approaching, was lying, apparently asleep, upon his hard stretcher.

No one would have believed that the man who moved so easily among his fellow-convicts on the morning of the next day and took his place at the breakfast table in such an unconcerned way carried with him a weighty secret contained in a tiny scrap of paper hidden in his shoe—a secret that meant to him death or liberty. Yet so it was. Cranbourne had read and re-read his talisman till its contents and their terrible import had been completely mastered by him. And, as he glanced with apparent

unconcern at the clouds above when the prisoners mustered in the yard prior to setting out for their day's labour, his practised eye told him that the fog of yesterday had been as nothing compared to that which would envelop the sea-skirt district before many hours, and that the day would decide his fate.

Coolly he surveyed the angle of the prison wall, as he and Marston passed side by side through the heavy gates; and as the two, upon reaching the spot where their tools had been left, selected those for present use they passed a few words together in low tones, and were soon engaged in their ordinary work, incurring no word of censure from the warder in charge. When the two gathered with their fellows in response to the whistle calling them to the mid-day meal, they were unnoticed as they spoke quietly to each other, and the coarse food was eaten with apparent relish by both.

Early in the afternoon Cranbourne's prediction that a fog would arise was verified. The warders glanced anxiously upward as the light began to fade, and soon the whistle calling the gang to muster was sounded. As Cranbourne and Marston moved towards the place assigned for the general "Fall in," a few words were passed between them, and the men were immediately afterwards formed up and marched back to the gaol.

As soon as the heavy gates were closed, the chief warder went through the usual routine of calling numbers. Those of Cranbourne and Marston were the last on the list. "Speak up," said the officer. "Why don't you attend to your work? What do you think I am here for?" There was a pause for

a few seconds, and the two numbers were again called. The warders went hurriedly through the ranks. "Not here, sir," exclaimed one. For a moment all was confusion. The chief warder was the first to recover himself; he issued a few brief orders, and in response to them two officers took the prisoners to their cells, while a third went to call the Governor. The loud clanging of the prison bell was heard as that functionary hastily came into the yard. Lights gleamed in every direction, and a search of the gaol premises was immediately made. Messengers were despatched to the officer in command of the military forces, and to the Inspector General of Police, and parties were soon searching the neighbourhood in every direction. There was great hindrance on account of the fog, and no trace could be found of the men.

Within the walls of the gaol a thorough search was instituted, without result. That the missing convicts were in their rank as the gang entered the yard was clear, for two warders were in the rear of the party, and no one could have fallen out of the company unnoticed.

Lights were now gleaming in every part of the gaol premises, and a careful investigation revealed the fact that a rope was hanging over the wall at a spot that formed an agle at one corner of the gaol ground.

It became evident that the two prisoners, aided by some confederate from without, had contrived to seize the moment when the gang was being mustered, after the gates were closed, to scale the wall by the help of this cord, and that the time had

been carefully arranged when all the warders would be attending to the men at roll call, and when the fog would hide the movements of the escaping convicts.

It was remembered, too, that Cranbourne and Marston had been of late engaged in the same portion of the road then being constructed, and that they were the last to press through the gates on that day. The rope had been passed over the wall, evidently, at the very moment of the muster, and, by some means, as yet unknown, communication had been contrived between the convicts and friends outside.

All search by the military and the police proved utterly fruitless, and, except for the fact that two valuable horses were missing from the stable of the leading hotel, and that the sound of galloping hoofs had been heard by some in the neighbourhood, no clue could be found.

After many days even this mystery was more than half forgotten, and the usual routine inside and outside of the convict prison continued, as if no such thing as an unprecedented escape from gaol, under the eyes of the warders themselves, had occurred. Telegrams and instructions of all kinds flew still from police camp to police camp, but they resulted in nothing.

XXIV. "HANDS UP"

THREE months had passed since the gaol-breaking incident, when the memory of it was suddenly awakened in the minds of the police and of the general public, by a series of audacious robberies under arms, of a character scarcely equalled even in the early days of Australian life. In each case the very audacity of the crime had aided the success of the perpetrators.

The first instance of the kind reported to the police was in the Mansfield district of Victoria. The coach conveying passengers to the nearest station on the way to Melbourne was passing a narrow gorge, in broad daylight, when the driver was perplexed at finding an obstruction across the road in the form of heavy trunks of trees. Hastily handing the reins to a box passenger, the coach-driver jumped from his seat and began to remove the obstruction. Three male passengers alighted with the idea of assisting the driver. They had seized upon the topmost log of the barricade, and were lifting it from its position, when a man, whose face was partly covered with a black mask, rose up suddenly from behind the obstruction and, presenting a revolver at the head of the driver, said, in cool drawling tones:—"That'll do, mates, don't take your hands off the log, or this man's brains will go to feed the dingoes." So sudden was the movement that not one of those holding the log had a moment for thought other than of the jeopardy in which the driver was placed, and none moved from the spot.

At the same instant a tall well-built man sprang from a clump of saplings and approached the coach window. Like the man at the barricade, he wore a mask of black crape fastened to the front of his hat and falling over his face. "Throw up your hands," he said, addressing those inside the coach, "and you, sir, don't try fumbling at your breast-pocket or you may get hurt. I'm not responsible for the tricks this little article may play, and it may go off at any moment." At the same instant he presented a revolver at the head of the man whom he had addressed, and who had made a movement as if to take something from the inside pocket of his coat.

There were but three passengers remaining in the coach, and these were now bidden to alight. This they did, being still covered with the revolver. The next order was to the man who had had the temerity to put his hand to his breast-pocket. "Take off that coat," came the command, and it was tremblingly obeyed. "Now throw it as far away as you can," were the next words, and it was done. "Go up to the near wheeler," called the bushranger, "and unfasten the harness at the top. That right's; now unbuckle the collar. Oh, we shall make a groom of you before we've done," said the man, as harness and collar fell to the ground. "Now, come round here and do the same with the off-wheeler. That's first rate," he added, as the same result followed. "Now unhitch the swingle bars. Good; I'll recommend you to Cobb & Company for a billet; you're a born genius as a groom. Now just go to the boot and throw out the

mail bags. Now look what you're doing, and don't leave any in there, or you'll get a bullet through you quick enough. That'll do; now put them down handy."

So terrified had the passengers become by the sudden appearance of the bushrangers that they had quickly complied with every order, standing, as they did, at the muzzle of the revolver. And now the man who had guarded the driver and passengers at the barricade gave the word for them to leave go of the log, to which they had held in their terror, and to throw up their hands. This they did, and they were next bidden to rejoin those by the coach. Passengers and driver were compelled to stand together, each holding his hands over his head.

While the short man stood over them, revolver in hand, the other coolly examined the mail bags, and stuffing the contents of the whole into the largest of them, he carried it a few yards into the bush to the thickest part of the scrub and fastened it to the saddle of one of the two horses that were standing there, the bridles hitched to saplings. He then rejoined his mate, and together they marshalled their prisoners two deep, and after compelling each one to divest himself of coat and vest, the order was given that they should march back on the road by which the coach had been travelling; the threat being held over them that the first who looked back would be shot down.

It may appear strange to those who have not passed through such an experience, that seven able-bodied men would submit themselves to such an outrage, or permit two highwaymen to thus hold

them in complete control; but the surroundings can never be understood by those who would thus criticise their fellows. Men who would readily face danger and death in battle and who would flinch from no conflict where the chances are by any means equal, when divested of every weapon of defence and confronted with loaded revolvers in the hands of unscrupulous desperadoes, can scarcely be blamed for allowing themselves to be so intimidated, at least for the time, as to yield to that which they have no power to resist, and to be passive in the hands of those holding them in durance rather than expose, not only their own lives, but those also of their comrades, by a resistance that could not possibly prevail. Hence the driver and passengers, however unwilling, obeyed the order given, and tramped back on the road they had come; nor did anyone of them glance back towards the spot where they had left their assailants until the sound of galloping hoofs told of the fact that the bushrangers had decamped with their booty. Then the driver turned and rapidly made his way towards the coach, followed by those who were his companions in misfortune.

Except for the fact that one of the horses was missing and that all valuables had been taken from the garments that the passengers had been compelled to discard, everything was found as it had been left when the robbers had sent them on their weary march.

A little alteration in the adjustment of the harness was all that was required to re-horse the coach with a team of three-in-hand instead of four, and

another hour's travelling brought them to the nearest bush stage. One man was in charge of the place, and when the circumstances were told him, he, in turn, related the facts of a visit to him a few hours before by two men, whose description tallied with that of the bushrangers who had stopped the coach. Of the groom-in-charge they had enquired carefully as to when the coach would arrive at the stage. The man concealed nothing from them, believing that they were from one of the stations with the mail or for the purpose of receiving a parcel, according to the custom of the time.

The coach, with a change of horses, duly arrived at Mansfield, where information of the robbery and a full description of the bushrangers was given to the police.

Troopers were sent to the spot where the outrage had been committed, and the Chief Commissioner despatched extra police officers and two black trackers to endeavour to trace the men; but owing to recent rains having obliterated the tracks, it was impossible to gain any accurate knowledge of the route taken by them after they had been lost sight of by those who had been "held up."

The loss of the mail bags was, of course, the most serious incident of the robbery. These contained much that was of value, including cheques and other negotiable securities. Some of these were passed through the bank before those who had drawn them could be aware of the loss, and much inconvenience was caused; so that the police force in the district was continued at the increased

strength and no effort was neglected to obtain such information as might lead to the arrest of the miscreants.

While these investigations were proceeding, a report came of a daring bank robbery at Deniliquin, New South Wales. It happened that the accountant was the only person in the bank at the time, one of the officers being away on sick leave, and the manager having gone to some distance on bank business. Early in the afternoon a man walked into the bank and stood in front of the counter. The accountant stepped forwards to attend to him, and the man passed a cheque over and requested payment in notes. As the official was examining the document, he was suddenly confronted with a revolver, the muzzle of which was pressed against his head. At the same instant the supposed customer called upon the young man to throw up his hands. Almost before he could comply with the order, a tall man rushed in from the street and, vaulting lightly over the bank counter, seized the victim from behind and securely bound his arms, then, thrusting a wedge of wood into his mouth and tying it with a cord at the back of his neck, he pushed him into the manager's room, the door of which stood open, and returned to the man in the bank office. It was the work of only a few moment to rifle the safe, which was unlocked, and both men passed out of the building with the notes and gold they had secured.

It was just at the hour of day when the business of the bank was least brisk and very few customers would be likely to enter it. No doubt the time had

been very carefully arranged for that very purpose. Some considerable interval elapsed, therefore, without any alarm being given, and the robbers had every opportunity of making good their escape.

Nearly an hour passed before the manager entered the bank, and, passing into his room, found the accountant gagged and bound and, indeed, in a most exhausted condition. He hastily released him and applied such restoratives as he had at his command. As soon as this was done, attention was turned to the safe, and it was not difficult to discover that a very large sum had been extracted, though the exact amount could not be known until the books were examined.

No time was lost in communicating with the police, and in a few minutes troopers were scouring the road for some trace of the offenders. With little or no clue to guide them, their work was more than usually difficult, and even with the aid of black trackers they were unable to effect an arrest.

The roads were in bad condition for finding or following any clue, and the men had had a good start before any word had been given of the outrage.

The affair caused a great sensation. The newspapers were full of details concerning "the Deniliquin Bank Robbery," and many false rumours as to men answering the description of the miscreants having been seen and recognised in one place after another were brought to the police. In some cases persons were arrested and detained,

but were soon released upon showing that they had been in quite a different part at the time of the robbery. After a few weeks the alarm caused to residents of inland towns by the knowledge that two desperate criminals were at large altogether ceased. Nothing could be learned of the movements of the men after leaving the bank; and, except that it was known that they had left Deniliquin on horseback and that a description of them as to height and voice tallied with that of the Mansfield bushrangers, nothing could be ascertained, though it was now fairly certain that the escaped convicts from the prison and the bank robbers were identical.

XXV. RODETZKI AGAIN.

WHILE these events were occurring in Australia little or nothing was known of them in England. The wonderful cable connection had not been completed, and news of the doings of those on the one continent filtered through very slowly to those on the other. An occasional announcement would appear on the boards of an evening paper of bush-ranging outrages, but these had little interest for the public.

Mr. Hammond and his daughter lived their quiet life in the old home by the Thames. The former went daily to his office, as of old, and no change appeared in him.

Edith, always loving and watchful for her father's comfort, would not let him see the pain

that gnawed at her heart, nor did he note any difference in his beloved daughter.

People came and went, as before the great trouble of her life. Very few knew of the depth of suffering she endured, or of the fiery trial which she had passed through. Always trustful and with that pure religion and undefiled which allows nothing to come between the Great First Cause and the creature of His Hand, she could lift her heart to Him in the midst of all difficulty and all perplexity and believe still that a way would be found out of all the evil that had befallen her and those dear to her. Her confidence in the Great First Cause led her to have faith also in those with whom she was associated. Nothing could make her believe that Marston was anything more than the victim of a terrible mistake, and still she assured herself that his innocence would be completely established. As in the days before she had met him, lovers came and went, so now, one and another sought her hand, but always was there the same result: her heart was not free, and she had no love to give in response to that offered to her.

To the passing visitor she was the same kind, gentle hostess, but nothing could move her from the firm resolve to love, to hope, and to wait.

Mr. Hammond's confidence in Marston had been rudely shaken. As a matter of business, he could not but realise that the evidence against his friend was of a character that could not be controverted, and yet always through his mind would pass the thought:—"Can it not be that there is some

awful mistake, and that Marston may be the victim of circumstances?"

Those who had known the young man in his business life were utterly bewildered when they learned of the charge against him and of his conviction, and many were inclined to the belief that there had been, in his case, a terrible miscarriage of justice. Among these were Captain Frankston and Ernest Clyde. They had both known Marston for some years in connection with shipping matters, and it had always been realised by them that he was one who might be fully relied upon. It was no easy matter to shake their confidence in him, and after the conviction they often spoke of the matter as one open to question.

It happened that they had met Mr. Hammond at the office of Rodetzki after the trial, and while the astute detective scouted the idea of there being even a possibility of Marston's innocence being proved, he promised that he would not by any means relax his efforts to discover the whereabouts of Butler and Harvey, and to bring them to justice. And, with this assurance, the three were compelled to be content. They hoped that, if these were discovered, some further light would be thrown on the matter of the scuttling and that Marston's character might yet be cleared. Rodetzki tried to impress on them the fact that no amount of convictions of other persons could make their friend's position any better; yet these honest friends clung to the hope that with the discovery of those who had evaded the clutch of the law their own friend's innocence would be established.

XXVI. "THE NORFOLK"

CAPTAIN FRANKSTON had been recently appointed to the command of the "Norfolk," of Money Wigram's Line, and had succeeded in getting Ernest Clyde engaged as chief mate—no easy matter, for many men of longer standing with the firm awaited such a position. But the company had great faith in Captain Frankston's judgment, and yielded to his wish; and very soon after their interview with Rodetzki these two were on their way to Melbourne.

The usual complement of first, second, and third class passengers had secured berths, and all the various traits of character might be noted. Many who were in the saloon would have been wiser to content themselves with a lower grade berth and so saved the amount of extra cost for use on their arrival in Melbourne; but Australia was at that time believed by many to be a place where all that was required of immigrants was to possess themselves of pick and shovel and tin dish and to scrape the ground in order to secure heaps of nuggets, and to return to the old country, perhaps even by the very same vessel on her homeward voyage, with enormous fortunes; and they would spend all in present luxury and leave the future to take care of itself. Alas! for the many: the future took no more care of them than they took of the present, and a few weeks of hotel life in Melbourne found them completely stranded, with no hope of getting work or of gaining the wealth about which they had so fondly dreamed. Some who had

travelled by saloon passage to Melbourne were to be found at the docks pleading with the captains of outgoing ships to be allowed to work their passage back again.

In the second cabin were men of a slightly different character. Many of them were sons of farmers who were going to the new home in the hope of being able to secure land for themselves, and who built upon the thought that in a few years they would be able to send for fathers and mothers, and they would all be together again, with large holdings and plenty of means, instead of the small space that was all they could secure in the old country. Kindly and well-disposed, these men extended their goodwill to all in the space allotted to second-class passengers. To many they gave assurance that, on landing, they would be able to get plenty of work for them at higher wages than any they had hitherto dreamed of receiving. Among these one youth in particular gained favour with them. He was depressed and careworn when he came on board, and, except for one elderly gentleman, who seemed to be a foreigner, he had no one even to bid him good-bye. And this one friend had come on board in the evening and had left after a few minutes' talk, and no one had taken particular notice of his appearance; but after he had gone the youth appeared almost in distress at his loneliness—no one seemed to know anything about him. On the card over the doorway were inscribed the names—" Edward Barrington " and " Harry Charles." The former soon became familiarly known to his fellow-passengers as " Nid,"

from the fact that he was so-called by the other Somersetshire men in the brogue of that county. He was not more than twenty years of age, tall and heavy. He was quite innocent of the ways of the world, and only realised that he was on his way to a new country in company with his married brother, whom he almost worshipped. To him nothing came amiss. Australia was a land where all could become rich and where large holdings were to be had for the smallest possible sum. " Nid " would join in all sports on board, and was a general favourite.

Of his cabin mate he seemed to take charge as of a poor innocent who required as much care as an infant. This, indeed, was the general opinion on board, and it was only considered a matter of very short time when poor " Hal," as his shipmates had dubbed him, would be down at the Melbourne wharf to beg a passage home again, it being generally taken for granted that he would never be able to do anything for himself in Australia.

" Nid," indeed, promised that his brother would give him a job looking after sheep as soon as he had acquired the vast area of country which was to be his in the near future. To all this " Hal " listened with but half-awakened interest. He liked " Nid " for his innocent, kindly nature, and appeared to be quite satisfied with his company and to rest with confidence in his promises. To all enquiries as to his past, he gave the same ambiguous reply:—" I knocked about, you know, and picked up a job here and there when I could get

it." To a sturdy Cornishman who asked, "How did'st pay thee passage then, lad?" He replied: "The other gentleman paid it for me." And this was all the satisfaction that could be gained by any who had sufficient inquisitiveness to strive after the early history of "Hal." Upon some among his companions, however, it gradually dawned that "Hal" was not quite so much of a babe as they had at first thought. More than once when rough weather was experienced and all others were glad to take shelter below, "Hal" was doing good service by helping to shorten sail and otherwise assisting in the work of the ship. The boatswain would cast a look of approval at him, and once he remarked to his mate: "'Taint the first time that chap's hauled on a rope." "Not by a long chalk," was the reply. "He've been aboard when many of these 'ere knowing ones had to be tucked in by their ma's. 'Taint him'll want the feeding bottle so much as some o' them when they gets ashore." And so the voyage drew to its close, and there was the usual rejoicing when land was sighted for the first time.

When the passengers were mustered on the main deck after arrival for medical inspection by the Government officer who had come aboard with the pilot, "Hal" took his place with the rest, and stood in line with perfect indifference. The doctor was accompanied by a man who seemed to be his assistant, and he noted carefully the passengers as each passed the inspection. Any slightly more observant than Hal's shipmates might have noticed that, as the newcomer passed with the doctor along

the line of passengers, a glance of recognition passed between him and Hal. Momentary as this was, it implied that these two had something in common. It was, however, unnoticed by any on board.

Hal had no friends to look for and no belongings to trouble much about. A portmanteau and a pair of blankets comprised his luggage; and, with these, he strolled along till he reached the platform of the Melbourne & Hobson's Bay Station. Procuring a ticket, he took his seat in one of the most uncomfortable carriages he had ever seen, and reached Spencer Street. Still carrying his portmanteau and blankets, he walked along Bourke Street, and having booked a bed, proceeded to the old restaurant known as "Hosie's Scotch Pie Shop," a rendezvous for those newly arrived in the Colony. Here many fellow-passengers greeted him, and all were speedily enjoying the change of food that the place afforded. The meal ended and the patrons went their several ways. Hal passed on to Swanston Street, and scanned the names appearing on the doors of different offices. One struck his attention. On the brass-plate at the front were the words, "Employment Agency: Edward Hill, Secretary." Hal examined the number and compared it with one on the first page of a notebook he carried, and then proceeded up the stairs to the first floor, and passed to a door bearing the same intimation.

In answer to his knock, a voice called "Come in," and obeying the injunction, he found himself in the presence of the man who had accompanied the doctor on his visit to the "Norfolk."

Hal asked if he were speaking to Mr. Hill, and, receiving an affirmative reply, he produced a letter, which he handed to the Secretary, who, after perusing it, remarked:—"Yes, I saw you on the ship this morning, and thought you were the man referred to in this advice received by last mail. I have got work for you, and we may as well go and arrange the matter now."

The two men went out together, and passed along Collins Street to Queen Street, where they entered the office of A. G. Corbett & Company, machinery merchants.

XXVII. HAL FINDS EMPLOYMENT

MR CORBETT was in, and after a few words with Hill, he turned to Hal and said:—"I want a man to look after a mine at Reedy Creek, near Kilmore. It is not working at present, but you would have to keep the engine clean and see that no damage is done to the machinery. Your fare to Kilmore will be paid, and the claim is fifteen miles from there. Are you willing to go? Davis, a storekeeper at Reedy Creek, will give you every information you may require, and you had better see him before going to the claim."

Hal expressed his willingness to accept the terms offered; and it was arranged that he would start by coach from the Albion Hotel, Bourke Street, on the following morning.

The two men then returned to Hill's office, where much conversation ensued between them; and it

was arranged that Hal should call at the office on the following morning, and that Hill should see him off by the coach.

Hal spent the rest of the day in seeing the buildings and gardens of Melbourne, and in making himself acquainted with the streets of the city and of its surroundings, and retired to his hotel.

Punctually at ten on the following morning he presented himself at Hill's office, where more conversation passed between the two, and then they went out together to the coach. Hal put his portmanteau and blankets on the rack, while Hill went into the office and paid his fare; and a few minutes after the two parted, the one taking his place by the driver and the other returning to his office.

There is nothing of very great interest on the road from Melbourne to Kilmore. Well-kept farms are on each side of the road, and the greater part lies between fences of diverse kinds. The road is good, and, except for an occasional stoppage to change horses, nothing breaks the monotony of the journey. The day of coaches has passed since Hal journeyed to the little north-eastern town, and the railway has long since taken the place of the stage. Hal enjoyed the fresh air and the drive, and was almost sorry when the journey was ended, and he bid good-bye to the driver and passed into the "Red Lion" Hotel, where he intended to pass the night.

At dinner he was the centre of attraction to the guests. There is an air about the newcomer which is unmistakable, and yet that cannot be defined. "Do you smell lime juice?" was the question

passed round as the stranger took the seat assigned to him. The expression is derived from the fact that lime-juice is served out to all on board ships daily during a voyage, and the newcomer to Australia bears with him evidence of his having but recently left the Old Country and been a partaker of the beverage.

Hal, however, was made welcome by those at the hotel, and he readily joined in the general conversation, and was voted " Not a bad sort " by those with whom he came in contact.

The hotel was almost deserted in the morning, the guests having gone their several ways as soon as breakfast was over. The landlord noticed the load that Hal was about to carry on his way to Reedy Creek, and, remarking that it was too much for a " new chum bundle," helped him to adjust it in such a way as would permit of its being more readily balanced, and then set it on his shoulder so that the one part hung in front and the other at the back, thus giving more freedom to his limbs. He then gave him definite instructions as to the road, and went with him to the spot where the ways diverged, and thus put him well on his journey. He had taken a liking to the " new chum," and felt uneasy on his behalf. Evidently the youth knew nothing of country life in Australia, and it was not at all unlikely that he would miss his road after all, and come on some accident. However, there was no more to be done, and Hal and the landlord parted, the latter to return to his wife with the remark :—" The idea of sending a poor beggar of a ' new chum ' like that to go on to the Leviathan

as Claim Shepherd; not much he can do to look after machinery, and I don't half like his taking that fifteen mile trip on by himself. Anyhow, I could do no more than I have done for him."

Hal trudged along his way, carrying his " new chum " bundle, and thinking every hundred yards to be a mile.

" Hullo, mate, where are you bound for?" called out a cheery voice, when a couple of miles had been traversed. " Reedy Creek," was the answer. " Is it far from here?" And looking up, Hal saw a good-natured looking man seated in a spring dray and eyeing the traveller with an amused smile, as he saw his general make-up and the style of his swag.

" Far?" he said, " well, t'would be for you if you are thinking of getting there the way you are trudging now. Come on, get up; I'm bound for the Creek too, and 'twill be as cheap to ride as to walk." Nothing loath, Hal mounted the dray and took his place beside the driver on a rude seat.

" Now, throw that bundle to the back, lad; the horse won't find it any heavier there than on your shoulder. That's better; and what are you going to do at the Creek, if I may make bold enough to ask?"

" Oh, yes," was the reply, " that's all right. I'm just out from the Old Country, and am going to look after the Leviathan plant." " Why, that's seven miles from the Creek. Did you think to make there to-night, lad? You'd have been bushed sure enough, if I hadn't come along; and do you mean to stop up there by yourself, lad?

There's been an old sun-downer up there the last few months, for Corbett & Munro, but he's full up of it, so I suppose they've got you on the lay now."

"Yes," said Hal. "Corbett sent me up. I must have something to do, you know; and it will suit me till I find a better job. Are you, Mr. Davis?" "No," was the answer, "my name's MacManus, Davis runs one store, and Tresize another, and mine's the third. We've got about two customers a piece, so there's not a big lot on the Creek, anyhow. Two Cousin Jacks (Cornishmen) took up a claim a good bit out of one crushing, and then sold out to the Tunstal; but there never was any more got to speak of, and the claim is idle a mile or so up, and no one else has been getting any this long time."

MacManus had much to tell of the Creek in its days of prosperity, now long past, and Hal gathered many details from his new-found friend, and was much more interested in them than one would imagine an ordinary stranger was likely to be.

XXVIII. REEDY CREEK

UPON arrival at the Creek, Hal arranged with MacManus to spend the night at the Store, and to set out in the morning for the Leviathan Claim, which was to be his home for a time. He was quite ready for a meal by the time tea was announced; the long journey and fresh mountain air having given him an appetite such as he had not

felt for a long time. The strangeness of his surroundings very soon passed away, and he was found to be good company by those coming to the table.

He strolled away by himself in the evening, and called on Davis, who, as well as storekeeper, was the Creek postmaster and bootmaker, and also a shrewd man of business, who only remained on the township on account of his passion for prospecting. He had been disgusted with the man whom Hal was to succeed at the Leviathan, for he had found him too lazy to take advantage of the teaching Davis had given him in the way of prospecting for gold in the neighbourhood of the claim.

Hal expressed great eagerness to profit by any hint that he might receive. Davis advised him to call again before starting for the Leviathan next day; and Hal returned to MacManus, and soon after retired for the night.

Rising early on the next day, he went down to the Creek, and followed its course till he came to the place MacManus had told him of as the spot where two new chums had come on some alluvial gold. The men were already astir, and while one was lighting a fire, the other occupied himself with such preparation for breakfast as the surroundings permitted of. So much were they engaged that they did not notice the approach of Hal, and he did not appear inclined to interrupt their work, but contented himself with taking a seat on the ground a few yards off in the seclusion afforded by some young wattles.

Soon the two men were seated at their breakfast, and discussing the chances of the washing of the

heap of dirt lying on the surface and the probable amount of gold to be obtained from it.

To judge from the scraps of conversation that reached Hal from time to time, the two diggers, though mates, were not on the happiest terms together, and it seemed as though neither trusted the other as much as diggers do. It was evident, too, that these men had been associated in some former venture, and that not altogether of a very creditable nature, but one that might bring trouble to either or both of them, for which each was casting blame on his companion. Hal heard many parts of the conversation, which seemed to become more and more heated as it progressed. Not being desirous of discovery by those whom he had overheard, he took the first opportunity that arose to retire from the belt of wattles, in the midst of which he had been seated, and to return to the township.

Breakfast was ready by the time he reached MacManus' Store, and to this he did full justice; and then once more visited Davis, from whom he was to receive certain instructions, and who was also to pay him his weekly wage on behalf of Corbett. After some conversation, the two men set out together for the claim, Hal calling at MacManus' on the way for his swag. A walk of five miles brought them to the Leviathan. Here Hal found an extensive claim with every appliance requisite for working. The stampers were in good order, and the stock of tools was complete; an eight-horse-power horizontal engine stood under a good shed, and the pumping plant was perfect. Three log huts, roofed with stringy bark, were on

different parts of the claim, and from one of these the man whom Hal was to succeed as the caretaker, or shepherd of the claim, came shuffling out, as the voices of the two visitors reached his ear.

" Mornin', Mr. Davis," he said, and then turned an enquiring glance towards Hal. " Well, Jim," Davis answered, " I've brought you the new shepherd, and Mr. Corbett has sent word that I'm to pay you off whenever you like to go."

" All right, Mr. Davis, I'm ready any minute, and too jolly glad to get out of it. Hope you'll like it better, mate," he continued, turning to Hal. " I've got to take what I can get, you see," was the answer, " and this offer came along, and I started at once." " New chum, I see," said Jim, glancing pityingly at Hal's swag. " Oh, come on," Davis exclaimed hurriedly, " where's that tea and damper you said you'd have ready whenever I came up?" " Right you are, Mr. Davis, the billy's on, and I'll fix you both up in no time. My word, aint I jolly glad to get out of this hole, anyway." Thus talking, Jim led the way into the hut he had been camping in, and produced some tin plates and mugs, which he set upon the rude table placed between the two bunks that stood at the side of the hut.

Davis now undid the swag he had brought with him, and disclosed sundry parcels of necessaries that he had put together for Hal, including the usual tin drinking vessel, and a sufficient supply of food to last him till he should pay another visit to the Creek.

Hal watched with interest the preparing of the mid-day meal, and this having been partaken of, he

was shown the pegs which marked the boundary of the Leviathan claim. Soon after, his predecessor and Davis took their departure.

The next thing to be done was to examine the engine and machinery. These were in a very dirty condition, and Hal cleaned out the furnace and prepared to give the engine a complete overhaul.

Tired with his journey and labour, he re-entered the hut in which he was to live, carefully swept and cleaned it, and after spreading his blankets on one of the stretchers, lit a fire and put on the billy that Davis had brought for him, and prepared his tea.

Evidently, while apparently taking everything so easily and settling down to his new surroundings as if all were those to which he had been long accustomed, there was something that was perplexing him. He sat on the rude form resting his head on his hand as one more than puzzled. Again and again he would raise himself as if to begin his evening meal, but each time he would sink down again and try to fathom some mystery which yet had the mastery over him.

At length, with a sigh, he turned to the viands on the table and commenced his neglected meal. This having been partaken of, he lighted his pipe and cleared the table, carefully washing every vessel. Then he was again lost in thought, evidently struggling to solve some mystery, and finding it too much for him to unravel; till, provoked with himself for his failure, he rose and strolled from the hut. The moon was at the full, the air fresh and invigorating, and Hal walked about for an hour, still struggling with some thought that would give him no peace.

"I will find this out, somehow," he muttered. "I'm on the right trail, but I've missed a blaze somewhere. I'll hark back a bit and pick it up, sure enough."

Thus consoling himself, Hal returned to the hut and retired to rest. Neither the discomfort nor the noises from the bush disturbed him, and when he awoke he found the sun streaming into the hut through the canvas-covered aperture that answered for a window. He partially dressed and went out to a water-hole for a bath, and then sat down to his breakfast.

XXIX. HAL'S MATE.

"HALLOA, mate, how long have you been sat down here?" came a voice from the open door. "I came yesterday," was the answer, as Hal scrutinised his visitor. "Sit down and have some tea." "Don't mind if I do," was the reply. "I've come a good few miles, and have had no breakfast yet." So saying, the newcomer took the pannikin that Hal passed to him, and helped himself to the viands before him.

Little more was said till the meal was finished, and the two men rose, and, with the easy manners of Australian bush life, lit their pipes and proceeded to wash the plates and pannikins as if they had been mates for years instead of newly-found acquaintances.

"Which way are you going?" asked Hal, when the table was cleared of the fragments of the meal

and the two men were re-seated. "Well," was the answer, "I don't quite know yet myself. You see, I'm like a good many other fools. I had a good billet in the old country and a comfortable home, but nothing would do but I must come out here; and I've walked the streets of Melbourne looking for a job till I'm sick of it, and my uncle had an interest in the Tunstal over there and sent me up to work at anything on the claim. Now it's closed down, and there's nothing doing, and I've been over to Sunday Creek for a few weeks trying for a bit of gold and had no luck, and someone said there was a chance at Reedy and that two men were getting a bit there; so I thought I would see what it's like, and if I can't get anything I must just tramp back to town and try my luck with my avuncular relative once more, though I expect he'll be pretty well sick of seeing yours truly coming down on him. Are you here for David Munro?" "I suppose I am," said Hal. "A. G. Corbett engaged me, and sent me up through Hill's agency, but Munro's there, at Corbett's, as well. I am only just out from the old country, and must keep on at something, you know."

The two young men discussed many things as they smoked after their meal. They had much in common, and had seen a good deal of life in London, with its changes and troubles, and men from the same part of the old country are not slow in forming that friendship which often lasts a lifetime.

"You haven't told me your name yet," saiid Hal suddenly. "Well, no," came the answer,

"and for the matter of that, neither have you told me yours. Herbert Routledge, mine is, and I have neither kith nor kin here except my mother's brother, of whom I was speaking just now. I only found him out just before I came here, and he has his own family to see after and is not able to do much for anyone outside. He is a legal manager, but things have not been very lively in mining circles of late, and the Tunstal did not answer expectations. He believed it was going to be a big thing when the prospectors got that forty ounce to the ton crushing. But I fancy that ended the lot, and my uncle had too much in it, and it will take him all he knows to make things square, I expect. He sent me up with word to the manager to put me on at anything on the mine, but when they closed down I was left in charge of the plant, the same as you are here. That job soon came to an end when the funds ran out, and I am left pretty well stranded. I'm not going to give in though; and mean to have a cut in on the Reedy for a bit anyhow, and see how things will turn out. There's plenty of gold on the Creek if one knows where to find it. Now you have my autobiography pretty well full; and you may as well tell me what I am to call you." "Bert is what they dub me in these parts; it doesn't take long to find a word by which a man may be known on a diggings."

"That's so," was the answer. "My name's Henry Charles, but of late I've had nothing but Hal, and it just suits as well as the other, and there's no need to be particular. I expect to stay here till the Leviathan plant is carried to town, for it does not

look much as if it would work again—the place is what they call ' patchy.' You may have one or two good crushings, and it all finishes out after that, and folk fight shy of new ventures. I don't mean to be stranded though, if I know it, and Davis has a pretty good idea of what the ground is like. He wants me to put in my spare time somewhere near the claim of those two men over the ranges; it's not very far, and I might as well do that as sit idle. As soon as I've got the plant a bit cleaner—and, goodness knows, it wants a good overhaul—it's filthy as it stands."

After some further talk the two men agreed that they would work together till noon in cleaning the plant, and afterwards go to the Creek for necessary stores and for an interview with Davis, who had promised assistance to Hal in prospecting. Under their active hands the engine was soon cleaned and polished, so that it presented a totally different appearance. At noon they returned to the hut and took some lunch, after which they started on their way to visit Davis, on whom they relied for some information as to where they should peg out a claim for themselves. They were not long in reaching his store, and he was glad to give them every assistance in the matter. His advice to them was to work a few yards from the Leviathan at a place where a rich quartz specimen had been picked up some months previously; but he yielded to the desire of the men to prospect nearer the Creek at a place that he admitted was a very likely one to find alluvial gold. He knew Bert. Routledge well as the former caretaker or shepherd of the Tunstal

claim; and his advice was that the two men should work as mates, and that they should camp on the claim they proposed pegging out, one or the other visiting the Leviathan as often as possible, so that the property there should be duly cared for.

Having procured the stores they required, Hal and Bert set out on their return journey. It was agreed that they should go by the way of the Creek; it was somewhat longer than that by which they had come, but a good purpose would be served, for Davis would go with them till they reached the place where they intended to work, and would put them in the way of prospecting and show them how to peg out. Both readily consented to his having a share in case they were successful in their work.

Davis enquired if they had miners' rights with them, and, finding they had not, he promised to provide them and also to supply all tools and stores while they worked, on condition of his having one-third of the proceeds of the claim.

This arrangement was satisfactory to all concerned, and was readily agreed to. The three men were in excellent spirits, and looked forward hopefully to the success of the project. They followed the road towards the Tunstal Mine for about a mile, and then took a track to the right which brought them to a spot about a quarter of a mile from the claim of Cleeve and Ross. Here Davis suggested that they should mark off three men's ground, as the place had good indication of being gold-bearing. The claim was exactly measured, pegs were cut and sunk at the four corners, and the orthodox trench dug at the foot of each one. Davis was

careful to explain that this would give them no title to the ground until they had their miners' rights, and these he promised to bring by noon of the next day; and he told them that, as soon as these were in their possession, they must go over the claim boundaries again in order to secure it to themselves.

It was finally arranged that Davis should put Hal and Bert on the Leviathan track, and then return to Reedy Creek for the night. At a part of the bush known to them as being in a direct line for their home, he left them and took his way to the township.

After tea, the whole matter was very carefully discussed by the two mates as they smoked their pipes. They were quite satisfied of Davis' good faith, and felt assured that there was every prospect of a good time before them. Bert, in particular, was glad of an assured living for the present at least; and Hal felt that the lonely time that seemed to have been in store for him was happily ended. He was much occupied with his own thoughts during the evening, and was evidently turning something over in his mind that puzzled him more than a little. Bert rallied him on his silence, and tried to draw him into something like cheerfulness, but his efforts were not of much avail; and after the two men had gone round the claim and found all safe they retired to their stretchers for the night.

As soon as breakfast was over on the following day the two mates packed the tent and tools, with Hal's blankets and such other things as were necessary, and set out for the place that they had marked

out as their claim. Bert knew the road perfectly, and the " swag " being divided between them, they had little difficulty in traversing the space of three miles or more which intervened between the Leviathan and their new home.

On their arrival they set to work to put up the tent. Hal was astonished to see the ease with which his mate designed the work and the knowledge he displayed as to what was necessary. He showed Hal how to cut the pegs to secure the tent in its place, and himself carefully measured the ground on which it was to stand, and then cut a trench on three sides to carry off the water. This done, he selected a sapling strong enough to serve as a ridge pole; this he felled and also two others for uprights; the latter he sunk a foot deep at the top and bottom of the place where he intended to erect the tent. With the assistance of Hal he inserted the ridge pole in the holes made for it in the canvas, and the two men raised it to the height of the uprights and allowed the ends to rest in the forks left for them. The tent was stretched to its full capacity and fastened to the pegs prepared for it.

By this time it was nearly noon, and the two, while resting from their work, gathered enough light wood for a fire and put on the billy, so that dinner might not be delayed on the arrival of Davis. Very soon they heard the barking of his collie in the distance, and went towards the spot where the sound came. The collie had " treed " a native bear and was in a state of great excitement, while Davis was throwing sticks and every missile he could find at the marsupial in the hope of bringing it

down. The instinct of self-preservation was strong in the bear, and the creature had seated himself in the secure shelter of a fork of the tree, and no amount of skill in aiming could by any means cause a stick or stone to reach him. Leaving the bear to his rest, the three men went on to their claim. Davis was more than surprised to see how much had been done during the morning. He had rather despised both the young men as new chums who know nothing of bush life, and who probably would tire of their venture in a few weeks and want to return to Melbourne and importune their friends to find them some kind of a billet where little skill would be required and the work would be of the lightest. Instead, he found that a good amount of judgment had been shown in the way of selecting the most suitable spot for the tent and in its erection. He surveyed it critically, but could find no weak spot about it. Entering, he found that the two mates had already erected bush stretchers composed of saplings and bags, and that they had had the sense to put these up a foot or more above the ground so that the sleepers would be protected from any damp.

Davis was a little inclined to be cynical, and was very seldom betrayed into any expression of approval of anyone or anything. He could not, however, refrain from remarking that this was "A1," and from that moment he seemed to have formed a much higher estimate of the ability of the two mates and to believe more strongly in the possibility of their making something of the claim which had been pegged out the previous day.

He had brought miners' rights for the two men and himself; and the three now formally marked off the ground again in order that no legal difficulty might arise thereafter.

All three sat down to dinner with hearty appetites and enjoyed the good things that Davis had brought with him. As soon as the meal was over, they lighted their pipes and made a more careful examination of the claim than they had been able to do previously. One part in particular engaged their attention: the eye of the experienced miner soon detects the slightest indication of gold-bearing in any sort of country; and Davis was quick to note the spot where success was most likely to be achieved. Together the men set to work here, first carefully testing the surface. There were evident signs of gold, and Davis advised Hal and Bert to sink at that part of the claim and to bring him word if they came upon any quartz with an indication of gold. He himself would have to return at once to the township to attend to his duty as postmaster, the Reedy Creek mail being nearly due. The two others worked with a will, and had sunk a shaft four feet deep by the time they ceased work. They agreed that Bert should return to the Leviathan for the night, and that Hal should remain at the claim. The two mates set out together on the Leviathan track, having decided to go in company to the cross road. Here they parted, and Hal returned to the tent.

XXX. HAL'S INQUISITIVENESS

HAVING put things in order for the night, Hal sat down outside the tent and pondered over his experience of the last few months and his present position and prospects. That there was something of greater import on his mind would have been evident to even a casual observer had there been one in this neglected region, but no one was at all likely to intrude himself upon the lonely young miner. Except for the cry of the opossum as he moved from tree to tree, or the occasional dull thud, thud of the kangaroo and wallaby as these creatures passed by the region of the claim, scarce a sound broke the silence of the night. Thus Hal was left to his own thoughts and to the contemplation of the past and the present.

Hitherto neither he nor Bert had seen anything of Cleave and Ross, the two miners who had a claim a few hundred yards away. At the township these men were but little spoken of; they were not favourites in the place, and spent no money there; neither did they mix with any of the inhabitants. They had come to the Creek quietly, and had almost immediately set to work in the spot where they still had their claim. Opinion on the Creek was divided concerning them; some maintained that they were doing well; others that they were getting very little. Moreover, as they neither sold any gold on the township nor purchased their stores in the place, the Creek curiosity was not likely to be satisfied, and as the few residents had their own claims, they wasted no time in verifying

the diverse rumours of the success or otherwise of the strangers. Ross was recognised by one or two as having been on the Creek previously, and it was concluded that he knew of the place where he and his mate were working and had brought him there. He himself was believed to be a seafaring man, and that was all that had been learned of him. There were rumours that the two were not on good terms, and that there had been sounds heard from the direction of their claims as of loud talking and quarrelling. All this had been told to Hal in the short time he had been in the place, and he had carefully scrutinised the faces of the men when he once had an opportunity of seeing them.

His thoughts this evening were of these neighbours; there was something about them that puzzled him. He was determined to know more of them than people on the township could tell; nor would he leave the matter until he had learned all that he could of them. He was mystified; there were so few persons in the whole place that any individual would be quickly noted, and Hal had a faculty for knowing a man again even if many years had elapsed since he had seen him. He believed that Ross had once been known to him, but it was in different surroundings and a long time previously, and there was a mystery about this whole matter which was connected in some way with a circumstance in which Hal had been in some measure interested. This was why he had pondered over it after the only occasion on which he had seen Ross and his mate since his arrival at the Creek. This,

too, occasioned his serious thoughts as he sat in the moonlight now.

Suddenly he rose; there were sounds of loud talking in the direction of the claim of these men. Hal moved cautiously towards the place. The sounds became more and more distinct. Now words could be distinguished. The voices sounded louder and louder. Still Hal proceeded carefully until the hut in which the men lived came in sight. Ross and his mate were sitting outside; their words could be clearly heard. Each was trying to throw the blame of some calamity on the other. "Who spoke of the fool that's in the jug, or who cares if he never comes out? I don't; but if everyone had his rights, it's you would be on that side of the door and he'd be holding his head as high as ever." The words were jerked out as if by a man in a towering rage. "Shut up, murderer," came the answer. "I never told you to strike down the man that had befriended you and harmed no one, did I?" "No, you didn't; but you left the man who had risked all for you; you left him to take the consequences of what you put him up to, and never lifted a finger to keep him out of gaol. And what I did was bad enough, but it was to help the man you had brought to ruin anyhow. And where would I be now, I should like to know, if it hadn't been for him. You, you dirty crawler, left him and me to get out of Rio as best we could, while you cleared away with all you could lay your filthy hands on, and he and I had to ship for here before the mast and hunt you up in Melbourne. Don't you talk of striking a man down. Cranbourne

would never have shipped for home and got 'lagged' either if you hadn't told him the way was clear for him to draw the money for what you let him into. And who knew about this bit of gold here and brought you to the Creek when you were stony broke? And much you've done since we came up, haven't you? I've got to do the work, and all you want is to share the profits; and I suppose if you get the chance you'll leave this fool in the lurch the same as you did the others. It's about time you got put away Bill Cleave (or whatever you call yourself when you're not doing a big swindle in London), and I'm just the man to do it, too, if you raise too much Cain in me. I'm going to get out of this, anyway. I don't like the looks of the chaps that have pegged out just below here, and I've a notion that I've seen one of 'em somewhere, and in a way I didn't like, too. Anyway, you and I'll sell out and go our ways, and I don't care if I never set eyes on the like of you again."

"Hist—fool, what are you raving about? I tell you I can put you away any time, and you can't sell out without my word. You bellow as if we had all the world to ourselves, and you never can tell who may be about. After all, where can we go to be as safe as we are here? What was that?" This last exclamation was caused by the snapping of a twig as Hal took a step nearer to where the two men sat. Both now started to their feet and peered anxiously round. Hal threw himself at full length and lay motionless; and after a careful scrutiny of the bush, the two who had been so loud in the

expression of their opinions, each of the other, returned to their hut.

"A 'possum most likely," Ross remarked. "You are always so mighty cautions about your precious skin. Pity you can't think of other people's as well, sometimes. Then some who are in the strong box would be outside. Anyway, this is the last of my time with you, and my share in the claim can go to anyone who likes to buy it. Perhaps one of those two new chums lower down will take it, and then you'd have to set to and work for your living, a thing you never did in your life yet."

Hal had listened to all this in great bewilderment. It was clear to him that these men were no ordinary miners, and also that they had been engaged in the past in some transactions which had brought them within the pale of the criminal law, and that each feared the other, and knew not the moment when he might be handed over to justice. But some parts of the mutual recrimination of the two worthies required thinking out. What was the allusion to Rio? And how did it happen that both had been implicated in the striking down of an innocent man there, and had had difficulty in effecting their escape from the scene of the crime? And what caused the allusion to Cranbourne?

Slowly and cautiously the listener retraced his steps to the tent. Both the men had re-entered their hut, and beyond the sounds of violent quarrelling, Hal could hear no more to assist him in elucidating the mystery.

Upon entering the tent, he took from his pocket a wallet, and lighting one of the candles that Davis had brought with the stores for Bert and himself, he examined the papers within the case. These did not seem altogether to satisfy him. Ever and anon as he turned them over, he shook his head as though some new difficulty presented itself to his mind.

At length, folding them carefully, he returned them to the case, and drew from his swag a neat leather writing-book containing all necessary articles for correspondence. It was so compact as to take but the smallest possible space, and thus formed very little incubus. Selecting pen and paper and opening the folding inkstand, he begun a letter to Edward Hill, who had obtained for him the post with A. G. Corbett & Co. He described his journey to Reedy Creek, and told of his interview with Davis, and of his having found a mate, and commenced to work at prospecting, as Hill had suggested to him. He told further of the men who had the adjoining claim and of the conversation which he had overheard between them, and then carefully described their appearance and voices. In this he was much more minute than the unitiated might have considered necessary. Not a detail was omitted. And Hal, after carefully reading through the letter, could find nothing that might require to be added. This done, he turned in for the night. No sound disturbed his rest; and the early sun sent a stream of light into the tent before he awoke.

He lit a fire outside and prepared breakfast. Bert arrived by the time the meal was ready, and the two mates sat down to enjoy it. As soon as this was over they took their tools and started to work

in the claim they had pegged out. It was easy sinking, the ground being fairly soft. By noon they had got down eight feet, and well satisfied with the morning's work, they returned to the tent for dinner. They had scarcely sat down, when a cheery voice called to them, " Halloa, lads, hard at it?" and the next moment Davis appeared coming from the township. Both men greeted him heartily, and he joined readily enough in a meal to which they silently invited him. Together they discussed the work and future prospects, and Davis was pleased at the way in which the two new chums had carried out his suggestions.

It took some little time to wash a few dishes of dirt from the shaft, and Davis, after carefully examining the sediment, declared that they must be very near the reef, and urged them to proceed as fast as possible till they should " strike a leader "—that is, till a thin vein of quartz should be found having indications of gold in it. So anxious was he about the matter that he stayed the greater part of the afternoon and worked with the two mates. The deeper they went down the greater were the indications of a gold-bearing reef being within measurable distance. In every dish-load of dirt that was washed there were small pieces of quartz, and these, when examined by Davis under the glass, sometimes showed small specks of gold; and it was with no little reluctance that he returned to the township to attend to his duties of receiving and stamping the mail from Melbourne. Davis took Hal's letter with him, promising to send it on in the next day's mail-bag.

The three men had now sunk over ten feet, and Davis advised Hal and Bert to continue downward and to look very carefully for a " leader," and to follow that by driving in the direction it indicated.

XXXI. HAL and BERT STRIKE THE REEF

LEFT to themselves, the two mates worked hard till sundown, carefully following the instructions given to them by Davis. The further they went down the greater were the indications of their approaching the reef; and, as a matter of course, the slower was the progress made.

Inexperienced as they both were in the work of sinking a shaft and of other intricacies in the matter of gold-bearing, it was no easy task to trace the course of the mineral leader, and they knew but little of the art of washing a dish which seems so simple to one who is merely an onlooker, and who can only see that certain material taken from the ground and placed in a circular dish is well shaken and carefully examined. It was more difficult to raise the dirt from the shaft than when they could throw it to the surface without having to use a bucket and rope for the purpose. They were now, however, over twelve feet down; they surveyed their work with no little satisfaction, and it was only on account of the waning light that they ceased labour for the day.

Both were in high spirits at the prospect that was opened before them. Very seldom had it been known that two men with scarcely any experience

of gold-mining had been so successful as there was every appearance of their being in the near future. Their hopes were high, and they had proportionately good appetites for the evening meal. When this had been partaken of, they smoked in silence till it was time for Hal to set out for the Leviathan, where it was agreed that he should spend the night. Bert accompanied him the greater part of the way, and then returned to the tent and went early to rest. He was not disturbed during the night, and rising early, he prepared the breakfast which was scarcely ready when Hal's cheery voice greeted him as he broke through the scrub.

The two men were anxious to get to work, and spent very little time at the meal. Hal went below with pick and shovel, while Bert hauled the dirt to the surface. He had the advantage of his mate in experience, and tried dish after dish from the stuff as it was raised from below.

Davis came earlier on the scene than on the previous day, being anxious to know the result of the work so far as it had gone. He found good indications of a gold-bearing reef being near, and took his turn below watching carefully for the leader that would show in which direction to drive.

By noon nothing more had been discovered, but the men went cheerfully to dinner, convinced that they would soon attain the object of their search. They toiled patiently on through the afternoon, neglecting no precautions and always being in good hope of finding that which they were convinced was near at hand.

Hal had just taken his turn below, and was

working with great vigour, while Davis and Bert drew the bucket to the surface as fast as he could fill it. Davis suddenly called to Hal to stop sinking and come up, at the same time lowering the rope to help him in his ascent. As soon as he reached the surface, Davis swung himself down the rope and began to work lustily, not at the bottom, but at the north end of the shaft, and after a few blows with the pick, he filled the bucket and called to Hal and Bert to haul up. This they did, and immediately after Davis came to the surface himself, and turning some of the contents of the bucket into a tin prospecting dish, carefully washed the contents at a water-hole. There was no doubt about the result of the prospect. Before the quartz and dirt had been removed from the tin dish, several large specks of gold could be plainly seen; beside this, Davis handed out to the two mates a piece of quartz thickly studded with gold. The result of the prospect was much more satisfactory than the most sanguine of the men ever hoped for. Davis declared that there was over an ounce to the dish. Encouraged by this unlooked for success, the three men worked with good will, driving along the course of the leader that Hal had been the first to discover. By dinner-time good progress had been made with the drive, and the quartz brought to the bank showed heavy gold all through.

During dinner the success of the venture was, naturally, the chief topic of conversation. Davis had had many years' experience of the reefs at Reedy Creek, and while sharing with the others in their elation, he advocated the scheme of trim-

ming the mine and working over to a company as soon as a trial crushing had been put through. The carrying on of the work effectually would, he well knew, require considerable capital, and this was not to be raised without taking the public into the concern.

Though not very willing, at first, to endorse this view, Hal and Bert were convinced by the arguments of Davis; and it was agreed that the matter should be placed in the hands of a Melbourne firm of stockbrokers at once. For this purpose it was necessary that two of the prospectors should go to Melbourne on the following day. After some discussion, Davis and Bert were chosen for the purpose, and the former left the claim soon after to make the necessary arrangements for their transit to Kilmore. Bert was to join him at the Creek early the next morning.

The two mates worked hard during the afternoon, and raised a fair amount of quartz to the surface, the reef widening out as they drove along its course. They retired early, being resolved to get on the road to the Creek with the first gleam of light in the morning.

Despite the excitement consequent on the prospect opened up by the day's experience, they slept soundly, and were astir in the morning before sunrise.

On arrival at the township, they found Davis already awaiting them with horses for Bert and himself.

Having seen his two friends off, Hal procured such stores as were necessary, and returned to the

camp. He busied himself during the morning with cleaning up the shaft and drive, and in making such preparation as was necessary for the trial crushing which it had been decided should be made as soon as sufficient stone had been raised for the purpose. Afterwards, he went over to the Leviathan to see that all was in order there. The engine and machinery had been left well cleaned and oiled since he and Bert had first attended to them, and there was plenty of firewood stacked ready for use if it should be deemed best to crush the quartz there.

Thus that week passed with no other variation than the periodical visits to the township on mail-days. On the Friday he received from Mrs. Davis several letters, and with these and the necessary stores he returned to the Leviathan. The letters were eagerly perused by him. Two were from Davis and Bert respectively. These gave an account of the journey to Melbourne and of the two men having seen the broker whom they purposed employing in the event of its being decided to float the claim into a company. He had gone carefully into the matter with them, and had given every encouragement to the project. The specimens they had brought with them were considered by him to be of such value as to render the formation of a company to work the mine a matter of little difficulty. The only drawback was the known patchy nature of the reefs in the Reedy Creek district. He had the specimens exhibited in the window of his office, and they were exciting the minds of the public, many of whom had already

made anxious enquiry as to the locality from which they had been obtained. The letters further stated that Davis and Bert would return to the claim on the following Monday, and that they would be accompanied by Mr. Giles, the share broker, and that the only reason for the journey being delayed was the fact that it had been decided to apply for a lease of the ground on part of which the claim was situated, but that the necessary papers would not be completed earlier. Of the other letters one was from Hal's employer, Mr. Corbett, but was not of any immediate importance, as it was merely referring to details with respect to his charge of the Leviathan. The last to be opened was by far the most important, and was a reply from Hill of the Employment Institute, to the letter Hal had written the previous week. After expressing his gratification at the success his protégé had achieved thus far, the writer referred to another part of Hal's correspondence, and asked for more details as to the appearance of the two men who were working near to him, and advised him to continue to watch their movements and to notify him immediately of any action on the part of either of them that might imply an intention to leave the neighbourhood: and further, that Hill might be expected to pay Hal a visit with two friends who were interested in mining ventures, at an early date, adding that, if the men on the adjacent claim expressed any desire to sell their interest, he and his friends would be willing to negotiate with them for the purchase: and Hal was further asked to furnish any details of the claim with which he might become acquainted;

and it was hinted that an amalgamation of the two properties might prove of great value to both.

XXXII. MORE MYSTERY FOR HAL.

HAL was now more alert than ever for any discovery as to Cleave and Ross, so that he might supply Hill with information concerning their movements. On Saturday night he was enjoying a pipe at the entrance to the tent, when loud talking attracted his attention as on a previous occasion. The words could not be distinguished, but the tones of voice showed that they were of those engaged in angry recrimination. Hal quietly left the tent, and proceeded in the direction of the sounds. He had been much exercised in his mind ever since he had come to the Creek. That there was some reason for these two men being anxious for concealment was very clear. The accusations that each had hurled at the other before, when he was within hearing of them, and the allusion to some crime in which both seemed to have been implicated, naturally increased his wonder and curiosity. And now it seemed to him that the revelation they had previously given was being repeated, and perhaps he might learn what it was that they feared, both from each other, and from the law.

Profiting by his former experience, Hal stepped with great caution in the direction whence the sounds proceeded. It was a dark night, and no form could be distinguished. So engrossed, however, were the speakers upon the subject under dis-

cussion that they allowed their voices to be raised to a very high pitch and every word could be distinctly heard by the unseen listener. " I tell you, I've had enough of your low swindling," one was exclaiming, " it's all through you that I'm a hunted outlaw at this present moment; you set me on to work with the mate to put the old Tub away, and if it hadn't been for you Clyde would have been alive and well this day. Who wanted to have anything to do with Plugger Bill, and what had I against the young chap to make me go with him when he knocked the life out of him at Rio? Can you tell me that, you paltry hound? It's blood for blood, I tell you, and I'm full up of being your dog, to do your dirty work and slave for you to have the profit. I tell you, your neck is as near being stretched as mine; and you won't hesitate to put me away when you've got all you can out of me. I was a fool to take your word, and I'll save you the trouble of laying the traps on to me. Go and work for your living. That'll be something new for you to do, anyhow. And I'll ship off the first chance I get and live honest with the little bit I've got out of the claim. You've got the biggest share as usual, and done the least for it. Go and get in with the new chums over there, and see whether you can have them, as you've had me. I heard down at the Creek that they've struck it rich and gone to town to float a company. Leastwise, that's the idea with most on the township; and there'll be more up in the ranges directly, and more like you'll be spotted by one or other of 'em. Your hide's worth more than all your lazy carcase,

and I can get something by putting you away before you get the chance to do it for me. Anyhow, I'm sick of your blessed company, and I'll have no more of it. I know too much for you."

This tirade was delivered in a loud voice, the speaker evidently being so excited as to lose all thought of the danger he incurred by the possibility of anyone overhearing words that would be sufficient to cause not only the arrest of the man he accused, but also of himself. There was also the fact that both men were unaware that one of the prospectors of the adjoining claim remained at the camp.

What followed was not so distinct. It seemed to Hal that the man who had been thus addressed answered more calmly than one would have expected. His voice was not raised to a high tone. He appeared to be absolutely cowed by what his mate had said, and to be endeavouring to pacify him. Disjointed sentences reached the listener. " We have been together for years," the man was saying, " and you've as much in it as I." Then there was an allusion to selling the claim and clearing out. Then followed more taunts in a loud tone by the first speaker, and the threat that he would clear out and " give away " his mate.

But Hal had heard enough to puzzle a wiser head than his, and he cautiously slipped back to the claim and left the two men to argue their point as best they could; while he endeavoured to piece together the scraps of information he had gained.

Arrived at the tent, he drew out his writing materials and carefully noted all that he remem-

bered of the tale unfolded by the men. Then he set himself to unravel the mystery. Who were these two self-accused criminals? And what was it that made one of them, at least, acknowledge that the rope was hanging very near the necks of both? What was the " Tub " that had been " put away," and how came it that a man engaged in the quiet occupation of working a gold mine, with which he had evidently been connected years before, could be concerned in the sinking of a vessel and in an assault on an innocent man?

All this and much more was in the mind of Hal as he read and re-read the notes that he had written of the conversation in the bush. He was puzzled, too, about the allusion to Clyde. What could the attack on this man have to do with the miners on the adjoining claim?

He lit his pipe, and opening his case of writing materials, perused again and again all the written papers contained therein, but in none could he find anything to throw a satisfactory light upon this mystery. Carefully folding the precious documents, he enclosed with them the notes he had made during the evening; and, still pondering, retired to rest.

On the following morning he breakfasted early, and set out for the Leviathan claim, where he spent the day. He decided to sleep there that night, being anxious to see that no damage was done to the machinery on the mine.

It was necessary for him to visit the township in the morning and to learn of any fresh tidings concerning Davis and Bert. He decided to take the

longer route and to visit on his way the claim pegged out by his mates and himself. This took him near to the hut of Cleave and Ross. He saw nothing of either of these men as he passed, and concluded that they had, for the time at any rate, adjusted their differences and resumed their work at the claim.

He stayed at his tent till noon, and examined the workings to see if anything had been interfered with during his absence. All was perfectly secure, and after a hasty meal he resumed his walk to the Creek.

Mrs. Davis had letters for him from Melbourne, informing him that the arrangements with reference to the floating of a company to work the claim had been well advanced, and the mine had been registered under the name of the " Red Jacket." All this was satisfactory to Hal, who had already wearied of his solitary life and of the double responsibility thrust upon him. He was therefore the more glad that the mission of his friends was being successfully brought to its close.

From Hill there was word also. He congratulated Hal on his experience in the work for which he had recommended him, and stated that he purposed visiting both claims with the friends to whom he had previously referred, and that the whole party would start for the Creek on Tuesday morning. As it was now Monday, Hal would have but a short time to wait before meeting them. Calculating the time that would be occupied in driving to Kilmore and the stoppage there to refresh both men and horses, he concluded that Reedy Creek

would be reached by them early on Tuesday evening. It was clear that the party would not be very small, and in Bert's letter was the statement that a vehicle had been hired in Melbourne for the journey, as it had been found necessary to procure certain tools and requisites for the working of the mine.

The terms for floating the company appeared to be very satisfactory; the public having readily responded to the invitation to invest. It was intended to place the claim on the market in one hundred thousand shares of one pound each—thirty thousand fully paid-up shares to be assigned to the original prospectors.

Hal was delighted with the news, and after procuring stores for those whose visit was expected and for himself he started on his way to the Leviathan.

All was quiet on the neighbouring mine; there was no sound of quarrelling, and Hal was preparing to retire for the night, intending to make an early start in the morning for the Leviathan, when he heard the rumble of wheels at no great distance. He had been thinking so much of the contents of letters received during the day and of the coming to the Creek of his friends and those who intended accompanying them, that a vague idea passed through his mind that possibly these had, for some reason, left Melbourne a day earlier than they at first had resolved upon, and might even now be on their way to the "Red Jacket" without passing the township. He knew that Davis was well acquainted with the country, and that there was a

track by which a vehicle could reach the Leviathan from the Plenty Mountain road by turning off at the Old Sawpit and following the route of the drays formerly used when the mine was in full work; and his natural conclusion was that the expected visitors had struck this road, reached the Leviathan, and were now on their way to the "Red Jacket." Without pausing to consider further these possibilities, Hal started to run in the direction from where the sounds proceeded. This took him on to the track between the Tunstal claim and that worked by Cleave and Ross. Guided by the sound of the wheels, Hal was going at full speed, when suddenly he tripped over a fallen sapling which he had not noticed in the darkness, and fell full length on the ground. He was, for the moment, partially stunned by the force with which he struck the ground, and scarcely realised where he was. He soon gathered himself together, and listened intently for a renewal of the sounds which he had heard; but all around was still. Imagining that he had been mistaken and that the noises were either in the distance or that they had been caused by a limb from one of the trees falling and rolling on the sloping ground, he was about to retrace his steps to the tent, when he heard footsteps. Wondering, he remained perfectly still. The sounds came nearer and nearer, and were certainly those of a man. Now he heard muttering. "Must have been somewhere here" came in a hoarse whisper. Thus mumbling, the speaker turned and passed within a few feet of the spot where Hal stood concealed by the darkness and the thick scrub; and in

a few moments the noise as of wheels passing toward the Tunstal claim was heard again. Hal followed cautiously. Occasionally the sound ceased for a few moments, as if one propelling a truck paused for breath. Presently there was a longer interval, and then a sound as of earth being moved, and again came the rumble of wheels; and Hal knew that the man was coming back towards the spot he had just passed. Hal intently listened. The darkness prevented his seeing any form, and when the man had passed the watcher returned to the tent.

XXXIII. VISITORS TO REEDY CREEK

HAL reached the township early the next afternoon. Mrs. Davis handed him a letter from Bert telling of the doings of the party and of continued success in the efforts to float the mine. The men had decided on having a trial crushing as soon as there was sufficient stone raised for it. And it would depend much on this whether there should be an amalgamation between the " Red Jacket " and Leviathan claims.

A dray had been hired in Melbourne to convey the whole party to Reedy Creek, and they might be expected that afternoon. Hal, therefore, remained at Davis', and in due course the visitors arrived. The meeting between the friends was a pleasant one; and Hill, who was with the party, introduced two men to Hal as intending shareholders in the " Red Jacket."

One of these—George Main—had been at Reedy Creek before; the other, Edward Waring, was a stranger to it.

After some refreshment the party started for the " Red Jacket " claim, which was found to be in good order for carrying on the work, and then the engine and plant of the Leviathan were overhauled.

Tents had been brought from Melbourne, so that there was no lack of accommodation for the party; and all that was necessary for carrying on the work at the claim was very soon in order, and during the next few days work was carried on rapidly.

Soon there was enough stone at bank for a trial crushing, the result of which far exceeded all expectations, the stone yielding over fifty ounces to the ton, by far the largest return ever known on the Creek.

As the claim of Cleave and Ross was known to be on the market, it was decided to make arrangements with the prospectors, so that it might be amalgamated with the " Red Jacket," this being essential to the more profitable working of the latter.

Hill, Main, and Waring were deputed to interview the two men and endeavour to arrange the purchase. These delegates sought the owners, but Cleave only could be found. He stated that Ross had gone to Melbourne some days ago with the object of putting the claim on the market, and had not yet returned, and that Cleave did not know his address in the metropolis.

The delay was serious, and would mean the stoppage of work as soon as the leader line between

the two claims was reached. Many speculators were already hurrying to Reedy Creek in consequence of the rich crushing from the " Red Jacket," and were endeavouring to secure an interest in the claim. Among these was David Munro, who had a large interest in the Leviathan Mine. He was well known to Davis and Hill. These consulted together, and decided to examine the boundaries thoroughly with the view of amalgamating with that claim also.

Davis and Munro went from peg to peg. Presently the latter exlaimed:—" Here's a strange thing; this is a copy of the Leviathan lease, and here are the boundaries plainly shown, and this ground on which we stand is included in it. Here is where the east peg came to, and the plain is shown as extending to the side of this gully. The west extension ought to show the same boundaries, but it does not: that we can easily understand from the plan itself. We will trace it up and find where the alteration comes in." The three started rapidly along the side of the gully, which ran east and west; and they found that the Leviathan claim extended a hundred feet farther than the line depicted by the pegs, and that these had been skilfully moved in such a way as to reduce the Leviathan area and increase that of the claim worked by Cleave and Ross. The three men now went over to the tent to see this important development. Convinced that fraud had been committed, they went to the hut of Cleave and Ross in order that they might be confronted with the evidence of alteration; but, as before, only Cleave could be

found. He stated that the bounds were exactly as he had found them when Ross had brought him to Reedy Creek, and that Ross had known of the claim years before, and had induced Cleave to join him in the further development of it, and they had been working this claim ever since. It was therefore impossible to prove that Cleave was implicated in the fraudulent alteration of the boundary.

XXXIV. DISAPPEARANCE OF ROSS.

WHAT, then, had become of Ross, and why had he disappeared when all was well at the claim, and before it was discovered that the two men had been taking gold from ground within the Leviathan boundary? It was also remembered that no one had seen Ross leave the Creek, and that Cleave had given no reason for his continued absence. Upon this point, Hill, Main, Waring, and Hal held frequent discussion, without satisfactory result.

It was clear that the ground on which Cleave and Ross had been working was included in the Leviathan lease; and no further difficulty remained in the way of uniting that claim and the "Red Jacket," and notice was served on Cleave to discontinue working the ground. The amalgamation of the two claims was completed with due legal formularies, and the work of raising the stone proceeded rapidly.

Visitors from all parts and of all classes came in great numbers to the Creek, and were soon actively engaged in pegging out claims.

A police station was established at the township, and black trackers paraded the one street in all the importance which those drawn from Aboriginal tribes know so well how to assume when dressed in a brief authority among whites.

The Leviathan was being worked with great success. Huts were erected on different parts of the claim, and miners were employed to raise the stone and in preparing for a large crushing.

No difficulty had been made by Cleave as to the bounds of the lease, and, while the attention of the residents was absorbed by the excitement that had followed the result of the Leviathan crushing, very little thought had been bestowed on either Cleave or Ross. The mystery, however, was not allowed to remain without some attempt being made by those more deeply interested to unravel it; and on more than one occasion Hal might have been seen at night accompanied by Main and Waring issuing from the tent and carefully going over the ground towards the Tunstal claim. Whatever might have been their object in thus occupying themselves, it would seem that it had not proved successful, for no new development was made known; and the three men held anxious discussion with Bert time after time.

Their interest in the mystery, whatever it was, had an awaking, however, from a communication made to Hal by Davis on the occasion of his calling at the Post Office for letters a few days after the nocturnal journeys had ceased. Davis had retained his interest in the claim, but no longer worked in the mine himself, his business having so much increased as to require all his attention. He was also very attached to Hal, whom he had found always thoroughly honest and trustworthy, and he was glad of any opportunity for a chat with the new chum.

While the two were sitting together in the store a Chinaman, who had a claim on the Creek, came in. Davis, in a jesting way, introduced him to Hal. "Mr. Bilum," he said, as the Celestial faced towards him. The Chinaman grinned all over his face at the name given him by the storekeeper, and after transacting some little business, took his leave. "Why did you call the poor fellow 'Bilum?'" Hal asked. "Oh," was the answer, "he's a regular dodger. He used to work between the Tunstal claim and the one that Cleave and Ross had, and he brought me the gold he got. It was generally in specks; but one day he came with his usual small parcel, and in it was a lump of about half an ounce. I didn't like the look of it somehow, and asked him, 'How you get him?' He answered, 'Oh, Mitty Davis, me no cheat 'em, me welly good man; you know me long time; me sellee you good gold; no cheetee.' 'Well,' I said, 'how you get him likee this?' "Mittee Davisee,' he said, 'me wellee good man; me no cheetee; me go gettum silberum out; puttee on shovellum, bilum, bilum, you savee? Too muchee bilum; you know me, wellee good man.'

"Well," said Davis, "I certainly didn't like the look of it, and it was quite different to any he had brought before; but I thought it might be all right, and I made him a bid for it. He grumbled a bit at first at the low price I was offering him, and I

tipped the whole lot out of the scale back into his bag, and told him to go over opposite with it. He very quickly handed me the bag again, and said, 'All litee, Mittee Davisee, *you* welly good man; *me* welly good man; me putee on shovellum too muchee bilum; me sellee you all litee.' Well," Davis said, "I bought the gold and tested it after he had gone, and, sure enough, he had melted down two brass buttons with the gold, but he didn't have me for much after all, for I made the price very low. Where he was working is quite close to our claim, but going a bit towards the Tunstal. I wanted him to show me the place, but somehow he's got frightened, and won't go near it; always says, 'Too muchee Englisheeman, too muchee wheel truck; welly bad man; too muchee flighten; too muchee lun after me; too much flow stones.'"

As Davis proceeded with the story of his deal with "Bilum," Hal became more and more interested, and he determined to interview the Chinaman as soon as possible.

It was necessary for him now to return to the camp, and as he took his way over the ranges he cudgelled his brains to find out how this man could possibly know about the wheeling of a truck by the "Englisheeman," and why the latter had run after the Celestial and thrown stones at him. He could not help associating this episode in his mind with the strange events of the night when he had himself seen someone apparently wheeling a truck towards the spot indicated in the narrative which Davis had related; and he was determined to sift the matter to the bottom. By the time he reached the camp

the men had ceased work for the day, and he and his mates sat down to their evening meal.

Hal was unusually silent, and the others bantered him about this, and endeavoured to find a reason for his taciturnity. He, however, would tell them nothing until nightfall. Then, as they sat smoking and discussing the events of the day, he repeated to them the conversation he had had with Davis. It was evident that Main and Waring were as much impressed with the story as Hal himself, and once more they went with him and Bert to the place frequently visited by them previously. They returned without gaining any clue to the mystery which they believed enshrouded the disappearance of Ross; for it seemed distinctly improbable that a man would abandon a claim that had all the appearance of being of increasing value, without leaving a trace behind, especially as the matter of any alleged fraud with reference to the boundaries had not then been mentioned.

After further discussion, it was decided that Hal should go to the township on the next day and make every effort to find "Bilum," and induce him to give some further particulars as to his having visited the neighbourhood on the occasion referred to, and as to his interview with the "Englisheeman" and his having been "too muchee flightened" by him.

Soon after noon on the following day Hal started for the township. Arrived at the Post Office, he found Davis, and they had much talk over the matter that had brought Hal to the Creek; and eventually the two men set out in search of

" Bilum." They found him working at his puddling tub, and after the usual greetings, the visitors sat down and lighted their pipes, as if there had been nothing of more importance in their coming than to ask after " Bilum's " welfare and general health.

Cautiously Davis led the conversation up to the time when the Chinaman had brought him the spurious gold. " Bilum " smiled blandly when the matter was referred to, and persisted in the statement that he had had quicksilver in his tub and had heated the gold on his shovel in order to separate the metals. He was very voluble on this subject, and talked and gesticulated in an excited way about it. Davis became still more cautious, and now endeavoured to get the Chinaman off his guard. All those who know anything of the habits of these Celestials will readily perceive that this was no easy matter; and Davis was long in getting " Bilum " to the point. At last the former rose as if to go, and then, turning to the Chinaman and assuming an air of perfect indifference, he said in the patois which Europeans generally affect in talking to Asiatics, and which is known as pigeon English :— " Where you gettum lump? Me wanturn find place, gettum more gold. You come along showee me, savee?" The effect of these words on " Bilum " was electrical. He left his tub, and, approaching Davis, laid his hand on his shoulder, saying :—" Mittee Davisee, me no go; me flightened; Englisheeman up there; him comee ontum holee; him lun after me; him go back into holee; him all whitee; him cuttee all here; me too muchee flightened; me lun away; me no go by holee; him come out; all cuttee here;" and as he spoke " Bilum " indicated to his listeners the place where the " Englisheeman " was " all cuttee " by putting his finger to Davis' left temple.

The two visitors were now intently watching the Chinaman, and they realised that he was evidently sincere, and that something had happened to him in the silence of night on the lonely ranges which had caused a horrible dread to fall upon him, and had rendered it a matter almost of impossibility to induce him to re-visit the spot at which the episode had occurred.

Davis, however, still pressed the man for further particulars as to the exact place where he had seen the " Englisheeman," and succeeded in eliciting that it was " All-ee same Cleekum, longee by tlack goee long Tunstal." By which the visitors understood that the spot at which all this had occurred was close to the track leading from Reedy Creek to the Tunstal claim.

With this additional information, meagre as it was, the two were compelled to be content; and Hal returned to the camp and reported to Main and Waring what he had learned.

XXXV. THE BLACK TRACKER—A HORRIBLE DISCOVERY

THE mystery of the absence of Ross and the Chinaman's disclosure caused the three men to redouble their efforts to learn more of the matter, and, pro-

curing the aid of a black tracker, they went again over the ground previously pointed out as that traversed by Hal on the night when he had heard the sound of the truck being wheeled in the direction of the Tunstal claim.

The Aboriginal listened attentively to all that Hal had to tell, both concerning his own observation and the Chinaman's assertion that a white man had come from a hole and had thrown stones at him, and that there was a cut on the face of the man.

Being shown the exact spot on which Hal had stood and the direction in which the truck had been wheeled, he carefully examined every part of the ground, and very slowly made his way towards the place from which sounds as of earth being removed had emanated.

After much pondering and the examining of every bush for sign of a trail, he set out in the direction of the Tunstal claim. No detail escaped the notice of this child of Nature, and after a few paces had been taken, he stopped and gazed with great intentness on a spot half-hidden by wattles, and pointing to the ground exclaimed :—" White man, here, baal come out; him here long time."

Those following could now see that which had previously escaped their notice. The ground had been evidently disturbed, but had been so carefully replaced as effectually to conceal the fact of its having been opened, and only an expert would have discovered that anything out of the ordinary course had taken place.

All was now excitement, and it was necessary that

immediate action should be taken to re-open the ground and verify the judgment of the guide.

To procure tools for the purpose was the work of only a few minutes, for there were plenty on the claims a few yards distant. For the eager men it took but a very short time to excavate the place that had but recently been opened. Soon a sheet of bark was disclosed a few feet from the surface, and upon this being raised, the horrified workers found the body of a man. The nature of the soil in which this man was enclosed had prevented decomposition, and the features of Ross were plainly to be recognised.

Hal had known the man in life, and he had no hesitation in identifying the remains. On the forehead was a fearful gash, evidently made by some sharp instrument. And thus the story of the Chinaman, " him all cuttee here," was shown to be accurate.

How the Celestial had arrived at the conclusion that the man had come out of the hole and thrown stones was a mystery. Presumably, the one who had wheeled the truck and placed the body in the hole had been in concealment among the bushes and had taken this means to scare off the intruder.

Carefully replacing the bark in its former position, the men who had removed it returned to the Leviathan, determined that some of them should proceed to Reedy Creek and report the news of the discovery to the proper authorities; and Hal, by arrangement with those who had been associated with him in the matter, started for the township for this purpose.

When he reached the Post Office he found Davis busy with his official work. He looked up as the sound of Hal's hasty step reached him, and gave a low whistle, exclaiming:—"Why, what on earth ails you, lad; have you seen a ghost or struck a new lead?" His bantering tone ceased suddenly, as he noted the evident distress of his visitor, and he added:—"You are bad, old fellow; come inside and take something.

He led Hal into the room behind the shop, and hastily poured some brandy into a glass, and, handing it to him, said:—"Here, drink this, and pull yourself together; you're nearly done. Whatever has happened to you?"

Hal was quite unused to strong drink; nevertheless he took that which was offered to him, and drank it off without feeling any ill-effect. He now led Davis to a seat outside the Post Office, and hurriedly told him of the events which had happened, and of the wish expressed by Main and Waring for the presence of a magistrate at the Leviathan.

An enquiry was being held in the township at the time with reference to a disputed claim, and a Justice of the Peace from Broadford, a neighbouring hamlet, had been called to arbitrate in the case. Davis and Hal, therefore, proceeded to M'Manus' store, where the matter was being dealt with.

They found the object of their search, and he, having adjourned the case in hand, ordered his buggy, and set out with Davis and Hal for the claim; and late in the afternoon they reached the Leviathan.

Davis had taken a message from the magistrate to the Police Station while the preparation for the journey was being made, and two troopers were already at the tent when the party having taken the bridle track through the bush, arrived.

An improvised morgue was hastily prepared in a building which had been used as a forge in the old days of the Leviathan prosperity, and the men set to work in the presence of the magistrate to raise the body from the shaft.

By this time the news had spread over the camp that a tragedy of some sort had been discovered, and there was a crowd of interested miners about the spot. No lack of help, therefore, was experienced, and in a few minutes ropes and other requirements were brought, and the body was raised to the surface and conveyed to the building prepared for it.

The magistrate, being also Coroner for the district, formally opened the inquest on the remains, and took evidence of identification, the senior constable acting as clerk of the court.

Hal and Bert deposed to having known the deceased as "Tom Ross." Both had seen and spoken to him a few days before his disappearance from the district. Hal stated that he had heard sounds of quarrelling at the hut occupied by deceased and his mate, William Cleave, and that threats had been made by the men of personal violence to each other. He also said, in answer to questions, that he had not seen Cleave for three days, and had no knowledge of his movements. At this point the enquiry was adjourned till the

next morning at ten o'clock, in order to permit a post-mortem examination to be made by a medical man from Kilmore, for whom a mounted messenger had already been sent.

During this time the black tracker had been carefully following the trail of Cleave. A trooper accompanied him, in order to render any assistance that might be required, or to ride after the fugitive if the track should be so plain as to point to any particular road as the one taken by him.

In many places, however, the marks of passing feet had been quite obliterated, and to follow the trail was more difficult. It was therefore nearly dark before the two men had reached the Plenty Mountain road, so slow was the progress they were able to make. And now it was impossible to tell which was the direction taken by Cleave after turning into the road. Naturally, it would be concluded that he had gone to the right, in order that he might reach Kilmore, make his way to Melbourne, and take shipping for a foreign port. The black tracker, however, was positive that the trail did not lead in that direction. In the end, it was decided to return to camp and start at daybreak next morning with more assistants.

XXXVI. THE SEARCH FOR CLEAVE

ACCOMPANIED by the trooper and others, including Main and Waring, the Aboriginal very early in the following day started on the search.

It was soon evident that the man whom they

followed had taken the road leading to the Plenty Mountains. Probably he knew nothing of the bush and had mistaken the way, and would soon be bewildered.

The party had brought sufficient stores to last for two days, having no certainty of the distance they might have to pass over. By night they reached a camp of bullock carters, who were on their way to Kilmore. These gave them shelter.

Meantime, events of some importance had happened at the Leviathan. By noon the doctor had arrived, and proceeded at once to examine the body of Ross. He found that the wound on the head had been caused by a blow from some sharp instrument, such as a miner's pick, and that it had been of sufficient force to cause death. There was evidence, too, of a sharp struggle having taken place between the deceased and his assailant, and that the wound had been inflicted while the former was in an upright position.

Hal deposed of his having seen a man wheeling a truck in the direction of the hole from which the body of Ross was recovered. Other testimony convinced the Coroner that Ross had been wilfully murdered, and he returned a verdict to that effect, and forwarded the particulars to the Attorney-General, while a warrant was issued for the arrest of Cleave as the murderer.

While these proceedings were in progress the search party continued the work of following the track of the missing man; and dawn of the day succeeding that of their leaving the Leviathan found them making every effort to trace Cleave.

The black tracker compared every footprint with

the boot that had been given to him as one that had been worn by Cleave. At length, with the exclamation, "Him here!" he started off at an angle to the right. With renewed energy, the whole party followed. The trail led considerably away from the road. The fugitive had, no doubt, seen the camp fire and, desiring to avoid recognition, had made this detour. For some miles the footprints were easily followed, and it unaccountably turned and twisted in different directions. "Him lost," exclaimed the leader. "Baal find road; him sit down here." The place indicated by "here" was a clump of undergrowth, which showed unmistakable signs of having been tramped upon and made use of as a bed. Stooping down, the tracker very carefully examined this spot, picking up here and there something that he considered of importance concerning the matter in hand. Presently he went up to one of the troopers and opened his palm. In it lay several small scraps of bread, showing that whoever had rested there for the night had also made a meal at the spot. The trooper took charge of these evidences of human occupation, and feeling them with thumb and finger, remarked:—"It's quite fresh; he can't be far off now surely."

The wonderful ability of the Aboriginals in tracking men or animals is well known, and also the intelligence which enables them to piece together the smallest details, and to draw a correct inference from them as to that which they desire to make clear. And the man chosen to lead the party in this case was no exception.

He now explained in broken English, which was well understood by the troopers, that the man they sought had turned away from the road and had failed to recover it when he attempted to do so, that he had had a little food with him, and, having eaten this, he had lain down for the night, and was now probably in a hopeless state of bewilderment. "Baal find road," he repeated; "him done, we get him very soon."

Those who have traversed this part of the Plenty Mountain Range will readily understand how just was the surmise of the tracker. One keeping strictly to the beaten road may possibly reach the spot for which he has set out, but even this is not in every case easy of accomplishment. In wet seasons the country is trying to the experienced bushman, and drays, when heavily loaded, must make a detour here and there to prevent being bogged in the yielding ground. Hence the track is often undefined, and the traveller is inclined to turn, now this way, now that, until he becomes completely bewildered, and many have lost their lives in a hopeless effort to reach a place of habitation.

That the man whose trail was being followed had completely lost his way and become hopelessly bewildered was made more and more evident to those in pursuit. The occasional grunt of satisfaction by the Aboriginal as he discovered fresh indications of his man having but recently passed over the ground was invariably followed by the remark:—"Baal track, no good," as he discovered that every footmark led farther and farther astray, and that the

bewildered fugitive had frequently walked in a circle and had simply multiplied tracks. Eager as was every member of the party to come up with the quarry, it was found necessary to camp early in the afternoon in order that men and horses might have rest and food. They were now at a considerable distance from the road, and were hourly putting more space between it and themselves. Their own way back would not be difficult to find for the footprints were fresh and distinct.

While partaking of such food as remained, sounds of wheels were heard from the same quarter as that they themselves had traversed. One trooper with the black tracker went cautiously back to ascertain the cause, and very soon met a party of horsemen with a light cart, headed by an Aboriginal. This man was recognised by their own leader as his mate from Reedy Creek.

It was quickly explained that the senior constable in charge of the Police Station had collected a band of volunteers to follow the party from the Leviathan and convey extra stores for the men lest they should be compelled to return for want of provisions, and that he had brought a vehicle rather than pack-horses, so that, if the fugitive should be in an exhausted condition, there would be the means of bringing him to the township. The relief party had travelled quickly under the guidance of the black tracker. Hence their early appearance on the scene.

XXXVII. THE ARREST OF CLEAVE.

THE senior constable now assumed the command of the party, and gave the word to march. Difficult as had been the track hitherto, it was now ten times more so, for the bush was thick and the cart would not be drawn in a direct line but must be continually diverging to avoid the stumps that beset the way. After two hours of this rough travelling, the leader called a halt for a few minutes, and went forward with the trackers and the other trooper.

During the absence of these four, the remainder of the party, dismounting, allowed their horses to brouse on the herbage which grew plentifully on the mountain where no hoof had trod.

Suddenly Hal started up with the exclamation :— "Did you hear that?" "Hear what?" cried the others, rising to their feet. "Listen," answered Hal. Every man held his breath and strained his ears. Then, in a moment, each one set out for his horse. The animals had all ceased to feed and stood with heads erect, listening to the sound which had been heard now by every member of the party. It was that of the breaking of dry twigs as though footsteps were slowly passing over the ground. Then one of the horses gave a loud whinney, showing that the animal had discerned the tread of one of his own kind. In a moment there was an answering neigh from the same direction as that of the footsteps. Each member of the party instantly sprang upon his horse and rode as fast as the rugged ground would permit towards the place from whence the sounds emanated. A few yards of this

travelling brought them in view of a pitiable sight. Upon a slight eminence were seen a man and horse. The former was on foot wearily dragging, rather than leading, his four-footed companion. Even at this distance the men could see that the horse was dead lame and the man completely exhausted. Urging on their beasts, the party soon came up with the miserable pair. The first exclamation they heard was one of thankfulness to Heaven, as the weary wayfarer caught sight of his fellow-creatures. Then the power which had sustained him thus far suddenly left him, and he sank a limp bundle at the feet of those finding him. Dismounting, the men lifted the head of the poor fellow, and one of them, producing a flask of brandy, moistened his lips with the raw spirits. He soon showed signs of partial recovery, and assisted by those about him, struggled into a sitting position. He was not yet in a condition to be questioned, but his rescuers realised by his garb that he was a minister of religion.

After a few minutes the wanderer was able to stand, and by great exertion, and supported by those who had found him, with tottering steps he reached the camp. Here food and water were supplied to him, and he could now relate his adventures of the last few days.

It appeared that he was an Anglican priest and incumbent of Kilmore, and that, when the news reached that town of the gathering of people to Reedy Creek, he had determined to visit the place with a view of holding services there. He had ridden on in the growing darkness, and by some accident had left the road and wandered off into

the bush. He had been for four days almost entirely without food, having used the small supply that he had brought with him from Kilmore. His horse had suddenly become lame, and he was reduced to the last extremity from hunger and exposure when the party had found him. It was further learned from the reverend gentleman that on the previous day he had seen a man on foot in the scrub, and had tried to come up to him, but had failed. The person, whoever he was, seemed in distress and walked painfully, leaning on a stick.

As this information might be of importance in the search for Cleave, the men decided to follow the track of the troopers and endeavour to overtake them.

The clergyman's horse was found to be rather badly strained in one fore-leg, and, removing the saddle and bridle, the men left the beast to graze, and placing their newly-found friend in the cart, took the way indicated by the troopers' trail, and went as rapidly as possible after them.

Not till very late in the day, however, did they come in sight of those they were seeking.

The day had been an eventful one, and it was now too dark for the Aboriginals to follow the trail farther. A camp was therefore made for the night, and the horses were hobbled and allowed to go at liberty.

The troopers were glad of the tidings brought by the clergyman, for it confirmed what they had already surmised; and they were more than ever convinced of the identity of the fugitive, and were

certain of his capture, if he had not already fallen a victim to hunger and exposure.

Early the next morning the whole party started on the trail. The country now was much more open, and the difficulty of travelling was less.

Evidence was not wanting of the distress of the fugitive. It was manifest that he knew nothing of less fashion and as if in absolute despair. Mile upon mile had been covered by him, and still he had but become more bewildered.

The clergyman had by this time sufficiently recovered his strength to enable him to walk without difficulty, and he was full of interest in the matter and of pity for the forlorn creature for whom the search was being made. His own recent experience, when he had so nearly met his death by starvation, made him the more ready to feel for the suffering of another under very similiar circumstances. He therefore watched with interest the movements of the party, of which he had become a member, and was keen in his anxiety that the alleged criminal should be rescued from starvation.

After a very short distance had been traversed, the tracks led in the direction of a slight eminence, rising from the tableland and to the right of the direction in which they were riding. A clump of wattles lay in the centre of it, and to this the tracks led very clearly.

The day was fine and bright; no sound, save that of the horse hoofs and the rumble of the cart wheels, broke the stillness; all nature seemed wrapped in tranquil rest. It was just one of those times when one could banish every care and thankfully enjoy the good gifts of Heaven, and bask in the sunlight of nature. And yet, within a few hundred yards at most, must there be one of God's creatures suffering an agony of hunger and pain not unmixed with remorse. Such were the thoughts of the good man sitting in the cart to which he had only a few hours before been carried in a condition of helplessness. Suddenly from his reverie he was rudely aroused. "Him here," cried the trackers simultaneously from the front, and starting forward at a run, regardless now of footprints and those other signs of the chase with which nature had provided them, they made for the shelter, in which they believed the hunted man had concealed himself.

The whole party now pressed eagerly forward, pushing their way through the undergrowth. At first nothing could be seen, and the troopers turned inquiringly towards the trackers. The latter forced their way farther to the right, and almost immediately exclaimed, "Him here."

Upon the others coming up with them, they found a small open space, and in the middle of it a man struggling to raise himself from the ground. He was so weak that he was evidently unable to lift himself, but fell back with a groan as of pain. Instinctively one of the troopers, a young man who had but recently joined the force, put his hand to the belt under his jumper. There was a jingling of metal as he began to draw forth his handcuffs, but the senior constable laid his hand on the arm of the young man, and in an awed whisper pronounced the words, "Too late; he's done."

The experienced eye of the officer recognised that the fugitive had gone beyond the power of human law, and that succour and arrest alike had come too late.

One of the party stepped forward and poured a little brandy between the parched lips of the prostrate man, while another placed under his head a folded blanket. The rest stood round in awed silence with heads uncovered, each one realising that a human soul was about to pass to the Unknown World.

After a few moments the dying man opened his eyes and looked vacantly around. Then, seeing Hal among those about him, he gave a glance of recognition, and his lips moved as if he tried to articulate. Hal, at a sign from the senior constable, stepped forward, and, keeling down, placed his ear close to the moving lips. At the same time more stimulant was administered to the fugitive, and under its influence he revived somewhat, and in feeble accents, in broken sentences, murmured: "They call me—Cleave. I am ——" (Hal gave a great start at the name), and after a pause the man continued: "Him you knew—as Ross was ——. Came to me from—Rio—knew of the patch—brought me here—attacked me—might—I seize—pick—struck him down—self-defence—wheeled—creek—wattles—old claim."

During this time the senior constable had, with professional instinct, been busy with his pencil and notebook. And now, coming to the other side of the man, he asked:—"Do you believe that you are dying?" "Yes," came the answer in feeble

accents, "no hope—head split." Then for the first time was noticed by those near a stain of dried blood upon the head of the speaker, and closer inspection disclosed a wound on the skull, and it was seen also that the man's shirt was stained at the neck a dark red. "Fair fight," continued the dying man. "Mine's been—bad life, but—no murder."

Then it seemed as if the end had come; there was a faint struggle for breath, and all was still. The senior constable felt the man's heart and signed to one of the party for more stimulant. A little was poured between the parted lips, and again there was a tremor of the body and the eyes opened and an anxious look passed over the white face. At length the words came painfully and slowly, as Hal bent over the prostrate form. "Marston—innocent. I filled—'Helen's' cases—salt—he never knew—signed for arms—he believed all I said—he—did not know—fraud. I—did it."

A sudden start by Hal seemed to alarm the speaker. "Don't leave—me," he murmured, "more to say. Cranbourne did it—with me—no one else—in it—as God—my Judge."

The senior constable asked Hal if he understood all this. Too excited to speak, the latter simply bent his head in token of assent. Then the official signed to the other members of the party to come nearer, and clearing his voice, read from the notebook in his hand, first carefully repeating the formula: "William Cleave, do you believe you are dying?" "Yes," feebly murmured the prostrate man. "Name, Charles Butler, partner—Mar-

ston." Hal gave another start, and looked earnestly at the man as the senior constable read over what he had recorded. This done, he put the indelible pencil into the twitching fingers of the fugitive, who scratched a mark between the words —" William Cleave, otherwise Charles Butler." Then the officer signed his own name and passed the notebook to Hal, who also put his signature, and, closing the book, handed it back to its owner.

All this had occupied but a few moments, and the dying man muttered to Hal. " What is it?" he asked eagerly, bending down to the speaker. " Is there—anyone to read—to—me?" Could—any of you—say—word—for—soul?" Hal gently laid down the hand that clasped his own, and, standing aside, motioned to the clergyman, who came forward to the side of the sufferer. " Are you—clergyman?" was the first question the man asked. " Yes, my friend, I am. What can I do for you?" " I—want—pray—me—bad life—tell me—any—hope—soul—true?" came in broken accents from the dying man. " Hope, hope," answered the reverend gentleman, " certainly there is hope—hope for all who repent," and drawing from his pocket a small copy of the Prayer Book, he read :—" If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." " All our sins?" feebly murmured the dying man. " Yes, yes, my friend; all—everything." " Is there, is there——another chance for me?" " Yes," said the clergyman. " Yes, there is hope for all who repent." " That's me," came the answer, more firmly now, as the eyes, which had been closed,

opened and looked upward. " Do you say—there is—life for me?" " Yes, I firmly believe in a new life and a better hope on some other plane; and that is for you." " Pray," came in a weak voice from the sufferer. Then the clergyman recited the prayer for the dying, while those about with bared heads knelt reverently. " Amen " came distinctly from the lips of the dying man; and the parson began the Lord's Prayer :—" Our Father," repeated the sufferer, but as he said it the lips quivered, a slight tremor passed over the emaciated body, the mouth parted in a smile as of thankfulness and peace, and the soul of Charles Butler passed to another plane.

XXXVIII. SOME STRANGE DISCLOSURES

THE body of Charles Butler, lately known as Cleave, was covered with a blanket and placed in the cart, and a start was made for the Plenty Mountain road.

The clergyman was now well enough to mount a horse, and Hal and Bert took turns in walking and riding. No member of the party would have begrudged the reverend gentleman anything that was in his power to offer, for he had endeared himself to all.

The Old Sawpit was reached before ten that night, and thence to the claim was only a few minutes' journey.

Much excitement was caused by the return of the party, and everyone was anxious for full parti-

culars. But the senior constable answered all questions with proper official reserve, and contented himself with the statement that the cart contained the body of him who was known as William Cleave, that he had been found alive, and had shortly afterwards died of exposure and hunger.

Early in the afternoon of the next day the magistrate, who had been recalled from his home at Broadford, arrived at the claim. The inquest was held shortly after, and the doctor deposed that the autopsy disclosed that there was a wound on the head of the deceased, such as might have been caused by the axe produced, which showed bloodstains on the blade and on the handle; that the wound was not of sufficient severity to cause death, but would produce inflammation of the brain and render a man unaccountable for his actions, causing him to become bewildered and to wander about without any fixed purpose. He further stated that the body was much emaciated.

Other witnesses were called, including Hal, who deposed that he was commonly known as Henry Charles, and had been so ever since his arrival in Australia. That his name was Henry Charles Hancock, and that he was in the employ of Ludovic Rodetzki, a private detective in London, and had been engaged in working up the case for the prosecution of Edward Marston and George Cranbourne on a charge of conspiracy to defraud the Underwriters in the matter of the insurance of a vessel known as the " Helen," and also of scuttling her. That those two men had been convicted and sentenced to long terms of transportation, and that

it had been officially announced that they had escaped from the Convict Prison in West Australia, where they were serving their time. And that, as both men were known to him, he had been sent by Rodetzki to Australia with instructions in the case, and had placed himself in communication with Edward Hill, who was Rodetzki's agent in Melbourne. That Hill had procured for witness an appointment with A. G. Corbett, of Melbourne, ostensibly for the purpose of shepherding the Leviathan claim, but really to watch two men who were believed to be Marston and Cranbourne. That he soon found these were not the men in question, but he had discovered that they had been connected with the crime; and he had remained ostensibly to work an adjoining claim, but more particularly to watch the men and to communicate with Hill on the matter.

Hal added that he had frequently heard sounds of violent quarrelling between these two, and that, at his suggestion, Hill, with Detectives Main and Waring, had visited the Claim, and had found that Ross, whose real name was Harvey, had disappeared, and that they had remained at the Leviathan awaiting his return in order to arrest him and Butler for complicity in the scuttling of the " Helen;" and that, soon after, Cleave, alias Butler, had disappeared, and witness went with a party in search of him, believing that he had caused the death of Ross, alias Harvey, whose dead body had been discovered in an abandoned shaft.

Witness had also been with the troopers when the deceased was found in an exhausted condition

in the bush, and had heard him say that he knew he was dying, and that he had struck Ross, alias Harvey, with a pick, in self defence, and had put his body in the old shaft; and also that he, Cleave, alias Butler, had conspired with Cranbourne, the chief mate of the " Helen," to scuttle her, and to defraud the underwriters, with reference to the bills of lading, and that Marston was innocent, and knew nothing of the fraud.

The Senior Constable also gave evidence, and, after medical evidence had also been given as to the result of the post-mortem examination, the Coroner found that Cleave, otherwise Butler, the deceased, had come by his death through exposure and want of nourishment, accelerated by a wound on the head inflicted by one Ross, otherwise Harvey.

The dying deposition of Cleave, otherwise Butler, was forwarded to the Attorney-General in order that enquiry might be made as to the assertion of Marston's innocence, and of his having been the dupe of Butler and Cranbourne.

Nothing now remained to detain Main, Waring, and Hill at Reedy Creek, and they decided to place their shares in the Claim on the market, and to return to Melbourne. Both Main and Waring were experienced detectives in the Metropolitan Police Force, and had, in fact, been selected for special duty in connection with Hill and Hal in the intricate work of unravelling the mystery enshrouding the scuttling of the " Helen," and the appearance of Ross and Cleave at Reedy Creek.

Now that so much progress had been made they were entrusted with the equally difficult work of

tracing the escapees from the West Australian Convict Prison, and Hal, having so much clear knowledge of both Marston and Cranbourne, was commissioned by the Victorian Government as a detective for the special duty of working in conjunction with them.

Bert obtained a position with the brokers, who had negotiated in the matter of the Leviathan and Red Jacket Claims, and remained in Melbourne, while Hill resumed his duties as agent for Rodetzki.

XXXIX. MARSTON AND CRANBOURNE AGAIN.

THE task of tracking the two convicts was rendered more difficult by the fact of the detectives having been for months on the wrong trail, for they had been convinced that those known at Reedy Creek as Cleave and Ross were the men wanted, and it was not until Hal had been sent to identify them that the mistake was discovered.

Now the matter assumed a different aspect. It was known that two men answering to the description of the gaol-breakers had been seen in Victoria, and that daring robberies had been committed by them.

Meanwhile, Main, Waring, and Hal continued their enquiries in the matter of the former robberies attributed to Marston and Cranbourne, amid much discouragement. Hal was the only one who had sufficient knowledge of the men to be able clearly to identify them, and he and his comrades read with

great interest the account of the Deniliquin Outrage, and such description of the offenders as had been circulated, and they were not long in coming to the conclusion that these were identical with the men they were seeking. They decided that their best course was to return to Melbourne, and to report to the Chief Commissioner of Victorian Police.

Upon receiving their statement the Chief Commissioner communicated with the Inspector-General of the Police in the sister colony, advising him of Hal's knowledge of the men who were believed to be the perpetrators of the robberies in Victoria, and of the more recent one at Deniliquin.

The latter officer was impressed with the advantage that would be gained by having such a man as Hal to assist in the search for the delinquents, and arrangements were made for him to join the police party, who, under command of a superintendent, had been entrusted with the work of securing the miscreants.

Hal parted from his companions with sincere expressions of regret on both sides, and, while they resumed their duties in Melbourne, he set out for New South Wales, and in due course reported himself to the officer in charge of the police party at Deniliquin.

His knowledge of the two men, for whose arrest the whole district was anxious, was considered most useful, and when suspects were apprehended they were brought under his notice for identification or otherwise. Despite every effort, the days passed by without any satisfactory result being attained.

The robbers were apparently emboldened by their

success, and many reports reached the authorities of the sticking up of stations in parts distant from the centre of police operations.

In these cases the greatest effrontery was shown by the bushrangers. It was known to the police generally that two outlaws were abroad, and persons who in ordinary cases would have shown bravery in danger were paralysed with fear when accosted by these desperadoes, and gave what was demanded without even a show of resistance. It was no longer possible for these men to rely on the help of sympathisers. In the first place, the police had these under complete surveillance, and, in the second, the reward offered by the Governments of both New South Wales and Victoria was so large that even the most staunch might fall into the temptation of betraying the outlaws and securing at least a share of it, especially when the police were so completely forming a cordon about them as to preclude the possibility of ultimate escape.

It was evident that, despite immunity from arrest, the hunted men were often in desperate straits. With plenty of money in their possession, they still must be without food, for they could not venture into a town where it could be purchased. Horses, too, must be obtained, and these could only be taken by force or strategy from the homesteads. There was no possibility of a return to Victoria, for every place which might afford an opportunity to cross the border was carefully guarded. So that it was to a comparatively small area that the men were confined.

Riverina, the border line between the two

colonies, was now the only district in which their operations could be carried on, and this afforded some facilities, of which they readily made use.

The stations in this part of Australia were of large area. Very few selectors had as yet made their appearance, and the distances between homesteads were large, so that communication from one to another of these was not easy. There were times, too, when most of the boundary riders and other station hands would be away, engaged in mustering cattle and removing them from one part of the run to another some miles off. At these times it would be less difficult to hold up those few remaining at the homestead.

Thus, while police parties scoured one part of Riverina in search of the wanted men, they would suddenly appear in a totally different direction, and would easily overpower those on any one station and obtain stores and fresh horses, taking care always to secure the best of these latter that the run possessed. So swift were their movements that they were able to evade capture, and those who might have defended the property were taken completely by surprise and compelled to sit helplessly by while the bushrangers seized whatever they might require.

XL. CARRA STATION, RIVERINA

ABOUT thirty miles from the town of Albury, on the river Murray, the business centre of Riverina, was the station known as Carra, the most prosperous of all the runs. The owner, Mr. M'Farlane, had made the property more than usually valuable by his tact and commercial skill, and had practically secured as freehold an area of one hundred square miles.

Wherever a part of the run had been improved by him, either in the construction of a dam or by clearing and fencing, application was made to the Government that the area comprising the work done should be offered for sale. By law, the purchaser would have to pay for these improvements, which would mean a very great sum, while the squatter would be able to purchase it at the upset price of the land.

By this means and by judicious selections of the most valuable parts of the station, he had effectually prevented outside men from taking it up, for they would have no means of ingress or egress, as they could not pass through the squatter's land without his permission. Thus, Mr. M'Farlane had picked out the eyes of the estate, and prevented the alienation of any part of it.

He was a magistrate and a member of the Parliament of New South Wales, and was known as a good master throughout the district.

There was a good staff of servants at Carra, and the homestead was well ordered. A tutor was employed for the four sons, and a governess for the two daughters of the house. Two young men, one the nephew of Mr. M'Farlane, and the other the brother of his wife, were part of the household. These and the bookkeeper made up the number of those living at the home, the servants' quarters being at the rear of the homestead.

In the evening it was the custom of those of the home to gather in the dining-room and indulge in music and in quiet pastimes until the time for retiring. French windows gave ingress to this room, and a well-kept garden surrounded the house.

No alarm had been caused at Carra by the rumours of bushranging exploits. All had been very quiet in the district for a long period.

One evening about a month after Hal and his companions had left the Leviathan, the members of Mr. M'Farlane's household were gathered after their usual custom, and were entertaining two visitors who had come from Albury. These were employed as travellers by the wholesale houses of that town, and came periodically to Carra, where they were sure of doing good business in their respective lines, and where there was also a hearty welcome.

They generally travelled together for the sake of company on the long road from Albury to Germantown, and they frequently had much to tell of matters that had come under their notice since their last visit. On this occasion their story was of their own experience, and that by no means of a cheerful character.

The jaded and broken-down appearance of their horses had been observed by the grooms when they arrived, and the young gentlemen in the house had been called to look at them. Upon their return to the dining-room they were amusing themselves by chaffing the two travellers about the condition they were in. "Why didn't you put a candle inside

yours, Smith?" asked one. "What for?" was the answer. "Why, to make a lantern of him, of course. He's pretty well transparent; he looks as for you that the governor's away. He'd soon give if he hadn't had a feed for a month." "It's good old Charlie, the butcher, orders to put the two of them out of their misery."

Smith answered the remarks of the lads with some warmth. "See here, boys," he said, "if you had passed through the same experience as we have to-day you would not be quite so much in mood to laugh perhaps. It happens that those are not our horses at all." "Shook them on the road, did you, Smith?" asked one of the boys irreverently. "No, young gentleman, we did not shake them, as you are pleased to remark; but we have been in the hands of ruffians only a few miles back from here, who stripped us of everything worth seizing, which was not much. But they took our horses from us, and left their own jaded beasts; so you see we are not responsible for their condition."

"How long ago was this?" asked one of the company, now fully aroused and in more serious mood. "About a couple of hours," was the answer. "We were on our way from Albury, and had reached the top of the rise, three miles back, when we encountered the two men, who called on us to stand and throw up our arms. There was nothing for it but to comply and dismount, when the order was given. One man covered us with a revolver, while the other ransacked our valises. They then took our horses, and, leaving us theirs, rode off."

A painful silence fell on the whole company during this recital by Smith. This was at length broken by Hodgetts, the bookkeeper, who, turning to the victims of the outrage, remarked :— " Couldn't you have done something to resist those fellows? They were only two to two. Why, when I was at Chilianwallah I——"

" Oh ! bother Chilianwallah, go out and catch those fellows now, and you'll have something to talk about. Chilianwallah is too far off to interest us," was the answer. Hodgetts had at one time been in the Indian Army, and had great ideas of wondrous deeds that he imagined himself to have accomplished ; but as these had always been carried out when he was the only warrior on the spot, there was, of course, no one who could bear testimony to his valour, and he had perforce to tell of it himself, and this he never tired of doing.

XLI. THE BUSHRANGERS VISIT CARRA

HODGETTS was highly indignant at this interruption, and proceeded to deliver a homily on the ill-manners of the colonial youth generally and of the necessity for more discipline by those having charge of boys.

Mrs. M'Farlane and the governess, who were seated at a small occasional table near to one of the French windows, listened in a half-amused way to the old gentleman's diatribe, which was aimed in a slightly veiled way at the tutor, who had been

taking a hand at whist with the two ladies and one of the boys.

The cards had been abandoned while Smith and his companion related their adventure, and the tutor was putting the pack together with the object of returning them to their case. Suddenly the French window near to where the ladies were sitting was violently forced open from the outside, and two masked men entered the room. One was a fine looking man, over six feet in height; the other, short and thick-set . " Throw up your hands, every one of you," exclaimed the former, who was a little in advance of his companion. It was useless to disobey the order, for both were armed with revolvers, whose barrels shone with menacing brightness in the lamp-lit room.

Instantly every hand was raised, except in the case of the tutor, who still held the cards and the box, and of Hodgetts, the gallant champion of Chilianwallah, who had made a hasty exit from the room as the bushrangers entered, banging it violently in his terror.

The tutor had not moved a muscle during this time, nor paid the slightest heed to the order given. " Do you hear, you young jackanapes. I tell you, throw up your hands," repeated the intruder. " There's one then," answered the young man, as, with a sudden spring, he faced the outlaw, and at the same instant shot his left fist with stunning force upon the point of the man's jaw.

So terrific was the onslaught that the ruffian staggered back and collided with the man behind him. At the same instant there was a loud report,

and with a groan of agony the stalwart robber fell upon the floor, his head coming in violent contact with the sharp edge of the chiffonier.

All was the work of but very few moments. The tutor had been an English public school boy, and one of the foremost in the gymnasium and at all athletic sports. He was in good practice, for he was extremely popular with everyone on the station, and had frequently put on the gloves for a friendly bout with one or other of the hands.

By no means lacking in courage, he had with perfect coolness marked every move of the bushrangers from the moment of their entry, and had purposely retained the cards and box in his hand till opportunity was afforded for making the attack. This had been afforded when the taller ruffian shifted his position to address him, thus completely covering his companion, and preventing him from using his weapon. Seizing the opportunity, the tutor had, in sporting phraseology, "got in with his left," and had given such a blow as to disable his adversary; but far more serious consequences ensued, for, as the man staggered, he had brought his back in line with the revolver in the hand of his companion, and this exploding, he had received a mortal wound.

The tutor now threw himself upon the other outlaw, and would have overpowered him but for the overzeal of some of the company, who, rushing forward to assist, impeded his movements, and by a desperate effort the miscreant freed himself and, reaching the open French window, succeeded in passing out to the verandah and made a dash for the

garden fence beyond. This he climbed, but before he could drop on the other side there was the sound of galloping hoofs, and a body of mounted police from the neighbouring town rode up. "Stand!" cried the sergeant in charge. "Throw up your hands!" For answer the man raised one hand, and there glittered the steel barrel of a revolver. There was a flash of fire from the muzzle, and then came the answering crack of a trooper's rifle, and the body of George Cranbourne, exmate of the "Helen," fell with a dull thud to the ground.

Dismounting, the sergeant went to the side of the fallen outlaw, and, stooping over him, began to examine his body to locate the wound, which it was evident he had received.

A stream of blood from the chest showed clearly in the moonlight, and, assisted by the troopers, the officer removed the wounded man's coat and vest and unfastened his flannel, disclosing a bullet hole near the heart. All attempts to staunch the crimson stream were unavailing, and it was evident that the fugitive had but a few moments to live.

It was useless to attempt his removal, and one of the troopers went up to the house and asked for a pillow on which to rest the dying man's head.

Mrs. M'Farlane returned with the constable, bringing bandages and also brandy, with the merciful intention of relieving the sufferer as much as possible. As soon as the liquid had been applied, the man murmured something that was too indistinct for those about him to hear correctly. The sergeant bent lower and asked: "George Cran-

bourne, do you know that you are dying?" "Yes, yes," came the answer in low gasps. "It's all up, and—and—if I could begin again—all—different—life—failure—only one friend in—world—my—pistol killed—him. Glad I—not—live. My only mate——"

"Do you mean Marston?" asked the sergeant, as he held his official notebook to a lantern that one of the hands had brought to the spot, and began to make a note. "Marston, Marston," murmured the outlaw, apparently startled to momentary life by the mention of the name. "Yes," was the reply. "Your mate, Marston?" A slight smile crossed the face of the dying man. "Marston," he repeated. "Poor beggar. No mate—mine. They—ran—him in, but—he knew—nothing. Signed anything—Butler and I—put before—him. Thought—all right—no idea—business." Then, as if the effort had been too much for him, Cranbourne gave a sigh and lay perfectly still.

"He's gone," exclaimed Mrs M'Farlane. Silently the sergeant, who had been busy with his notebook, stretched out his hand for the brandy and moistened the lips of the sufferer. There was a movement as if to speak, and the sergeant turned to his writing again.

"Speak the truth, you know, Cranbourne," said that functionary in rough and ready fashion. "You've gone too far now, and there's no hope for you in this world. If you've anything you want to say, speak, but don't go to your Maker with a lie in your mouth, lad."

"I know—dying," came the feeble response.

"Marston's—gaol. Why ask of him?" "Who's your mate, then?" asked the sergeant.

"Mate, mate," murmured the man, "he's dead—my—iron—went off—shot him."

"Who?" asked the officer again, as he made another note in his book. "Wasn't Marston here with you?" "No—gaol—fourteen years," came the laboured answer.

"Who's your mate, then? Isn't it Marston?"

A faint smile, as of contempt, passed again across the white face. "No, Joe—Joe Casey—Bos'n Joe—My—iron—went—shot him—My—only friend—through flood—and—fire."

The hand of the bushranger moved restlessly, as if seeking something, and he muttered, "Poor old Joe—we—bad—both—I—worst—but—never gave us—chance—hunted us. Too late—too late—dying."

"Too late for what?" asked the sergeant, as he moistened the parched lips. "Too late for what, lad?" "Repent," came the laboured answer. Then in low, earnest tones came the words from one bending towards the prostrate man, "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness which he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive."

All eyes glanced towards the speaker, and the light of the lantern fell on the face of the tutor as he quoted the opening Scripture sentence of the Anglican Church service.

A solemn pause ensued, broken after a few moments by the dying outlaw as he whispered, "Wicked, that me—save soul—my—poor—mother said it—never heeded her—another chance—all

gone." The words came in broken accents and with long pauses between. "No, my friend," said the tutor gently, as he knelt, supporting the head of the dying man. "No, it has not all gone. There is another plane for all who will seek a higher life." Then, without a pause, he added, "Let us pray."

At Carra the opportunities for service of any kind were necessarily limited. Germantown was too far for most of the hands to reach on Sunday, and even there the visits of the clergy were few, for it was a large district in which that township was included, and seldom did preacher reach Carra itself.

All classes of men were gathered round the spot on which Cranbourne lay, and many different shades of religious belief were represented there. Yet, by common impulse, everyone knelt at the unaccustomed injunction, and all joined with the tutor as he repeated solemnly the words of Him who taught of forgiveness and peace, "Our Father, which art in Heaven." Very slowly, very reverently, the sentences came, for the dying man crossed his hands, and his memory carried him back to scenes long ago, scenes that had been before a career of crime was entered on. Scenes in which there were but two actors, a gentle woman in whom love and trust and hope were shown clearly by every look and word, whose eyes of clear blue were ever directed to a higher and nobler plane, and whose fair hair fell in golden showers around the lovely boy who, the very image of herself, knelt by her at the side of a tiny cot in a quiet home

among the most beautiful of English scenery; and, following her clear voice, as she repeated the very words now being spoken to the same God in whom she had so fully believed. "Our Father—which art in Heaven," the words were distinctly clear, and in husky tones each one followed the tutor as he prayed, looking upward the while to the higher plane which the Common Father has in store for those who believe. "For ever, and ever," he concluded. "For ever, and ever, Amen," the words were repeated by all—but one.

Everybody before rising from the attitude of supplication looked at the face of him for whom the prayer had been uttered, and realised that but the tent remained and the soul that had been the occupier had passed away to seek the other life and to be clothed again in the innocence of its earlier days which years of trial and sin had sullied. Perchance to meet once more the loving woman who had been permitted the task of training the infant mind but had, all too soon, been called to another world, and compelled to leave her tender boy to the rough usage of those who had driven him to crime.

Who shall say that for George Cranbourne there will be found no place in that Higher Sphere where sorrow and sin shall be done away?

XLII. INQUEST AND IDENTIFICATION

WHILE the greater number of hands at Carra were round the dying bed of George Cranbourne with the sergeant and one party of police, the few who had been at the back of the house when the bushrangers entered and had known nothing of the stirring scenes in the dining-room now came hastily at the call of Hodgetts, who, rushing out to the kitchen, had shouted that Mrs. M'Farlane had been shot by robbers and was lying dead in one of the rooms, and that others were being attacked, his terror having led him to imagine many things that had no foundation in fact.

"Well, why don't you come and bear a hand, then?" cried the cook. "Oh, I'm off to tell the others," was the reply, and off he certainly was, but in which direction he imagined the others to be or whether he had decided to find his lance and once more set it at the charge for the purpose of scattering bushrangers and Chilianwallians together was never accurately ascertained, for no one set eyes on him again that night. The cook and those with him went hastily towards the dining-room to see if they could render any assistance. In the quadrangle at the rear they were met by a party of police who had been detached from the main body, and had reached Carra by another route. At the head of them rode Hal and a black tracker who had picked up the trail on the Albury road, and had followed it with all possible speed. Their object in entering from the back of the homestead was to

cut off the retreat of the outlaws if they were attacked in front by the main party.

Together, police and servants entered the dining-room. Smith and a few others were bending over a prostrate body. "Who's this?" asked the senior constable-in-charge. "We don't know yet," Smith answered. "He's one of the bushrangers. The other is outside dead. They say this is Marston, and that Cranbourne is the one whose body is there. I don't know myself who they are, but they are the same who attacked my friend and myself while on our way here to-day."

Hal bent over the prostrate form. For a few seconds he regarded it very carefully. Then, raising himself, and addressing the senior constable, he said:—"No, this is not Marston, nor anything like him, except in height." "Have you any notion as to his identity, then?" asked the officer. "Yes, more than a notion—a fair certainty as to the man," Hal said, as he stooped again and examined the body more closely. "I was at the court when Marston and Cranbourne were on trial, and a man was pointed out to me as the friend of Cranbourne, and he was there near the dock day after day. This is he, right enough. He was most concerned during the whole time, and it was said that he had spent every shilling of his savings to procure counsel for Cranbourne. I never saw him after the trial, and he must have contrived to make his way out here and rejoin his friend. I know his name, too, if I can only think of it."

After a moment's pause, Hal continued:—"Yes, I have it. One of the witnesses knew him. He

said that Cranbourne and he had been through all sorts of adventures together, and that his name was Casey. That's it, Joe Casey, and they called him ' Bos'n Joe.' " " Called who Bos'n Joe?" asked a voice from the open French window, and, turning, those in the room confronted the sergeant as he entered after assuring himself of the death of his prisoner without. " Why, this other one," answered the senior constable. " Hal, here, says he knew this man as a pal of Cranbourne when he was on trial at the Old Bailey, and that he waited on him and paid counsel for him, and that his name was Joe Casey, and he was known as ' Bos'n Joe.' " " Are you sure, Hal?" asked the sergeant, addressing him familiarly in the name he had become well known by among the members of the force. " Certain," was the reply. " I saw him day after day at Cranbourne's trial, and naturally took an interest in the man who stood by his friend to the last. This is ' Bos'n Joe ' all right."

" I believe you are correct there, Hal," was the answer, " for Cranbourne said when he was dying that his pal was not Marston at all, and he gave the same name to the best of my belief." Then the official notebook was referred to, and the sergeant nodded as he read from the dying deposition of Cranbourne, " Joe Casey, ' Bos'n Joe.' "

" That's who this is, then, sure enough," remarked the senior constable, as he reverently spread over the dead man's face a handkerchief that lay near. " This is Casey, as Hal says, and we've been on the wrong track as far as Marston's concerned. But we've got the two we were after, and Marston's

not in Perth Gaol, that's for sure, and it seems to me the next question to answer is—Where is Marston?" " You're about in the right of it this time, lad, at anyrate," was the answer. " Joe Casey lies there. Hay says it, and the poor chap out there said it, and it's clear enough in my notes, and a man won't lie when he's on his death-bed. So I agree with you that we've got Casey and Cranbourne, two bushrangers, who, in whatever names, were wanted; but the mystery after all to be discovered is this—Where is Marston?"

Having thus delivered himself, the sergeant asked where he could find the master of the house. " He's in Sydney attending Parliament," answered the eldest son, who at the moment entered the room. " Well, young gentleman," was the official's comment, " we must get the bodies of these two put somewhere till the Coroner can get out here and hold the inquest. Where do you propose that they shall be carried?" " The harness-room will be the best room, I should think," was the answer. " It is near, and is perfectly clean." " Let's have a look at it, will you, and see how we can fix it up for them. We can't leave them where they are, you know," said the sergeant, and the two left the dining-room to make the necessary arrangements. In a few minutes they returned with some of the station hands bearing improvised stretchers. Upon one of these the body of Casey was laid, and the men carried it reverently to the room which the sergeant had in the meantime seen and approved of; a few minutes after, others followed, bearing that of Cranbourne. The two were placed side by

side, and the sergeant carefully locked the door, placing the key in his pocket.

The whole party then set to work to remove the traces of the recent conflict, and in a very short time the dining-room was restored to its former order, and no one entering would have imagined that an awful tragedy had but a short time ago been enacted within its walls.

Mrs. M'Farlane and the governess were too much agitated by these events to appear again that night, but the cook and his assistants made all possible haste to provide the necessary refreshment for those who had travelled a long distance to defend the homestead, and who had been for many hours without food.

Two of the station hands volunteered to ride to Germantown with a telegram which the sergeant had prepared for transmission to Albury, conveying an account of the night's events, with a request to the Coroner that he would attend at Carra and conduct the necessary inquiry.

A telegraphic message to Mr. M'Farlane, giving brief particulars of the attack on the station and of the death of the bushrangers, was also entrusted to them.

The Coroner, on receipt of the message, made the necessary arrangements for the journey to Carra, and was on the road very soon after daylight, arriving at the homestead early in the afternoon. The inquest was opened as soon as possible in the schoolroom of the station.

The tutor and others who had been present when the outlaws had entered the dining-room gave evi-

dence as to the scene they had witnessed, and of the fact that the taller of the two men had been in front of the other, and of his having presented his revolver at the head of the tutor, who had then struck him in self-defence, and of the bushranger having staggered backwards on to the weapon held by his companion, which had exploded and caused his death.

A medical man who had been on a professional visit to a neighbouring station, and had been called to examine the bodies of the outlaws, testified that the wound received by the taller man was of such a character as would cause instant death.

In the case of the other outlaw, it was proved by police evidence that he had fired more than once on the advancing company of troopers, who had then shot him in the execution of their duty.

The proclamation of outlawry against the two bushrangers was produced, and the Coroner intimated that this was sufficient in itself to justify the taking of their lives.

The important matter of identification was now proceeded with. Hal was the only person who could positively depose to this point. He gave his evidence in a straightforward manner, stating that he was connected with a private detective's office in London, working in conjunction with the city police; that he had been detailed for duty in connection with a charge of scuttling preferred against two men named Cranbourne and Marston; that he had been present at their trial at the Central Criminal Court in London, when both men had been convicted and sentenced to long terms

of transportation; that an official report was received in London of their escape from the West Australian Convict Prison, and he had been despatched to Victoria, where two suspects, who were believed to be Marston and Cranbourne, had been traced, in order that he might identify them.

The witness deposed to having seen the suspected persons, and discovered that they were not those whom he had been detailed to follow; but that, since then, he had been commissioned to the police of New South Wales in order that he might assist in the capture of two bushrangers who were believed to be those who had made their escape from Perth Gaol; that he had arrived at Carra with a body of troopers on the previous evening, after an attempt had been made to raid that station, which had resulted in the death of the two men who had been engaged in the outrage.

Hal further deposed that he had seen the bodies of the two bushrangers referred to, and that one was that of Cranbourne, who had been chief mate of the "Helen," the vessel that had been scuttled, but the other was not that of Marston, who had been convicted and sentenced at the same time as Cranbourne on a charge of conspiring with him to commit a felony, and who was believed to have escaped with him from the gaol.

The Coroner asked many questions of this witness as to his knowledge of Cranbourne and Marston; and Hal replied that he had known Cranbourne for many years, and had sailed on the same ship with him, and had also been present at the trial of both men; that he had seen them every day

while the case lasted, and could easily recognise them anywhere. He was quite certain that the taller of the two bushrangers was not Marston, but one Joseph Casey, known as "Bos'n Joe," who was the faithful friend of Cranbourne, and had attended to his wants while he was in Newgate awaiting trial, and had also been in court every day while the case of Cranbourne and Marston was being heard.

The Coroner was much impressed with the way in which Hal gave his evidence, and expressed his intention of forwarding the depositions to the Attorney-General of New South Wales in order that a thorough investigation might be made into all the circumstances of the case, which now seemed to be enshrouded in mystery. It was clear that Marston was not one of the bushrangers, and that the identification of the two men was complete; and there was nothing more to be done but to return a verdict in accordance with the facts deposed to. The Coroner did this, recording that Joseph Casey, *alias* "Bos'n Joe," and George Cranbourne, being proclaimed outlaws, while engaged in an unlawful undertaking had met with their deaths, and that no blame was attached to anyone in the matter.

There still remained the matter of burying the bodies of the deceased men, and it was decided that graves should be dug in the station burying-ground and that they should be interred there.

Mr. M'Farlane arrived at the homestead during the same day, and fully approved of all that had been done: he was much interested in every detail.

All was made clear to him with reference to Casey and Cranbourne, but he was still in perplexity concerning Marston. After everything had been discussed, he remarked :—" Well, gentlemen, I don't know what may be your opinion in this case, but I shall never be satisfied till the whereabouts of Marston are discovered and the whole matter of this conspiracy you speak of fully investigated. One thing must evidently be done, for the sake of the man himself : the question must be solved first of all—Where is Marston?"

XLIII. WHERE IS MARSTON?

THE slip of paper so treasured by Cranbourne when the band of convicts were on their way to the prison, after landing at the jetty, and so skilfully hidden by him while in the gaol, contained a complete plan of the building and its surroundings; while the scrap that was hidden under the stone near where the convicts had been working gave the indication of an impending fog. A dotted line referred to the part of the prison wall where a rope would be found, by which he was to make his bold attempt to escape.

All had fallen out as Casey had planned. The anticipated fog, it will be remembered, enveloped the prison and the surrounding country. Cranbourne, ever alert to seize his opportunity, had quietly slipped away from his place in the ranks and passed to the spot shown on the plan; he found the rope, and by its aid scaled the wall,

leaving his means of escape where Casey had put it.

Before the alarm was raised that a prisoner had broken gaol, Marston had missed his fellow-convict, and, turning quickly, had caught sight of the cord. Without pause to consider the terrible risk he ran, he grasped it, and, availing himself of his former training as a sailor, began to climb upward. Nerved by his dire peril and by the feverish desire for liberty, by almost superhuman effort he scaled the wall. Then he groped for the other part of the rope.

It was a time of intense excitement. Should the alarm be raised or should a warder on the wall hear the slightest sound or catch sight of anything moving, a bullet from his rifle would put an end to all the convict's hope of liberty and to his life together.

Marston held his breath as he lay in this perilous position, and continued to grope for the line that he was convinced would enable him to gain the ground on the outside of the wall. At length he felt it, as his hand passed cautiously over the masonry. Then, without raising himself, he grasped it as his one hope of freedom, and cautiously allowed his body to slip from the summit. With hands torn and bleeding from the unaccustomed work and the terrible strain the descent involved, he held on his way, and at length found a footing on the grass-covered ground.

With no compass to guide him, and enveloped as he was in a dense fog, his position was still one of dire peril. But, in the midst of all, his early experience, by which he had been taught to listen

for every sound and to take bearings from all he saw or heard, stood him in good stead. In the midst of his perplexity the shrill note of a railway whistle caught his ear. He remembered having more than once heard the same sound while in the gaol, and he knew that it gave intimation after departure of a train from Fremantle to the coast. Instantly he lay prone, with his ear to the ground. Satisfied by what he heard, he started to his feet and began to run in the direction of the sound.

It was absolutely dark; the way was unknown to him. He knew not why he took the course he had chosen, or how he could exist. Yet there had been the whistle, and he would follow the line that this seemed to indicate to him. One thought was in his mind: he must reach the coast, which lay somewhere in the dim distance, and to which it seemed clear that the train was destined.

The fog was a help now, instead of a hindrance, for no one passing on the way, whether by road or through the scrub, could by any possibility discern the presence of a fellow-creature, nor could pursuers, if the alarm should be given, discover the fugitive through this merciful curtain of nature.

He had no notion of the distance he must travel in order to reach the station, nor what he must do when he arrived there. One thought possessed him—he was free, and nothing should cause his return to the convict life. He would rather die than submit to be recaptured.

With these thoughts in his mind Marston struggled on. Occasionally he would stumble upon the rough ground, and more than once he

had a heavy fall. He was not sure now that he had kept the right course; no sound reached him to show that he had not swerved from his intended direction in the darkness.

Now he paused for a moment and listened intently. Yes, he was right; the beat of the railway engine could be discerned, and that at no great distance. Once more he started on his journey, and pressed forward even more rapidly than before, though the terrible strain was telling on him more and more at every yard of his way.

At length, to his great joy, there peered through the fog a light. He paused for an instant to assure himself of its character, and then realising from its height above the ground that it was a railway signal, he pressed on towards it, in the hope of reaching the line of rails and thus being enabled to follow on to the coast.

Presently he gained the fence by which the line was bounded. The whistle that Marston had heard at the outset of his journey was evidently that of the engine engaged in shunting, for a goods train was still at the platform farthest from the spot at which the escaped prisoner stood. He could distinctly hear the voices of the officials on the other side, as some final instructions were issued to those in charge of the train.

Now was the distressed man's one opportunity, and he was not slow to avail himself of it. A ray of hope had come to him as he realised that a merciful Providence had not left the poor destitute creature in his dire distress.

The time of his reaching the station fitting in,

as it did, with the starting of the train could not have been by chance; there must be a great First Cause by Whom all these things were ordered; and Marston was inspired by the thought that, though all human aid had been denied him, there was yet a Power ready to help the poor outcast in his extremity.

Breathing a prayer to this wondrous Being, of Whom so little is rightly conceived by men in general, who yet have their life and all good at His hand, Marston climbed the fence and reached the rails on the other side. Then, in desperation, he made for one of a line of trucks which stood at the platform, and which the railway lights made discernible. Without hesitation, he clambered upon the buffer nearest to him, and thence to the top of the loaded truck, and raising an end of the tarpaulin with which it was covered, dragged his weary body through and lay down, being completely hidden from view.

Hardly had he reached this haven when the guard, giving a shrill whistle, flashed the "All right" signal to the driver, and with a groan or two from the engine the heavily loaded train steamed from the station. At the same instant the boom of cannon announced that the prison muster had been called, and the escape of one or more of the convicts discovered.

Marston, lying at full length beneath the friendly tarpaulin, breathed a thanksgiving to the Great Ruler of all Who thus far had marvellously helped one of the most despairing of His creatures. And a new hope filled the breast of the man whose life

for months past had been of a kind to drive him to the very depths of desperation.

He knew that as yet he was by no means safe. The escape of two long-sentence convicts could not fail to arouse the utmost energies of the authorities, and from one end of Australia to the other the hue and cry would be raised, so that the chances were very great that he would be denounced by anyone who might encounter him. He had no hope of being able to change his prison clothes, nor any idea of how to obtain food.

Still, Providence had helped him so far, and he believed that he would in some way be enabled to reach the coast.

Meantime, the heavy train lumbered along, and every moment he was being carried further from those whose business it was to track him.

Wearied though he was, the fugitive dared not snatch a moment's sleep, for he must be ever alert, lest at any stopping place a search should be made for the escaped convicts; and he knew that he was at the mercy of any man on the continent of Australia.

The immunity from arrest which had so far been permitted him was due to two circumstances. First, to the great rapidity of his movements and to his having succeeded in reaching the station at the moment when the train was about to leave it. And, secondly, to the fact that the prison officers, upon missing the two convicts, had made investigation and had learned that men answering their description and well mounted had been seen making their way to the east. They had, there-

fore, no doubt that Marston and Cranbourne had been assisted by friends outside, and had been provided with horses and were endeavouring to cross the border and to reach the colony of South Australia. Thus the pursuers had concentrated all their efforts in that direction, and had given no attention to that in which Marston had gone.

This would not, of course, enter into Marston's calculation as he lay in the truck; and he was consumed by anxiety as to what might be his next experience. Still, the thought of freedom and the delight that his efforts had so far been successful buoyed his spirits and gave him new life.

Marston had learned from a few words between the station officials just before the train started that its destination was Geralton, on Champion Bay, with supplies for the Murchison Gold Fields. When a midshipman in the Royal Navy the fugitive had visited Geralton, but he had no idea of the distance between his present starting place and the bay.

It was night, and the stations were not brilliantly lighted. He feared that at any stopping place the truck in which he lay might be shunted off and his presence detected. He resolved, therefore, that the first time the train pulled up he would endeavour to escape from his present perilous position, and make his way on foot.

Very soon an opportunity presented itself to put his resolve into practice. There was a shrill whistle from the engine and a harsh grating sound as the brakes were applied, and the train came to a standstill. Very cautiously Marston raised the tarpaulin

that covered him. By the dim light on a wayside station he could discern the narrow platform, on which stood the solitary official, in whom were combined the duties of stationmaster, porter, and shunter.

To him the guard slowly approached, lantern in hand. " 'Night, Bill, truck to come off here, isn't there?" was the greeting that functionary received. " Right, Joe, A412," was the answer. Soon there was the sound of uncoupling; evidently the signal was given to the driver, for again the whistle sounded, and with much noise and rumbling of wheels and puffing of steam the train was backed towards a siding.

Marston realised that now was the moment to make the attempt to leave his place of shelter. Very cautiously he began to work with feet and hands in order to bring himself towards the edge of the truck. His limbs were cramped from the confined position in which he had been lying. But foot by foot he brought himself towards the edge. The train had backed beyond the rays of light at the station, thus aiding his effort to conceal himself from anyone who might be on the platform. He lowered himself till his feet touched the buffers, then he dropped to the ground and moved very cautiously towards the fence on the side of the line opposite the platform, and hid in the ditch bounding the line until shunting operations were ended and the train started once more.

The truck that was to remain was " kicked " into the siding, the detached parts of the train were united, the signal was given, and with a labouring

puff or two from the engine the long line of trucks passed on.

Regretfully Marston watched the moving mass. He had no friends, and as the train passed away the forlorn outcast felt that his last succour had gone from his side.

To be left utterly alone in a strange place and clad in such garb as could not fail to cause instant arrest at the hands of the first of his kind who might happen to encounter him, might well excuse the horrible dread that Marston felt as he lay prone in the ditch by the line.

He knew, however, that immediate action in some way or other must be adopted. It took but a few moments for the official to extinguish the lights, and the place was absolutely deserted, except that one of the most forlorn of God's creatures lay in the ditch farthest from the platform.

Pulling himself together by a great effort, Marston crossed the line and scrambled up to the side on which the station buildings stood. Carefully he felt his way, step by step, keeping one hand on the fence skirting the railway premises. Presently it came in contact with the board, on which in raised letters was inscribed the name of the station. Twice he passed his hand over it, striving to read the word recorded there, and now he began to trace it out, letter by letter, D o n g a r a. "Dongara, Dongara," repeated the outcast. The very peculiarity of the name, given to the district by the Aboriginals, helped the memory of the reader; and a heavy sigh escaped him as he remembered the pretty little wheat growing country only

fifty miles from Geralton, where he had spent a few hours in the old days when serving in the Royal Navy.

The word, however, sufficed for his present purpose. Dongara stood on Champion Bay. He could not therefore be very far from the coast, and he might be able to trace his way north by keeping between the sea and the railway line; and he would also be less likely to be met by any traveller, and could, perhaps, by some rare chance board a vessel bound for any port, he cared not where. Thus was he sustained by hope, the last friend to desert those near to despair.

Marston turned to make his way to the beach, and as he did so he stumbled on a seat intended for waiting passengers, and putting out his hand to prevent himself from falling, it came in contact with a small parcel. It was evidently of no value, for the wrapping was loose and there was no string to hold it together. The starving man examined the package. Within was half a loaf and a piece of meat. These were hard and dry, and had evidently been left by one who had found it too stale to be palatable. Too old to be of any value! But what a boon to the famished fugitive!

Breaking off a piece of the bread, he devoured it ravenously, and then carefully wrapping his treasure in the paper that had enclosed it, he bestowed it in his jumper and began his weary journey to the coast.

XLIV. A FRIEND IN NEED.

GUIDED by the sound of the waves, it was not difficult for Marston to trace his way to the beach.

He knew that there could not be very much time before daylight, and he determined to travel as far as possible while darkness lasted, seek some friendly scrub in which to be hid during the day, and then take his bearings, and the more readily pursue his way on the next night.

He walked rapidly, keeping the sea on his left. The exercise gave new life to him, and he knew that every moment placed a greater distance between him and pursuit.

And now the first streak of dawn appeared, and he must seek cover before the full light of day came. Turning towards the railway line, he found himself in a tangled mass of undergrowth. He had scarcely reached this friendly shelter when the full blaze of daylight appeared, the dawn lasting but a short time in Australia.

Cautiously Marston moved towards the part where the scrub was thickest, and found a resting-place affording complete concealment. Here the poor wayfarer stretched his aching limbs, and soon sleep wrapped him in oblivion. How long this lasted Marston knew not, but he awoke with a feeling of intense hunger. He found a spring of water, and, sitting down, he thankfully ate of the stale viands which he had so providentially found, slaking his thirst at the spring.

Now he had time to note his position, and the better to determine his route when night should

cast her friendly shade over him. His great difficulty was his prison garb and the impossibility of obtaining any other clothing.

He was in no danger of starving, for he was in the midst of a thriving agricultural settlement, and fruit he could obtain in any quantity; while shellfish abounded on the beach; and at eventide he would resume his weary walk. Still, within him was there ever the hope that help would yet be found.

Now he removed his prison jumper, and regarded it sorrowfully. Woven into the material itself so that they were ineffaceable were the brands of gaol. By the aid, however, of a sharp-pointed piece of rock, he made incisions in the cloth and tore out the parts that most assuredly would betray him. Much the same was the process with respect to his other garments, until he presented the appearance of a tramp whose wardrobe was of the scantiest and who had not the means to renew it.

Satisfied to some extent with the result of his efforts, he once more stretched himself out and tried to rest, so that he might be ready to resume his walk at nightfall.

With no very cheerful thought Marston arose from the bed that nature had provided for him, and again started on his journey northward. He kept close to the sea; the coast-line, though verging a little to the west, is here fairly direct, and he had no difficulty in following it. Before him there lay the possibility of obtaining a passage to some other country on one of the small craft frequently seen along the coast.

A little off the road were large orchards of bananas and other fruits, to which wayfarers are permitted to help themselves as they journey. With some of these Marston refreshed himself.

Thus another night passed. At daybreak, having refreshed himself with a swim and eaten the small piece of bread which still remained to him, he again lay down. He was no longer the fine strong man of a year ago, for his privation had reduced him to an emaciated condition. But evening found him once more on his way.

Emboldened by hunger, he did that which in other circumstances he would never have dreamed of. He was now on the outskirts of the small settlement of Walkaway, some thirty miles from Dongara. Close to the sea were a few houses occupied by fishermen, who pursued their calling on Champion Bay. Cautiously approaching one of these dwellings, Marston knocked. An old man came to the door and peered into the darkness, shading with his hand the fat pot into which a lighted piece of tow had been thrust by way of wick.

"Could you spare me a little piece of something to eat?" pleaded the outcast, standing well back from the ray of light. "Eh, what?" the old man answered. "Speak up, I'm deaf; can't hear you. Can't hear anyone 'cept my son Jim, and he's away to Geralton with the fish."

Marston pointed to his mouth and called as loud as he could, "Food." "Aye," said the old man. "That's like my son Jim; that is, I can hear. All right, all right. If my son Jim was here there'd

be plenty. He always brings it, my son Jim does; but he's to Geralton, he is—— But there's a bit left, a bit left yet. And it's in the Big Book, what my son Jim reads to me, nights, when he's home. I'm near blind myself, I am, but I know it: my son Jim reads it out to me, 'Thou shalt not withhold thy hand from the hungry.' It ain't zactly the very words, but 't's near enough. It's near enough to what my son Jim reads, and there's a bit left, there's a bit left, and God's good, and my son Jim he'll bring more in the morning." So saying, the old man turned into the hut. He soon came back, holding in his hand some cold meat and a large piece of home-made bread, which he offered to Marston, who shouted his thanks. "Thank God, young man, thank God," was the answer. "That's what my son Jim says. It's in the Book. I know them's the words. And good-night, young man, good-night to you and good luck for a civil spoken chap. Just like my son Jim, too, just like my son Jim, he is," muttered the old man, as he returned to the seat he had left when Marston knocked.

The food given to him at the hut was carefully husbanded, and with the fruit he could gather by the way and some seabirds' eggs, Marston was able to live. He was thankful for freedom, and determined that, come what might, he would never be recaptured. Still, he knew that he was daily becoming weaker.

It was now the fifth day since he had started from Dongara. He had made a rather long detour towards the east to avoid passing through Geralton,

troopers being on the alert on account of the lawlessness of the place, where there was considerable shipping. To reach the coast again he had to cross the Greenough River, and on the approach of darkness he resumed his weary way towards the north.

He had now travelled more than seventy miles in a direct line, and was twenty miles from Geralton on the way to Northampton, one of the most important lead mining districts of West Australia. His food was exhausted, and his prison shoes would no longer hold together; so that he was in a sore plight.

Presently he came to a small inlet on Champion Bay. Here a jetty had been constructed for the use of those coming with guano from Abroltros Island, and of others connected with the pearling station in the north.

Marston found a neat craft moored to the jetty, and he stood looking at it for a few moments. There seemed to be nobody aboard, and as he turned away, wondering whither she was bound and if his chance had come to him at last, he noticed a fire on the beach not many yards distant and men seated round it.

His experience of the last few days had made him very cautious. His lonely life had also made him inclined to nervousness and to exaggerate the danger of discovery and recapture. Clearly those by the fire belonged to the vessel at the jetty, and were on the point of starting on some expedition. Thus the very thing that Marston had been longing for ever since his escape from prison seemed within

his grasp. Here was the opportunity to speak to the men and ask if they wanted a hand.

Yet now he hesitated. How could he tell whether they would betray him? How was he to act with reference to this development? In his despair he drew a little further off.

Suddenly the fire, which had been burning low, burst into a bright glow, throwing a light upon the vessel and upon Marston. "Ahoy, there!" cried a cheery voice. "Where away, shipmate? Come and let us have a look at you." Thus adjured, the outcast, throwing off his nervous caution, came towards the fire. Now he saw that ten men were seated about it, and that food was being prepared. That those he saw were seafaring men he had no doubt. Their appearance and their occupation proclaimed it. Some of the number were busily at work splicing ropes, while others were mending hammocks.

The one who had hailed Marston rose from the box on which he had been sitting as the traveller came towards him. He was clearly in command of the expedition, whatever it might be, and a man accustomed to be obeyed. No one moved or spoke as he addressed the newcomer in tones which, if rough, were not unkindly. "Why! where on earth have you sprung from, lad, and what are you doing in these parts? You look about done up."

Marston looked his questioner over for a moment before replying. The firelight shone full upon as fine a specimen of mankind as the outlaw had ever seen. He was rather over than under six feet in

height, broad shouldered, and well set up. His hair and beard were dark, and apparently turning a little grey. His eyes danced in the light that shone full upon them, and seemed to depict a kindly nature. Firmness and decision of character were shown in as much of the under-part of his face as could be discerned in the changing glare of the fire. He was waiting for the stranger's answer to his question, with the air of one who had a right to an honest reply and expects it of him.

" I was making for the north," came the answer, in the hollow tones of one utterly exhausted and despairing. " I saw your neat craft at the jetty, and being a seafaring man, I stopped to look at her for a moment in the hope of finding someone on board who might want a hand, that's all."

The hopelessness of the tone in which Marston spoke and his gaunt appearance, together with the ragged garments in which he stood before them, struck pity in the hearts of the rough men whom he addressed. They were not very particular in those days on the northern coast as to a man's antecedents; it was enough for them that one was destitute and in misery, and their hearts were appealed to at once.

The leader looked again critically at the visitor, and noted his tattered clothes and the large rents in them. It was nothing to him or his company that these were in the parts where the convict brand is usually to be found, or that hat and shoes were wanting. It was a case that required no further enquiry, and none was made.

" We're going north, too," remarked the leader.

" We cast off at daybreak for Roebuck Bay, and can do with another hand. Pearling we are. It's a rough life, lad, a rough life; but we can do with you, as you are a sailor, if you care to risk it."

" Game to risk it, aye! What's good enough for you is good enough for me," came the answer. And a new light shone in the eyes of Marston.

With no word more, the leader motioned with his hand and turned towards the jetty. Marston, in obedience to the sign, followed him. The jetty reached, his new employer crossed it and boarded the craft that had first attracted the wanderer's attention. Once only did the leader pause and cast a look at the man following. Evidently satisfied by some action of his that his new hand was no novice, the leader nodded in approval and entered a small but neat cabin, and turned to a sea-chest battened to the floor. Raising the lid, he knelt down, and turning over some of the contents handed to Marston a complete suit of sailor's clothes, motioning to him to put them on.

Readily was the sign obeyed, and the old convict uniform soon lay in a heap on the cabin floor. Silently, as before, the Captain produced shoes and knitted socks. When these had been donned, the leader closed the chest, and motioned to Marston to be seated. Leaving the cabin for a few moments, he returned, bearing a lanyard and a marlinespike. Bending down, the Captain gathered up the convict's ragged clothes and bound them closely, putting the marlinespike in the middle. He then beckoned with his hand, and passed to the deck.

No need to ask a question : all was clear as to what was in the man's mind.

Standing well back, and balancing the bundle in his hand for a moment, he threw it with his full strength far out into the Bay. There was a heavy splash, and both men knew that the brand of gaol had passed away for ever, and those two clasped each other by the hand, and in silence crossed the vessel's side.

Not till the jetty was reached did either utter a word. Then the Captain said, " You are one of us now. We are perhaps a rough lot, and most of us have seen trouble : but we share and share alike, and you come in on the same terms. You seem discreet, take my advice : keep a still tongue, and steer a straight course. We ask no questions. Our luck has been out lately, and we came south to refit a bit. Better days are before us, and at any rate there will be none to weep if we go under. I am known as Captain Buchan : the craft is the " Sea-gull." You had better have a name to go by, so we will call you Guy : it's as good as any other, and better than most : for the best mate I ever had was known by it : but he has gone where men are hunted no more. You are like him, that is why I took to you at the first. If you prove as true as he was you'll do. And I believe you will. I'm not often deceived—but I was once. I was once, or these parts would never have known me."

This was a lengthy speech for the " Sea-gull's " Captain, and he was so overcome by the memory it recalled that he turned suddenly away, and, had it not been for the discretion he had enjoined,

Marston (or Guy, as he was hereafter to be called) might have suspected that the good man's coat-sleeve was passed very rapidly across his eyes.

" Dear me, though," the Captain exclaimed, " I am forgetting that you must be hungry, and supper will be ready by now, so come along ;" and together these two men, so strangely and yet so opportunely brought together, rejoined the group by the fire.

" I have brought you the new hand we wanted," remarked the Captain, in his usual quiet way of making any announcement. " Guy his name is; he comes in as one of us, and mayhap he will bring us better luck than we have had of late, boys."

Silently two of the men addressed made room for the newcomer. One of them handed him a pannikin of tea, and each of those at the fire rose to his feet, and with a brief salutation " Good luck," raised it to his lips. Guy rose, and answering, " Good luck, God bless you all," took the first drink of that beverage that he had tasted for months.

XLV. LIFE ON THE PEARLING GROUND.

ABOUT twelve hundred miles from Perth is the excellent harbour of Roebuck Bay, where pearling vessels find shelter during the hurricane season. For this bay the " Seagull " was making, and at daybreak she began to move out of Champion Bay.

Guy felt like a new man as he saw the land gradually receding in the distance. All dread of pursuit began to give place to a healthy vigour, and

his shipmates, after a few critical looks, realised that in the new hand they had no novice.

In his early days he had made a study of every point of seamanship, and this now stood him in good stead.

The course lay north-west, and it was desired to make the open ocean while daylight lasted, for Hontman's Rocks and the Guano Islands are a menace after dark.

Now an incident occurred that did much to enhance the good opinion conceived of Guy by both captain and crew.

The wind was off shore, and good progress was being made, when a sudden squall shook the vessel, causing her to heel over. The man at the wheel was thrown with violence, his head coming in contact with the bulwarks. The wheel flew over, and the " Seagull " was in imminent danger of striking the rocks. Instantly Guy seized the wheel, and succeeded in turning her head east, thus averting a terrible catastrophe. The squall passed and order was restored, but thereafter the bond of friendship between Guy and the captain was irrevocably cemented.

Before nightfall the dangerous part of the coast was passed, and on the seventh day out from Champion Bay anchor was cast in Roebuck Haven, on which stands the important town of Broome. Here some of the crew were sent ashore for stores, the captain taking care to retain Guy on board, without giving any reason. His discretion and delicacy of feeling were, however, not unmarked.

Within a week of reaching Roebuck Bay the work

of pearling was begun. All was new to Guy, who had not the most remote idea how the gems were obtained; but he was determined to prove himself capable, and soon became accustomed to the work. He was not unsuccessful in his searching, and the crew remarked often that the " new chum " had turned the luck.

After three months of active work a goodly number of pearls had been secured, but none of a size to command a heavy price. The Captain and Guy were in one part of the field, and worked for some days without very great success; but now the whole aspect of affairs changed. Guy was feeling a little depressed at finding that the good luck which had attended him did not continue, when one day he was surprised to find a large deposit of pearl oysters, which seemed to have escaped the notice of other seekers. Calling to the Captain, who was a few yards away, the two men spent the remainder of the day in collecting as many of these as possible. All hands were called, and examined the haul. Among the stones were found some of great size and richness.

The success of the party was now more than could have been anticipated, and by the time the new bed was worked out, as it was close on hurricane season, the Captain decided to sail for Broome without delay. But it was deemed advisable for Guy to remain behind, lest by some accident he should be seen and recognised by anyone to whom he had been known in former days.

He was quite satisfied with this arrangement, and entrusted his interest in the find to Captain

Buchan. The two men were the closest friends. At first neither had confided in the other. The Captain had never encouraged any account of Guy's experiences; but now this secretiveness began to disappear.

As they sat in the cabin one evening, and the Captain was unusually depressed, upon Guy trying to rally him the former said suddenly:—"I will tell you a little story, Guy, of a man I once knew. He was in the Navy and had won some laurels, and attained the rank of Commander. By the fault of another, who had been his friend, he became involved in a trial by court-martial and lost his commission."

"And what became of him?" asked Guy, deeply interested. "What did he do after leaving the Navy?" "Bought the 'Seagull,' and has traded ever since in Australian waters," was the answer.

The two men clasped hands warmly for a moment. Then Guy said:—"Your case is bad enough, but mine is ten times worse. You may be cleared, but I never." "Why not?" asked the Captain with keen interest.

"Like yourself, I was a Naval officer," said Guy. "Of course you were," interposed Buchan. "None but those who have served the Queen could have known how to submit to duty and discipline as you do, or to show such coolness in danger."

Guy paused for a moment, then he said:—"Yes, I was First Lieutenant, but I left the Navy in order to help my mother and sisters when my father died. I got a partnership in a shipping company, and a ship was scuttled and I was arrested for conspiracy

to cast her away. I am innocent, before Heaven. But the jury convicted me with another; and the real culprit escaped. Fourteen years was my sentence. The vessel was the 'Helen.'"

The Captain started as if suddenly awakened from sleep. Then he exclaimed, "And you are Marston!" "Yes," was the answer, "I am Marston, and am as innocent as a child. I signed documents that were put before me. They were false: that alone convicted me. I was fool enough to trust my partner; but it never entered my thought that he was a knave. Who could have dreamed it? I escaped from the prison by a miracle, and you took me on. That is my history. Would you rather have it than yours?"

The stolid Captain Buchan was as one dazed. "Let me think; let me think, old friend," he said musingly. "Butler was your partner, and Cranbourne the mate, the actual scuttler. Is it not so?" "Yes," came the answer, "but how did you know?"

"Read it, lad, read it, but where or when I don't know. But you will be cleared, you will be cleared. Something tells me that you will come out all right. And I am not the man to let a friend lie under this cloud. We have plenty of funds now, and they will be used to clear your name, to the last penny of mine anyway."

Again the two men clasped hands, and as others of the crew came in the confidence ended for the time, and the talk became general.

Weeks had passed since then, and the "Seagull"

company had greatly increased their store of the gems they sought.

Much more was told by the Captain and Guy to each other as time and circumstances allowed; and the day approached when the safe harbour of Roebuck Bay must be sought.

It was not a happy time for Guy. He believed that he had only one real friend in the world, and this one was about to be parted from him. And he was to be left alone, if in comparative security, still always with the weight upon him as of a proclaimed outlaw who must remain in hiding in one of the most miserable of places on the face of the earth.

Captain Buchan did not fail to notice his low spirits, and readily guessed the cause, trying in every way to find a remedy for his misery.

At length, when only one day remained to those two to be together, as they sat silently smoking, as had been their wont of late, the Captain suddenly said:—"See here, lad, I don't like this idea of leaving you on the island, and I have thought of something better."

Guy brightened at once, and his friend went on:—"Suppose you come over with us to Roebuck, I will arrange that you do not leave the ship. We can sell some of the stones there and then go round to Albany. You will be safe while on board, and we can go across to Auckland. There we can easily sell the 'Seagull,' and you can take your passage to New York. The rest of us can book for the Old Country just as well from there as from here, for the service is regular and good.

And when I get home you may be sure your case will take all my time till you are cleared, as I feel certain you will be."

This arrangement was thankfully accepted by Guy, and the crew readily acquiesced in it. Thus, when the "Seagull" sailed from the pearling-ground she carried her full complement of hands.

Roebuck Bay was reached in due course, and as soon as the vessel was in safe harbour the captain and crew, with the exception of Guy, went ashore.

Pearl dealing was one of the chief occupations of Roebuck, and there was no difficulty in disposing of the stones. Their value was much greater than was anticipated, and the sum paid for them amounted to a small fortune for every member of the party.

It was decided to continue the voyage to Albany, and the next day the "Seagull" was again under sail. Six weeks later anchor was cast in Waitemata Harbour, in New Zealand.

Auckland is on the southern shore of Waitemata Harbour, and is the largest city in New Zealand. Here the highest price was obtained for the balance of the pearls, and accounts were adjusted between the captain and the crew.

Theirs was the largest find of gems that had been known for many years, and, with a seaman's superstition, the company attributed their good fortune to the fact of their having taken Guy under their protection.

Ten thousand pounds was the share of each man. The Captain transmitted his part by draft to England; and Guy sent his to New York.

There was great competition for the " Seagull " when she was offered for sale, and enough was realised to pay the passages of the whole party to their respective destinations.

The Captain and Guy parted from one another with mutual regret. The former did not leave Auckland until he had seen his friend safely on board a steamer for New York. He then secured a passage for himself for London, resolving to clear the character of Guy and restore him to his former position among his fellows. He had arranged that the name by which Guy had been known on the " Seagull " should for the present be retained by him; and the addresses of both men were carefully noted.

Thus, these two, who had so strangely met, took their several ways; and while all the vigilance of detectives and black trackers was being exercised for the recognition and arrest of Edward Marston, only one man could have told of his whereabouts, and his lips were inviolably sealed.

So it was little to be wondered at if no answer could be found to the oft-repeated question, " Where is Marston?"

XLVI. MEETINGS OF OLD FRIENDS

WHILE Captain Buchan and his crew were at the pearling islands, changes had occurred in the history of those connected with Reedy Creek and the Leviathan claim.

An amalgamation had been effected between the

latter and the Tunstal, the Leviathan shareholders receiving a large sum in consideration.

Bert and Hal disposed of their interest, the former putting an amount of capital into his uncle's business and becoming a partner.

Hal decided to return to England, in order to set about the difficult task of clearing Edward Marston's character.

The amount received by him for his shares in the mine would be more than sufficient to maintain him, and he knew that he could enhance this by working with his former employer, Rodetzki.

He embarked at once for England, and lost no time after he had stepped ashore at Plymouth, but proceeded at once to London and to the well-known office of Rodetzki. He passed upstairs to the great detective's room. An invitation to enter followed his knock, and Charles Hancock, as he was thenceforth to be called, faced his former chief.

" I got your letters, Charlie," said the detective, after a hearty greeting, " and am astounded at the news contained in them; but you have done well for the office and for the public. I put the matter of Marston into the hands of the Chief of Staff, and a complete investigation is being made. I was only awaiting your arrival to enable me to bring the case before the Home Secretary. Have you brought all the documents with you?" For answer Charlie produced from an inner pocket an official-looking leather case and handed it to the chief.

Rodetzki examined the contents and nodded approvingly, as he noted the seals and signatures appended to each of the documents produced from

it; then he touched a bell, and the chief clerk entered. The parchments were again examined, and retained for the approval of Rodetzki's legal advisers.

It was agreed that Charlie should continue with his employer as an investigator, for Rodetzki found his time fully occupied in the office itself.

An appointment was made for a solicitor to attend at Rodetzki's office on the following day, and enter fully into all the details of the case, so as to be prepared for an inquiry without delay.

Great difficulties presented themselves in the matter to the supporters of Marston at every turn. When at one of the meetings the office boy entered with a card, which he presented to the chief, Rodetzki looked at the name engraved on it and started as he read, " Captain Buchan." " Buchan, Buchan," he muttered, " poor old fellow. Why, I thought he was dead."

Then, excusing himself to the company, he went to the outer office, and in a moment was heartily greeting the former commander of the " Seagull," whom he had known in the days before trouble had come. Their meeting was full of sadness, even in the pleasure they had in once more clasping hands.

" I am overjoyed to see you again, Captain," Rodetzki said, " but I am in a difficulty, for I have a most important meeting in my room. If you can excuse me for a little, I shall be so thankful to take you home and talk over old times. The matter I have in hand concerns a man who has been wrongfully convicted and in whom I am intensely interested. The man, like yourself, was in the Navy.

He was obliged to leave for financial reasons, and went into the shipping line. He was charged with conspiring with others to scuttle a ship. I am convinced of his perfect innocence, but he was convicted and sentenced to fourteen years' transportation. One link is wanting in the chain to prove that there has been a miscarriage of justice, and I am determined to find it."

" Edward Marston," pronounced the Captain. The detective asked in astonishment, " Do you know him?" " Well," was the reply, " as true a man as ever breathed. He told me of you, and gave me some information; and if I am not much mistaken this man here can splice your broken rope for you."

So saying, the Captain pointed to a man who had been sitting quietly by, and who rose on being referred to.

Marston had given every information to Captain Buchan as to his case, and had told him that there was one man who could not be found at the time of his trial, and who could have proved that Marston had nothing to do with the filling of the cases marked as containing revolvers and other arms, but which were shown to hold only bags of salt; that Butler and Cranbourne had been alone at the offices when this was done; and that the bills of lading which bore Marston's signature were in the hands of these two at the time.

This was testimony of great importance to those interesting themselves on Marston's behalf; and Rodetzki immediately took the Captain and his

companion to the room where the company was assembled.

There Captain Buchan explained fully the manner of his meeting with Marston and of the information received from him, and that he had met the missing witness while on his passage to England, and had recognised him as one who had sailed with him years ago, and that in course of conversation he had discovered that he was the very man for whom he was in search.

The solicitor who had been retained by Rodetzki saw at once the bearing of all this in connection with the matter in hand, and began a searching examination of the witness thus so providentially discovered.

The man stated that he had been employed by Butler on one of the ships in which the firm was interested, and which had been laid up for re-fitting, and that Butler had got work for him at the ship-chandler's stores till a berth on another vessel could be found for him; that this was arranged very soon after the " Helen " had sailed; and that he knew nothing of Marston's trial nor of the loss of the vessel until Captain Buchan told him on the voyage from New Zealand. There was no reason to doubt the truth of the man's story; while it afforded strong refutation of every allegation against Marston. It was resolved to lay this before the Home Secretary at once, and the meeting now adjourned for a week. Captain Buchan's witness remained at Charlie Hancock's quarters in the meantime.

Much still remained to be done. A great deal

depended on the evidence taken at Rio Janeiro and on those who had been connected with the trial there.

While this was being enquired into, three visitors for Rodetzki were announced, and Captains Frankston and Clyde, with the son of the latter, were ushered in.

Captain Clyde had just returned from a voyage to India in one of the Peninsular and Oriental steamers, of which he was first officer. His father and he retained their old friendship with Captain Frankston, and had met him in London, where he was awaiting the loading of a ship, of which he was in command.

Among the many matters which they had discussed together, that of the " Helen " came under review. It had much to interest all of them. Ernest Clyde had recognised on board the vessel he was engaged on a former member of the " Helen's " crew, and had obtained valuable information from him; and it was arranged that the man should be present at the next meeting.

XLVII. THE HOME SECRETARY TAKES ACTION

CAPTAIN BUCHAN and Rodetzki spent the intervening days in piecing together every scrap of evidence that could be collected on behalf of Marston, with the result that, when the time arrived for the meeting, they had a succinct account to place before the committee. This embraced every detail of the

case from the time of the lading of the " Helen " to that of the trial at the Old Bailey.

The solicitor and other advisers were much encouraged by this; and, further, by the appearance before them of the men who had been brought forward by Captains Buchan and Frankston, and by the straightforward way in which they gave their testimony.

No detail was now wanting to prepare the appeal to the Home Secretary, and it was resolved that the matter should be submitted to him without delay.

Meantime, Marston remained in the United States, and no one knew of his address save Captain Buchan, who communicated with him regularly. The time seemed long to the exile, whose earnest longing to see his native land was intensified by the desire to meet once more the only woman he had ever loved, and whom, he knew, remained true to him.

At his solicitation, Captain Buchan had called at the home of Mr. Hammond, and had seen Edith, and gladdened her heart with the tidings he was able to give of Marston's career since his acquaintance with him, and also of the efforts being made to obtain a free pardon for him.

Edith had borne her trials bravely, feeling, indeed, much more for her lover than for herself.

Thus two more weeks of weary waiting passed, and then Rodetzki received an important message from the solicitor engaged in the matter which caused him to notify every one who had been connected with the case, that a meeting would be held at his office on the following day.

All duly assembled at the time specified, and the solicitor announced to them that they were to proceed at once to Downing Street, where they would be granted an interview with the Home Secretary.

On their arrival at the Minister's official residence they were immediately ushered into the reception room, and, soon after, the Home Secretary entered, accompanied by the Attorney-General and some officers of his Department.

The solicitor, at a sign from the Minister, rose, and stated the leading facts concerning Marston. The Attorney-General listened with great attention while the address continued, frequently interposing questions, and showing great interest in the matter. When the documents from Rio were produced, he carefully examined every detail, and questioned the witnesses closely.

After a lengthened interview, the Home Secretary retired with the Attorney-General.

Upon their return to the reception room, it was intimated to the deputation that the decision of the Home Secretary would be communicated to the solicitor in due course, and the party withdrew, after thanking the Ministers for their courtesy and attention.

Mr Hammond was more than pleased with the turn affairs had taken, and his pleasure was enhanced by the marked effect the good tidings produced on his daughter, who was now convinced that the innocence of Marston must be clearly established, and that his return to England would be allowed. She was much cheered, too, by the accounts brought to her by Charlie Hancock who was

a frequent and ever-welcome visitor at Mr Hammond's home, and could give many details of the stirring times at Reedy Creek and other parts of Australia. Charlie was growing daily more and more refined under her influence, and time and travel, together with his efforts to educate himself, had so improved him that none who had known him in the old nomadic days would have believed that he was identical with the gentlemanly young man who so frequently travelled to the suburb in which the villa of the Hammonds was situated.

Naturally, Edith was more cheerful and content since the new hope had been given to her with reference to her lover, and Mr Hammond was once more the able business man that he had been before this calamity had befallen him: now, still more cheerful news was received concerning the appeal to the Home Secretary. Mr Hammond had gone on a journey to Plymouth for the purpose of meeting his niece, the daughter of his deceased brother, an Italian Judge, who had desired that the young lady should make her home with her uncle, and Mr. Hammond was, therefore, unaware of the notice that had been received.

The other members of the committee gathered at the appointed place to hear the communication read. It began with the usual formulary, that the Secretary of State had the honour to inform Mr. Rodetzki, etc., and went on to state that Her Majesty had been advised that one, Edward Marston, who had been sentenced to transportation, had made an appeal for further inquiry into his case, and that the whole of the circumstances had

been considered by Her Majesty's Ministers, with the result that Her Majesty had been advised that there were produced certain documents and other evidence on behalf of the said Edward Marston, which had not been submitted at his trial, and which Her Majesty's Ministers believed established his innocence of participation in the crime of which the jury had convicted him; and that Her Majesty had been graciously pleased to grant a free pardon to the said Edward Marston!

The reading of this document caused a thrill of excitement to the anxious listeners. It seemed that the fruition of their labours had really come, and that it could be only a question of a few weeks until they would again be shaking hands with the exile whom they had always believed to be innocent. Indeed, Captain Buchan rose hastily with the intention of sending for Marston at once, but Rodetzki advised great caution in the matter lest complications should arise with reference to the question of the escape from prison and of the Proclamation of Outlawry in Australia. With this, the solicitor fully agreed, and it was decided that further alvice should be sought and opinion of counsel should be taken on the point.

XLVIII. THE RAILWAY ACCIDENT.

CHARLIE HANCOCK, overjoyed with the success of the appeal, took the next train from London for the purpose of conveying the good news to Edith.

On the platform he was enabled to render some

assistance to a lady who was in a difficulty with a bundle of rugs and a portmanteau, and who had failed to attract the notice of a porter. The articles having been safely bestowed, he took his seat in the same compartment just as the signal was given to start. Other passengers already occupied places in the carriage. Turning towards Charlie as the train moved out of a station, the lady asked: "Are there many more stoppages between this and Henley?" "No," he answered, "this is the last, and if you are getting out there, allow me to get your portmanteau and things from the rack for you." She thanked him, and he turned to reach the articles, when there was a sudden bump, followed by a terrific crash, and he was thrown full length at the bottom of the compartment. Recovering himself in a moment, he threw open the unlocked door, and seizing the terrified girl in his arms, sprang from the train, realising that some fearful catastrophe had happened, and that there was need for immediate action. He reached the ground safely, but his foot became entangled in the semaphore wire by the side of the line, and he fell heavily into the ditch below and lay there stunned, while the girl he had rescued was thrown to some distance, unhurt.

In a moment all was confusion, the pace at which they were going caused the foremost carriages to telescope with the engine, which had left the line owing to the breaking of an axle, and a fearful list of killed and injured resulted. Had it not been for the prompt action of Hancock, both he and the girl with whom he had leaped from the carriage must

have met with instant death, for the compartment in which they were seated was wrecked.

The guard rushed to the front, and, with the help of uninjured passengers, proceeded to do all that was possible for the sufferers. Some of these were pinned to the ground by pieces of debris, and to release them required the united efforts of the rescuers.

In the meantime word of the calamity had been sent back by the guard to the station they had last passed, and all available hands soon arrived at the scene of the disaster, bringing such tools as were required for the removal of the obstruction to the line, and also medical assistance for the wounded.

Hancock was at first believed to be dead by those who discovered him at the bottom of the trench. On examination by one of the surgeons, it was found that there was life in him, and first-aid having been given, he was placed on a stretcher, and while restoratives were being applied an attempt was made to discover his identity and his destination. All doubt on the latter point was quickly set at rest by the discovery of a railway ticket for Henley, which was found in his pocketbook, and the stretcher on which he lay was placed under cover to await the arrival of an engine and trucks from that station for the conveyance of those who had been journeying thither.

Meantime, the lady whom he had rescued remained by the side of the stretcher ready to do anything to help the man to whom she felt herself to be so much indebted. In answer to one of the officials, who had noticed her close attention, she

stated that she was on her way to Henley and that she and the injured man were merely fellow-passengers from London, but that he had met with his injury in saving her from imminent death. She had only just arrived in England, and was on her way to friends, who would undoubtedly be glad to care for the man who had risked his life in such a noble way for a stranger. Further enquiry elicited the fact that the lady was on her way to her uncle, Mr. Hammond, whom she had been so unfortunate as to miss at Plymouth, where she had expected he would meet her.

Mr. Hammond was well known to the officer, and when soon after the engine and trucks arrived he saw that Charlie Hancock was made as comfortable as possible and arranged for the conveyance of the young lady in the same vehicle.

News of the accident spread rapidly, and Edith Hammond was among the anxious throng awaiting the arrival of the ambulance train at the Henley Station, as, having no certainty concerning her father's movements, she feared that he and her cousin might be among those killed or wounded.

As soon as the train stopped at the station, the official who had travelled with Hancock and his companions recognising Edith, who was well known to him, hastily approached her and explained that a lady passenger, who was uninjured, had been enquiring for her, and that a young gentleman who had been travelling with her and had risked his life by jumping from the carriage with her had been hurt in alighting, and was in the same truck.

Edith eagerly accepted the official's offer to take her to the travellers, and was shocked to find in the injured passenger her old friend, Charlie Hancock. Though suffering much pain, he was perfectly conscious, and greeted Edith as she approached the stretcher on which he lay. Then the latter turned to his companion, who stood silently by, and who, stepping forward, asked excitedly, "Are you Edith Hammond?" "Yes," was the reply, "and you?" "I am Maud Hammond," said the other. "I missed my uncle at Plymouth, and came on here, thinking he had been detained and that I should find him in the city, but there I learned that he had gone to meet me and had not yet returned. I am very sorry for the mistake, and hope he will not be worried about it. If it had not been for your friend here, I must have lost my life in the collision, but he risked his in saving me, and I am afraid he is very badly injured."

Very few more words were spoken between the cousins, and Edith sought bearers to take Hancock to the villa. There, surgical examination showed that his right leg was broken below the knee, and after this was set he was soon quietly sleeping in the room that was prepared for him.

XLIX. THE CLEMENCY OF THE CROWN

WHILE Charlie Hancock was being nursed back to life by Edith Hammond and her cousin, Rodetzki was working with great energy to secure further concessions in the case of Edward Marston and to

make the way open for his return to his native land.

As already seen, a decision had been given in his favour as to the charges of fraud on the underwriters and as to the scuttling of the " Helen," but complications had arisen with reference to his escape from gaol and as to the allegations of bush-ranging, and it was to these matters that Rodetzki's attention was directed. The investigation of all particulars by the constituted authorities had been most searching, and at length the requisite official proclamation was made that a free pardon had been granted to Edward Marston for a crime he had never committed, and for his breaking from the gaol in which he had been wrongfully detained!

Nothing now remained but to communicate with the exile and to await his return to England.

In order to prevent any mistake being made in the matter, or any failure in the delivery of such a momentous communication, it was agreed that Marston's old friend, a former captain, should undertake the journey to the United States and personally convey to him the good news.

Captain Buchan readily consented to this arrangement, and took passage by the first Cunard steamer, which, by good fortune, was advertised for the following day. He looked forward with eagerness to the time when he would once more clasp the hand of the man to whom he had become so sincerely attached, and with whom he had encountered so many adventures.

Those of the committee who could be spared accompanied him to Liverpool, and took their

leave of him on the vessel, thankfully realising that their labours had been crowned with complete success. Upon their return they found Rodetzki busily at work with the solicitor in arranging details connected with the case of Marston.

Mr. Hammond had been one of those travelling with Captain Buchan to Liverpool, and had been much interested in him, especially with his rare tact in the matter with which they were both concerned. On the evening before the vessel left, he had sat alone with him in his cabin and learned more of the circumstances which had brought him and Marston together. Confidences had been exchanged between the two men, and the Captain had given some account of their thrilling adventures and of his respect for the man who had endured so much and had proved himself so true.

" I liked him from the first," the Captain said, " but when he opened out to me and told me his history I was more than ever bound up in him, for I found that he was suffering much in the same way as myself, because, though I never was convicted, I was dismissed from the Navy for a crime of which another was guilty, and I have lived under that ban ever since. So you may be sure my heart went out to a man who was so much one with myself in suffering."

" And have no efforts availed to establish your innocence, Captain?" asked Mr. Hammond.

" None; and I have never confided in a living soul, save Guy, or Marston as we are now to know him, and you would never have heard of it but for your sympathy and kindness which have drawn me out."

" It is a short story." " I was but a young man when I was promoted Commander in the Royal Navy, and was engaged in a land attack in Egypt. Our force was overmatched by the enemy, and, despite my protestations, our leader ordered a retreat to the boats. I, with the support of those bluejackets who were of my company, fought my way to the beach step by step. He ran with his party and got safely away. Court-martial followed, and inquiry into the failure to attain the object of the venture. The positions were reversed; the leader was exonerated, and I was convicted of cowardice and incapacity and dismissed from the service. Do you wonder, then, at my sympathy with Marston?"

Mr. Hammond, impressed with the story, was deep in thought for some moments. " I remember," he said at length, " the account was in all the daily papers, and there was much discussion and great doubt as to the justice of the decision. But, Buchan, ' Buchan,' that was not the name, surely?" " Not much," was the answer, " my identity was sunk from the moment I left the service, and I chose the name of ' Buchan ' as most befitting the career that I then marked out for myself."

Again Mr. Hammond was lost in thought, and the two men remained silent for some time. Then there came to the memory of the listener the name by which Captain Buchan was known prior to his calamity. Mr. Hammond exclaimed :—" I have it; you are Captain Berwick, who stood so well in the Navy List, and concerning whom many believed that injustice had been done, and as your uncle has

since died, you are in truth ' Sir Alfred Berwick,' for the baronetcy fell to you when he passed away leaving no male issue." " I know that, too," was the answer, " but who cares for a title when his name is tainted. I will die as I have lived, and no one but yourself need know what my true rank is; but the stain is hard to be endured, and there are other things that one has to suffer beside the loss of position, as you know."

Mr. Hammond did know, for it was no secret that with the disgrace had come also the severing of an engagement between him and the daughter of a nobleman who was devoted to him as he was to her, and whose father had refused to allow her to see or communicate with the broken officer; and Berwick had gone away, believing that the woman he loved had proved faithless, while, on the other hand, she had been persuaded that he no longer cared for her. Thus each had lived under a mistaken thought of the other, and on each the sorrow of unrequited love had set its seal.

Mr. Hammond stayed until late discussing with his friend this and kindred matters, and on taking leave bade him still hope that this great wrong that had been done him would in the course of time be righted, and that he would hold his head among his fellows with reputation untainted.

Upon arriving at New York, Captain Buchan went immediately in search of his friend.

L. MORE MYSTERY CLEARED

THERE was little difficulty in finding the quiet boarding-house at which Marston was staying, and the two friends were soon clasping hands.

The thankfulness of the exile upon learning that his name had been completely cleared and that he was at liberty to return to England without fear of arrest was beyond anything that words could express. His eager questions elicited the intelligence that Edith Hammond was well and anxiously awaiting his return.

Passages were secured for the two friends by the next out-going steamer, and Marston arranged to leave the place at which he had stayed and to go with Captain Buchan to one of the principal hotels in the city and enter his own name on the register.

Long into the night the two friends sat discussing the events occurring since their last parting. The thankfulness of Marston was fully shared by his companion, and they retired to their respective rooms as men before whom a new life was dawning, and with a brighter hope than they had known for many weary months.

The one rejoiced in a name cleared from scandal and in unrestricted liberty; the other, in the fact of his friend's new-found happiness. But for him also was there to be a brightened life, in a way which neither he nor anyone could possibly have anticipated.

As the two friends sat together in the smoking-room after breakfast on the following day, Berwick suddenly started as two ladies passed by the

open door, and he half rose as if to follow them. "What ails you?" asked Marston. "You look as if you had seen a ghost." "If I did not," came the answer, "I saw Ada Preston but a moment ago, and she must be in this very building." Marston had been told by his friend of his hopeless attachment and of the cruel separation which had followed his disgrace, but the name of the lady he had had too much delicacy to enquire about.

Now the story was re-told with further details, and the rank of the man who had refused him his daughter's hand. "We have never met since, she and I," he added, "but a moment ago she passed by that door."

Marston could but think that his friend had been the victim of some hallucination, but he failed to shake his belief in this matter, and soon after they left the hotel to visit some of the principal places in the city. They did not return until the dressing bell for dinner was sounding, and were hastily mounting the stairs to their rooms when again Berwick started, as a lady passing down towards the drawing-room came face to face with the two men. "Miss Preston, Ada!" exclaimed he in astonishment. The lady bowed and passed on her way down the stairs.

Berwick remained as one stunned, and Marston, who had not noticed the circumstance, being a few steps in advance, turned to see why his companion tarried. A few words of explanation followed, and the two men went to their respective rooms.

Miss Preston did not appear at the dinner table, and Berwick seemed abstracted, and his usual cheer-

ful manner had deserted him. Marston noted this, and wisely kept silence; but afterwards, as the friends sat together in a remote corner of the smoking room, Berwick's manner changed, and he spoke in an excited manner of the meeting on the stairs, and added :—" I suppose she will not recognise the man who has a stigma on his name, though Heaven knows it is undeserved."

Much more followed on the same subject, and Marston determined that he would, at all hazards, make some effort to bring about an explanation, and possibly bring the two together again.

When they left the smoking room the two men went to their respective apartments to complete packing, as the steamer by which their passages had been taken was advertised to sail at noon next day. Marston, however sat without making any effort to arrange his effects. Presently he rose, and exclaiming :—" I will risk it, at anyrate," left his room and turned towards one of the music saloons on the first floor of the hotel, where those of both sexes gathered in the evening. Glancing round as he entered, he saw Miss Preston, who was seated at the piano, while a young man, with whom Marston had a slight acquaintance, was placing the music of a song in position before her. The lady played over the symphony, and the song began. The words were distinctly pronounced, and the fine baritone of the singer well suited the pathetic production.

Marston waited quietly till the music ceased, and then drew nearer to the instrument as the young gentleman thanked Miss Preston for the accompaniment and led her to a seat. Now was the opportunity for which Marston had been watching. As the lady left the piano, a brooch, which had been loosely fastened at her throat, fell to the ground. In a moment he had secured it and approached the chair to which Miss Preston had been led. Marston bowed as he came near to her, holding the jewel in his hand. " Thank you very much," was her exclamation as she took her property from him. " I must have fastened it carelessly, and it was a keepsake which I value very highly."

Marston expressed his pleasure at being of any service, and Miss Preston's friend accosted him in a courteous way and made room for him on the settee which he was occupying. " I have not the pleasure of knowing your name," said the lady, " but I am very much indebted to you."

At this both men rose, and Marston was formally presented. " That was an exquisite song," was Marston's remark, as he resumed his seat, " and your friend rendered it with much feeling." " He does but flatter," was the rejoinder of the singer, " he is far before me in the musical line; I wish I had his voice. You ought to hear him, Miss Preston; there is plenty of music here that he is accustomed to." " I shall be delighted," was the answer, and Marston rose and begged her to honour him by accompanying. The request being granted, he led her to the piano, from which a man had just risen. Marston turned over the sheaf of music on the stand and selected a song with which he was familiar, depicting the anguish of the lover at the separation from his betrothed.

Both instrumentalist and singer entered into the spirit of the composer, and the room was hushed as the song proceeded. At its close Marston led Miss Preston to a seat, thanking her for her assistance. "Indeed," she said, "it is quite the other way. I thank you, but," she added, "no man could sing that song as you did unless he had experienced it and felt the pain." And she looked keenly at him. "Indeed, that is true," he answered, "but my time of trial is over. It is those who are still enduring who should have our love and sympathy, especially when we have suffered ourselves." This was a tentative effort by Marston, and the words were spoken in an undertone, so that none could hear except the one addressed.

"I do not know that I quite understand you," was Miss Preston's answer. Quietly, almost as if soliloquising, Marston proceeded:—"I know of a man who had an honoured name and had gained distinction in his country's Navy. He had given all the love of a trusting heart to one who fully realised his devotion and returned his affection, but misfortune came and he was unjustly disgraced. That was hard enough to be borne, but when he learned that the woman he loved had discarded him his life became a misery to him. He has, to some extent, recovered from the first calamity, but this other he will never overcome. Is not this a case such as the poet must have had in his mind, think you?"

Miss Preston was silent for a few moments; then she said quietly:—"But, why, if they loved each other so much, did he not make some effort to

prove his faithfulness? Did he believe himself the only one to suffer?"

"He was distinctly given to understand by the lady's father that the betrothal was at an end with her full concurrence," answered Marston.

"You were with Captain Berwick on the stairs, were you not?" asked Miss Preston, after a pause, during which Marston realised how keen was the emotion she laboured under, but struggled hard to conceal. "You are, perhaps, a great friend of his?"

Marston answered that he knew him well, and understood his worth and estimated it very highly.

"You have guessed my secret," said Miss Preston, "and have put the case very plainly. If you wish, you may take this to the Captain and tell him that, should he desire to return it, he may do so in person here." So saying, she opened the locket at her neck and took from it the ring Berwick had given her when first they had become engaged, and which she had retained when the betrothal had so abruptly terminated.

Overjoyed with his success, Marston hastened to his friend. To impart the good news took but a very short time, and Berwick hurried away, bearing the trinket in his hand, and it was soon once more on the finger of Miss Preston.

LI. ENGLAND ONCE MORE.

It was decided that there should be no alteration in the arrangements made for the return of Berwick and Marston to England, and on the following day they left New York and embarked on their voyage home.

Miss Preston, who, since the death of her father, had been travelling abroad with an aunt, decided to follow as soon as possible.

The two friends, Marston and Berwick, reached England without adventure, and as the steamer reached the docks they recognised among those awaiting her arrival Mr. Hammond and the members of the Marston Appeal Committee.

The greetings of these old friends were hearty and warm, and as soon as the arrangements necessary for the completion of their labours had been made, Marston hurried to the Villa, where some of the happiest days of his life had been passed.

On the way Mr. Hammond told him of the accident that had befallen Charlie Hancock and of his convalescence, and also of the great help that he had given in the matter of the appeal to the authorities for Marston's release.

All this was of intense interest to the returned exile, who was full of gratitude to those who had so generously worked on his behalf.

Marston was much moved as the train reached the station, and the former days of his visiting there were brought vividly to his memory.

Mr. Hammond allowed him no time for these

reflections, but hastened with him to his home, where Edith anxiously awaited his coming.

Her father suddenly remembered that he had important work elsewhere, and the young people were left alone.

Though the time had not been long since they parted, yet the painful experience of those months had left traces on both.

Edith was pale and careworn, and already there were streaks of grey in her beautiful hair.

Marston had become bronzed by exposure, and his fearful sufferings had changed the young active man into one of middle age. Yet, amid all this alteration, one thing remained immutable: the trust of each one in the other, and the love that nothing could take away.

Each had much to tell of the experience of the time that had passed, and Marston's account of his thrilling adventures found an attentive and sympathising listener in Edith.

When Mr. Hammond returned to the drawing-room he brought Charlie Hancock and Maud with him. The former showed but very little sign of his recent accident, and beyond a slight limp there was nothing to indicate that he had been through the painful ordeal of a broken leg and other injuries. He plainly showed his delight at seeing Marston again, and his improved behaviour and easy manner in Mr. Hammond's house did not fail to attract and please the man who had previously seen him under such different circumstances.

Supper was now announced, and after this had been done justice to, the whole party returned to

the drawing-room, where the old songs were resung and the memory of past days and past happiness recalled.

The next morning Marston attended at the office of Mr. Hammond as arranged, and entered with him upon the details of a scheme devised by that gentleman with reference to the business which he had hitherto carried on with marked success.

It was obvious that, while Marston had sufficient means for all his requirements as the result of the pearling venture, it was essential that he should have a secure investment for his money, and also that he should enter upon some employment that would serve to occupy him and be a source of income.

Mr. Hammond proposed that Marston should enter into partnership with him. He found himself growing somewhat unequal to the management of so large a business unaided, especially since the shipping branch had been so much extended.

From his previous association with Marston, Mr. Hammond was satisfied that he was a man of more than ordinary intelligence and capacity, and that he was perfectly reliable.

There were many details to be arranged, and these were now fully discussed; and the partnership was shortly afterwards entered into, Marston taking control of the shipping department, as that of which he had the more complete knowledge, and the firm became known as "Hammond & Marston."

For a time some of the older merchants looked

askance at the man who was known to have been at one period of his existence under a cloud, and the charity of man towards his fellows sought to find a flaw here and there; but the general body of his compeers, to whom all the details of his case were fully known, readily received him, and he was soon able to live down every idle rumour and ill-natured suggestion.

Meantime his visits to the well-known villa were even more frequent than of yore. It was not long before arrangements were completed for the interrupted marriage, and it was decided that as soon as business matters could permit the happy event should take place. The Easter season was near at hand, and its coming would serve to remind those who had been for a time dead to each other, and were now once more restored to life, of the intensity of its reality. Mr. Hammond was able to arrange that his partner should be relieved from duty for a month, so that he and his bride might have the opportunity of visiting Paris during the honeymoon.

Meantime the intimacy of Charlie Hancock and Maud Hammond had ripened into sincere attachment, and no very great surprise was experienced when the young investigator waited upon Mr. Hammond and asked his consent to their marriage. As both had ample means and the antecedents of the intending bridegroom were so well known, there was no reason for this to be withheld. Indeed, his regard for the young man was so great that Mr. Hammond was pleased to receive him into his family.

In the Parish Church, therefore, a double wedding was quietly celebrated during Easter week.

Among the guests were Sir Alfred Berwick and Miss Preston, the latter acting as bridesmaid. Sir Alfred's name had, after further investigation, been restored to the Navy List, but he had no intention of resuming active service, preferring to settle on the estate he had recently inherited and to live at the old home as soon as the necessary repairs and alterations had been effected. His chequered career had made him long for the quiet of home, with the companionship of the dear one now so happily restored to him.

After their trying experiences, Edward Marston and his devoted wife were indeed thankful for the contrast afforded by their peaceful domestic felicity, and so we leave them to their well-earned repose, their mutual love and esteem rendered the more enduring and complete by the cruel shocks of fortune they had encountered and outlived.

THE END.

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