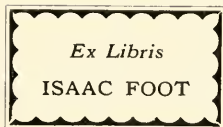


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BREACHLEY, BLACK SHEEP

BY

LOUIS BECKÉ

AUTHOR OF "BY REEF AND PALM,"
"EDWARD BARRY, SOUTH SEA
PEARLER," "TESSA, AND THE
TRADER'S WIFE," ETC., ETC.



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CHAPTER I

I BEGIN LIFE BY COMMITTING ARSON

I, WILLIAM BREACHLEY, "Black Sheep," was born in a small seaport town at the mouth of a tidal river, on the eastern coast of Australia, and near the boundary line dividing New South Wales and Queensland.

My father was the proprietor of a saw-mill, and had a rather large family—six sons and two daughters. He was a very hardworking man, and had two beliefs; one was that the saw-milling and timber-getting business was the noblest pursuit in the world, and the other was that the Sydney agents to whom he consigned his cargoes of cedar, black-butt, and tallow-wood, were villains and cheats of the deepest dye, and in this latter conclusion we boys concurred, for whenever we wanted money to buy a gun or a fishing-net, or some such thing, poor father would grow angry, and ask us to remember that he was being robbed every day of his life. But nevertheless we generally succeeded in getting what we wanted, especially if we worked steadily with the men at the mill. It was ever so much better lending a hand to haul the mighty logs of timber out of the punts which brought them down the river than being at school; for Mr. Blackwood, the master,

was a very big, robust Scotchman, who was perhaps afraid of growing too fat, and so kept himself in trim only by the exercise of flogging his pupils most mercilessly. If a boy shirked his lessons, he would get a thrashing; if he did them well, and was punctual, cleanly, and obedient, Mr. Blackwood would thrash him for being a sneak, and "meditating some meeschief."

He was, however, a useful man in his way, and had his good points, and a sense of humour as well; for twice a year at least he would buy a five-gallon keg of Queensland rum, and set himself to drink it as quickly as possible, first putting up a notice on the school door:

"Parents of pupils attending this school are notified that, on account of the approaching indisposition of the master, it is closed until further notice.

"DUGALD BLACKWOOD."

These bouts of his were the source of infinite pleasure to the younger portion of the community, for at the end of a week Mr. Blackwood would be so ill, and see so many strange animals pursuing him, that the sergeant of police, one Finnegan, would ride off to the nearest town for a doctor. When the doctor arrived, he and the sergeant remained with the patient, and finished the rum with him. Then the two troopers, who, with the sergeant, patrolled the district, would have to lock all three of them up until they got better.

These divergencies from the routine of school-life always meant a month's holiday to us, and as they sometimes occurred three times a year, and we played truant or shammed illness two days out of five, in order to go fishing, my brothers and myself were naturally, and quite justly, looked upon as incorrigible dunces. In this respect, however, we were no worse

than the rest of the pupils. Most of them were the children of rough timber-getters, stock-riders, and other bushmen; and, like their parents, their language was of a most lurid and pointed character. Even my mother, careful as she was, and anxious to bring her children up better than those of her uncultured neighbours, could not prevent us boys from learning and using the every-day language we were accustomed to hear outside our own home. I need go no further than to say that the commonest adjective used was a word which one naturally connects with the circulating fluid of the human body. It was used either as a word of endearment, a term of reproach, or a suitable expression for a conviction or an opinion upon anything or everything. The local clergyman, for instance, would not feel offended if some respectable farmer or timber-getter told him that he had "preached a b——y fine sermon last Sunday" and that "the missus and gals would come to church next Sunday if the b——y creeks were crossable." The clergyman, being a sensible man and acquainted with the vernacular, knew that no disrespect was intended, and when bidding goodbye to his parishioners, might perhaps remark that it was a very hot (or cold) day.

"B——y hot" (or cold), "sir," would be the reply.

(This abominable word was introduced into Australia by the early settlers; and is, I regret to say, not infrequently used to the present day in Colonial Legislative Assemblies to emphasise any particular point or contention.)

At the age of thirteen, I was the only one of us who continued to attend, or rather was supposed to attend school. Jim and Ted, who were then fourteen and sixteen, were helping father at the mill, and being paid wages like any other of his employees. Ted, who was a square-built, nuggety fellow, as strong as

a working bullock, and about as good-looking, was in charge of one of the timber punts, and Jim had to drive the wheezy old engine, set the saws, and help father to put patches on the rotten old boiler, which was always breaking out in a fresh place.

My other three brothers by this time had all left home. One, Harry, died soon after his return from New Zealand as a volunteer—he came back with a smashed knee-cap, having been hit by a Maori bullet at the unsuccessful storming of a pah. Another, the second eldest, Morgan, went to sea, and for three or four years we heard nothing of him, except one letter, telling us that he had been trading in the Dutch East Indies, had tired of it, and was then going to Hobart Town, in 'Tasmania, to ship on the *Fanny Fisher*, whaler. The third, Fred, had yielded to my mother's wishes, and entered a bank in Sydney as a junior clerk; but, being reprovved by the manager for fighting with "a superior officer," he put on his hat, walked out of the bank, and found employment with a well-known Sydney stevedore and lighterman, named Bayliss, who was also a contractor for raising sunken ships and other diving work.

My mother at first shed tears when she heard of Fred doing this, but, when he wrote he was getting £5 a week, and working with *men*, instead of driving a quill for £50 a year with a "pack of paper-collared snobs" who tried to make fun of him because he was a "young man from the country," she became more resigned, and father said it was flying in the face of Providence to expect a sturdy young fellow of twenty who could set a saw, ride a buckjumper, and kill and cut up a bullock with any man in the country, to stand behind a counter counting stinking bank-notes. He

afterwards became a famous diver, and made quite a fortune when the pearling beds in Torres Straits began to be worked.

Poor Fred ! we never saw him again, for, some years later, he died under the clubs of the murderous savages of Bougainville Island in the Solomon Group.

With Jim and Ted at the mill helping father, my life at school soon began to be unbearable, for as Mr. Blackwood was no longer able to give them their daily thrashing, I received it instead, in addition to my own ; and although by this time I was a sort of human pachyderm from the continual application of the master's supplejack to every inch of my body, the thing began to pall on me.

My particular chum was a big, red-headed girl or fifteen, named Mary Dick. She was Blackwood's niece ; acted as pupil teacher, and hated her uncle most fervently, for until she grew too big and strong to be flogged like the rest of the pupils, her skin had undergone the tanning process with the rest of us. She was a great rider and swimmer, could climb a gum-tree after a native bear or opossum like any black fellow, and had a merry heart and good-natured disposition.

"Mary," I said to her one day, showing her the back of my left hand, which was swollen and crippled by a blow from her uncle's terrible supplejack, "look at this ; I believe some of the bones are broken."

It was after school-hours, so Mary and I went to the pump, and as I held my hand under the nozzle, she pumped.

"That's what he calls 'the incentive to open-handedness,'" she said, as she looked at my unfortunate paw ; "you must never shut one hand when he is caning you on the other. It makes him as savage as a beast. And he is a beast !"

This expression of Mary's was uttered with such wholesome sincerity, that it added fuel to the rage I felt, and I said that I would have my revenge, even if I were killed for it. If my father would not put me to work at the mill, I was determined not to come back to school. Mary sympathised with me, and said she wished she were a boy too. "Some of these days," she added, with a savage gleam in her blue eyes, "I will put something into his food to half-poison him. Then I'll make a bolt for it, and walk along the coast to Sydney—it's only two hundred miles."

When I showed my hand to my father and mother, the latter was angry, and even my father, who was used to the sight of bruised hands and bleeding fingers—for such things were of common occurrence among the men working at the mill—muttered that it was "a bit too stiff." In the evening he walked up to the master's house, and in a few words explained his dissatisfaction at Mr. Blackwood's method of punishment. "You have no business to hit a boy such a crack as that on the back of the hand," he said, "and I tell you I won't have it. Why, you might have crippled him—and a gammy-handed lad wouldn't be much use to me in the mill. There's plenty of room on him elsewhere. So be careful, or else his brother Ted will come and take it out of you. He's only lying low for a chance. Good-night."

Having thus discharged his duty as a parent, my father thought no more of the matter, and ordered me back to school, but said he would not keep me there for more than six months.

On the following morning, at nine o'clock, before we began lessons, Mr. Blackwood ordered me out on the floor, and then fixing his eye on me, and pulling his long

bushy beard, called the attention of the school to me as a poor milksop, who ran home with tales to his mammy. My blood boiled at his sneering and contemptuous tones, but I had to suffer it in silence. Then, adding insult to injury, he ordered me to take my seat with the girls. This I flatly refused to do, whereupon he flogged me soundly on my back and elsewhere, but took care not to touch my swollen hand. I set my teeth as each stroke of that terrible supplejack seemed to cut into my very vitals, and then staggered to my own seat breathless and exhausted with the agony I was enduring.

That evening Mary Dick came down to our house to see how I was getting on, and she, Ted, Jim, and myself, formed ourselves into a committee of ways and means to "get even" on old Blackwood (we called him "old," though he was not much past forty).

Ted, who, although not yet eighteen years of age, had quite a local reputation for his skill in the noble art of self-defence, and had to exercise it frequently with the men and boys at the mill—for they were a rough lot, and fights were an almost every-day item—said he would tackle "old Blackie" on the following evening, after work was over at the mill, and take it out of him. But Mary protested.

"Don't you try it, Ned! He's as strong as a bullock, and although he can't fight, if he once got hold of you, you wouldn't have the ghost of a show. No, let us wait a bit. The *New Moon* will be here in a day or two, and uncle's keg of rum is on board, I know. Then we can do something."

The *New Moon* was a venerable steamer which traded between Moreton Bay (Brisbane) and Sydney, and twice every year called at our little port to ship timber from the mill, and her captain on these occasions always

brought Mr. Blackwood the five-gallon keg of rum before mentioned.

Two or three days later the *New Moon* crossed over the bar, and came alongside father's wharf, and presently we saw a blackfellow staggering up the grass-grown street, towards the school, with a corn-sack on his back. In the corn-sack was the keg of rum destined for the schoolmaster, who fatuously imagined that the townspeople believed it to be a keg of American pork.

At nine o'clock the next morning the usual notice was placed on the school door, the weary supplejack was laid to rest, and Mr. Blackwood began his usual orgie, whilst a camp of blacks—bucks and gins—established themselves in the school paddock to wait upon him, and get an occasional tot of the fiery spirit in reward for their services. Scandalous tongues said that on these occasions—Mary Dick and the old housekeeper having fled the place—the learned dominie enjoyed the society of the gins, and made these black and odorous ladies honoured guests, until they were driven out by the sergeant of police, who naturally resented their sharing the keg of rum as an outrage upon society in general and a distinct wrong to himself in particular.

On the third evening (which was a Saturday) after the arrival of the rum, Mary Dick and I, about ten o'clock at night, walked across the school paddock to her uncle's house and tried to see what was going on inside. The place was in darkness, except for the faint glow of a log fire in the sitting-room, which shone through the slab sides of the dwelling.

The night was very cold, for it was the month of June, and a keen wind blew from the west. Creeping silently along till we came to a place where there was a wider opening in the rough wooden walls, we looked in.

“The beast, the beast!” muttered Mary, as she clenched her hands.

In the centre of the room were lying two black fellows and five gins, all sunk deep in the heavy slumber of drunkenness; on the sofa was the instructor of youth, his chin upon his chest, and his usually flowing beard tousled up in a rough, bulbous-looking mass. The keg of rum stood on the floor beside the couch, with some cups and tin pannikins lying about. One of the gins—a young, well-formed girl—was clothed in one of Mary’s skirts, which was tied round her black waist, the upper portion of her body being exposed.

“I’ll soon get that off her,” whispered Mary to me, her eyes glittering with passion; “let us try the door first.”

The door was barred from the inside, and each of the two windows was secured by heavy wooden shutters, which also fastened from the inside. Then we turned our attention to the roof, which was of bark.

Mary stooped down, and I got on her back; she rose so as to give me a good hoist. I clutched hold of the lowest layer of the rough sheets of the bark and was soon at work with my clasp-knife. In a few minutes a six feet by three sheet was cut adrift and carefully pushed aside. Then, hanging by my knees to the rafters, I held out my hands to Mary, who, kicking off her rough Blucher boots, placed her feet against the slab timbers of the house and pulled herself up.

We sat together beside the opening for awhile, gazing on the edifying scene—I longing either to murder or inflict some lasting injury on my supplejacking persecutor; she eyeing the half-nude figure of the gentle savage who was wearing her best print skirt.

“Are you game?” she whispered.

I nodded. I was "game" for anything, for as I looked down upon the large, sprawling figure of Blackwood, and heard his drunken snore, my whole frame seemed to ache anew with the agony of my last flogging.

We dropped down inside, and Mary kicked the skirt-wearer in the ribs with her large Scotch foot. The black girl only grunted—she was too drunk to do more. In a moment Mary tore the garment from her, rolled it into a bundle, and, with a look of intense hatred at the figure lying on the couch, threw it on the fire.

The three other gins and the two bucks were so heavily weighted with rum that they, like their learned host, slept like hogs; and so Mary and I lit some tallow candles and made a thorough survey of the place. On a shelf near one of the windows were a number of books, among them a large, heavily-bound Bible and a "Cruden's Concordance." These Mary took up and laid on the fire on the top of the smoking and smouldering skirt. They were the two volumes in her uncle's scant library of which he was—or pretended to be—very proud, inasmuch as both had been presented to him by some college professor in Aberdeen.

"Let us burn them both," she said harshly, and, speaking loudly, "this house is not a fit place for God's Word. Oh, you beast, you brute!" and, standing beside the schoolmaster, she shook her clenched hand before his unconscious face, and then spat at him.

For a moment or two her aspect terrified me. Her long red hair had fallen around her shoulders, and her usually kindly eyes were blazing with almost uncontrollable passion as she clenched her big, bony hands tightly together. Then she sobbed softly, and her hand sought mine.

“He is a wicked beast, Billy, and I hate him; but he is my dead mother’s brother. Wait for me.”

She sprang to her feet again and went into her own bedroom, returning in a few minutes with a bundle rolled up in a scarlet blanket and secured by two saddle-straps.

“Billy, I’m off. I’m going to foot it to Sydney. I can’t stay here with a thing like *that*,” and she pointed with a sob to her uncle. “God help me, I’m only a girl, but I won’t stay here. I’d as soon live in hell as be disgraced like this.”

A quick flood of sympathy filled my heart. “Dear Mary, don’t run away. Come to us. Mother will be your friend, and you will be safe with us.”

She shook her head. “I’m off, Billy. If I stayed here I should do something dreadful some day. He’s only unkind to me when he’s sober, but he’s a cruel dog to me when he’s drunk.”

She sobbed again, and then her eyes fell on the keg of rum.

“That’s the devil that makes a devil of him, Billy,” she said in a harsh, dry voice.

“I know it is,” I said, as I went up to the keg and lifted it. “It’s three-parts full now. Let’s put it on the fire, Mary, and burn it.”

She nodded. “Yes, let us burn it, and we’ll stay here and watch it.”

I lifted the keg and dumped it down on the big, smouldering iron-bark logs between the big Bible and “Cruden’s Concordance,” the leather bindings of which were sending up a dense volume of smoke. Little did either of us dream of the result.

For some five minutes or so we, standing hand in hand by the door (which we had unbarred), watched the dulled smoky flames curling around the little, fat keg, so

neatly dunnaged by the two books. Then one of the burning logs yielded to the weight upon it and gave way with a shower of sparks, the keg rolled over, and the rum poured out from the open bung. In an instant there was a blinding flash of light and an explosion which, to us, seemed to have destroyed the universe, for it dashed us violently against the further side of the room.

I was the first to recover myself, and remember lifting Mary to her feet and pointing with an exclamation of horror to that end of the room in which the wide, open fireplace stood. It was in flames, and her uncle, with his hands to his face and his beard on fire, was staggering and rolling about, and in imminent danger of terminating his scholastic career by tumbling into the furnace of the now roaring fireplace. The bucks and gins, drunk as they were, were also awakened, and making for the doorway on their hands and knees.

Throwing her bundle outside, Mary rushed to her uncle, imploring me to help her. We seized him by his arms and partly dragged, partly carried him outside to a safe distance from the school-house.

Gasping with our exertions, we took no heed of him as he lay upon the frosty sward, but watched the flames and smoke bursting from the house, which was now thoroughly alight and burning with the utmost cheerfulness.

“We shall be put in gaol for this,” said Mary, turning a white and terrified face to me.

I could make her no answer, but to a mute inquiry in her eyes I nodded assent.

I shouldered my girl companion's swag, and holding each other's hands, we set off at a run towards the sea beach, half a mile away.

CHAPTER II

MARY AND I AND PADDY MINOGUE

AS soon as we emerged upon the beach we stopped and sat down upon a ridge of soft white sand, covered with a thick-leaved saline plant locally called "pig-face."

For some minutes neither of us spoke, for we were panting and exhausted with our exertions, and wildly excited as well. Then, like criminals desiring to return and gaze upon the scene of their crime, we rose and began the ascent of a round-shaped and scrub-clad hill which stood at the south side of the bar, and from the summit of which we could obtain a view of the town. Forcing our way through the dense undergrowth, and disturbing and startling hundreds of black wallabies and sleeping sea-birds, who fled in terror at the sound of our footsteps, we reached the crest of the hill.

One brief glance was enough. What had been the master's house lay a glowing fiery mass, and the school-house itself had caught, and was blazing away right merrily. We could see the figures of people running to and fro, and that the whole town was awakened and alarmed was evident by the ringing of the church bell, which we could hear distinctly.

"What shall we do, Bill?" asked Mary. "They

will soon miss us, and then Sergeant Finnegan and the troopers will be out after us."

The prospect of being brought back to town with my hands handcuffed behind my back, and a rope tied to my waist, as I trotted along beside the horse of a trooper, was too appalling a picture for me to contemplate. I had frequently seen offenders against the law thus brought into town by the police, and had often thought I should like to have been the proud and haughty trooper, with his carbine on thigh, and bright and clanking sabre, but figuring as the prisoner was quite another thing.

"Let us walk along the beach till we get to Paddy Minogue's saw-pit, at the mouth of Comerai Creek," I said. "He will not give us up to the police, for his father was hanged for bushranging, and he is a great friend of Ted and Jim. And perhaps he'll give us some food, and help us to get away and hide somewhere."

"Paddy's the man," said Mary. "He'll help us, I'm sure, for when I rode his iron-grey colt in the hurdle race and won, he gave me a sovereign, and said I had good stuff in me, although uncle was a d——d Scotchman."

With this encouraging prospect in view we started off along the beach, I carrying Mary's bundle and she every now and then looking back to see if the dreaded troopers were in sight. Had they appeared, we should at once have dived into the dense scrub which lined the beach just above high-water mark.

Comerai Creek was fifteen miles from the mouth of the bar, and when we reached it dawn was just breaking, and the soft grey mist which covered the ocean was thinning and dispersing before the chilly breath of the rising land breeze, which yet brought with it that

strange, sweet "earthy" smell of the deep forest beyond, together with the joyous cries of the awakened birds, as they shook their frosty wings, and sought their food in the groves of wild apple-trees, and upon the fruiting vines and climbers of the scrub, which ran in a narrow belt along the littoral for a good fifty miles or more.

Paddy Minogue's saw-pit and camp were situated about a mile or so up the creek, on the left-hand bank. By the time we reached the place it was broad daylight, and a dozen or so of kangaroo dogs flew out upon us with savage yelps and a great dental display. They, however, quickly recognised us, and after clawing and pawing us for a few minutes, accompanied us up to the door of the bark hut in which Paddy and his three comrades lived.

Pushing open the door—which was made of a sheet of bark—we entered, and found the four bunks untenanted.

"Of course," said Mary, flinging herself upon one of the rude beds, and examining her bare feet, "Paddy and his men went to town last night. They always do on Saturdays. We'll see them presently. Now let us get something to eat, for I'm jolly hungry."

We soon found the half of a huge damper, and some cold salt beef, with a bottle of pickles, and had just stirred up the smouldering log fire to make a billy of tea, when we heard the dogs barking, and then Paddy and one of his mates rode up.

"Hallo, Mary Dick, and you, Bill Breachley! What the deuce are ye doing here?" he cried, apparently in genuine surprise as he jumped off his horse and, booted and spurred, came into the hut.

"We'll tell you presently, Pat," said Mary quietly,

“as soon as you’ve had a drink of tea. I’ve only just put the billy on. Been to town, Pat?”

He looked at us curiously for a moment—our appearance was calculated to inspire curiosity, for our faces and hands were scratched and bleeding, through forcing our way through the scrub on the hill—but said nothing further at the time, and together we sat down at the rough table, and made a hearty breakfast.

* * * * *

Paddy Minogue, was, as far as appearances went, a typical colonial of the time. He was, I should think, about thirty years of age, tall, broad-shouldered, and as sallow-faced as a Spaniard, with a square, set jaw, and eyes as black as jet—eyes that when they blazed with anger meant mischief, for like all the rough country folk about the river, he was a fighting man, though he never sought a quarrel. Three years previously he had been suspected of cattle-stealing, and Sergeant Finnegan, who hated him—on account of his (Finnegan’s) wife, who was known to be over-fond of the dark-faced timber-getter—came to Paddy’s camp to search the place for the hides of the stolen bullocks—three in number. None were found, but there were certainly evidences of some beasts having been slaughtered. Thereupon Finnegan and his two troopers arrested Paddy, handcuffed him and took him to town. The sergeant tried hard to convince the sitting magistrate that Paddy had killed the bullocks, made away with the hides (so that the brands could not be identified) and sold the carcasses to an American whaleship, which had been off the coast at the time. The magistrate, however, refused to convict on such insufficient evidence, and dismissed the case. (That Paddy had stolen the bullocks, and sold them to the whaler, no one doubted, but he was a universal favourite,

and such a great rider, and such an unassuming young fellow, that I believe the magistrate, an old ex-army officer, was sincerely glad to reprimand the sergeant for arresting him on "groundless suspicion.")

Paddy stepped out of the court-house, and went down to the one hotel in the place, from where he sent a message to Sergeant Finnegan to meet him and "settle things like a man." This message was sent, to Finnegan's rage, by an old black fellow named "Prince Regent," who spoke excellent but variegated and blasphemous English, and who took care to let the whole town know that he was conveying a challenge from Paddy Minogue to "the sergeant" to meet on the beach, and fight at six o'clock. The whole town turned out to see the show, my father being an especially interested spectator.

Finnegan was a bully and a brute, but he had the pluck of an Irishman, and turned up to time. A ring was soon formed, and the two men stripped to the waist (Captain De Lisle, the magistrate, lending some assistance, and backing the sergeant as a matter of official principle). Finnegan's wife and my brothers and myself were, of course, in the very front.

Finnegan fought with a savage, deadly fury; but it was evident from the very first that he, although the heavier man of the two, had no chance with Paddy, who was as cool as if he were sawing a log, whilst Finnegan's face was inflamed with passion. In the third round, Paddy caught him on the jaw, and we heard the bone crack like a dry stick under a horse's hoof. He fell and lay motionless for a minute, and then his second lifted him to his feet again—game as a bulldog, but staggering to and fro on the sand.

"Do you want any more?" asked Paddy quietly.

"I don't. I think it is a fair thing, Rody Finnegan. You're not able to stand up to a *man*."

The gibe cut, for although unable to speak, the sergeant returned him a glance full of hatred, and pulled himself together so rapidly that even my slow-thinking, slow-speaking father gave him a cheer.

"Man," said Minogue in clear, contemptuous tones, "do ye want more? Shure I'll kill ye. Go home and take betther care of your wife."

Finnegan swung out with his right, and missed, and in another moment Paddy caught him on the chin, and sent him down upon the sand like a pithed bullock. The crowd cheered, and the victor, putting on his shirt and coat, mounted his horse and rode quietly away to his home on Comeroid Creek. And although the two men would sometimes meet and give each other a civil "good-day," every one knew the bitter hatred that lay between them.

* * * * *

After we had finished breakfast, Minogue got up, filled his pipe, and asked us to come outside and have a look at a big cedar log in the creek.

"Now," he said, as soon as we were outside, "what's wrong?"

We told him our story without hesitation. At first he laughed long and loud, then he became serious.

"I knew it was you two, for 'after both house and school were burnt out completely, I met your father and brothers looking for you. Some one had seen you both crossing the school paddock, and when neither of you could be found, people began to put two and two together." Then he told us that Mr. Blackwood had been severely scorched about the face, and had received

a great shock to his system as well, and that a trooper had been despatched to bring the doctor.

This was serious indeed, and Mary and I looked at each other blankly. I asked Paddy if he thought the sergeant would come after us.

“ Sure to. And he’ll pick up your tracks easy enough on the beach. He’ll be here in another hour after ye. What are you going to do now? Better go back and give yourselves up before matters are any worse.”

But we vehemently declared our determination not to return, and in our terror of being captured, we asked Minogue to help us to get away. We would walk to Sydney easily enough, we asserted, even if it took us two months to get there.

Paddy scratched his dark, sunburnt cheek thoughtfully. “ Shure it’s a mighty darin’ thing for ye to try and do, and I misdoubt me if ye’ll ever get there, and I’ll have no truck with such an attempt. But I’ll plant ye where the bould Mr. Finnegan won’t find ye in a month of Sundays; then maybe I’ll ride into town and tell your father where ye are. Go back ye must some time or other, and face the music, but it’s meself or your father that’ll take you—not that dirty sweep of a Finnegan.”

We returned to the house, where Minogue’s mate, a long, lanky colonial, named Sam Banner, was feeding the dogs. Paddy told us he was a “ safe ” man (indeed I fear he and his three mates did more cattle-stealing than timber-getting), and we could trust him.

Just at that moment some of the dogs outside began barking furiously, and Sam ran to see who was coming. He was back in a moment.

“ It’s Finnegan and a trooper ! ” he said ; “ they’re

coming along the beach at a trot, and will be here in five minutes."

"Into the saw-pit, quick, both of ye," cried Paddy.

We ran out of the hut, jumped down into the pit, and buried ourselves up to our chins in the sawdust, and Minogue hastily threw some dead gum branches over us. Then we heard the sergeant and his man calling out the opposite side of the creek, and inquiring if Minogue or any of his mates had seen us.

"I have not," replied Paddy civilly, "but the dogs were kicking up a great hullabaloo just about daylight at something they saw or heard on the other side of the creek. Maybe 'twas the boy and girl striking up along the right-hand track, and doubling back to town."

"We lost their tracks about half a mile from here on the beach," said the trooper, "where they turned up into the scrub."

"Aye," said Paddy (we could imagine him scratching his cheek as if deep in thought)—"aye, like enough they've struck across so as to pick up the track. They'd be afeared to come here on account of the dogs. Won't ye cross over, Sergeant, and take a drink of tea, and a bite?"

We listened in fear and trembling for his answer. "Thank ye, no. We'll be getting along, I think."

"Just as ye please, Sergeant," said Paddy politely, "but it's a cold mornin'. And how's the schoolmaster?"

"It's a dead man he'll be before this night, I believe. Sure he had a power of grog inside him when his beard tuk fire, and maybe it caught aloight. He's a dead man, I believe."

This terrifying news struck a chill of horror through our veins, and visions of the condemned cell and gallows flashed across our minds. Then we heard the

sergeant call out "good-day," as he rode off. Presently Sam and Paddy came out of the hut, carrying a huge cross-cut saw, and began work at a cedar log.

"Stay where ye are awhile," said Paddy to us; "that dirty scamp is only foxing. He'll be back here before long."

He was quite right, for in about a quarter of an hour the two policemen rode up to the house from the back at a smart canter, and dismounted. They had swum the creek higher up. Sam and Paddy ceased their sawing as they walked up to the pit.

"Didn't you pick up the tracks?" inquired Sam.

"We did not," said Finnegan gloomily, flicking the side of his long boot with his switch (I could see the lower part of his body quite plainly), "and what's more, I'm sure they never went that way."

"Maybe," said Minogue indifferently; and then he added with a sarcastic ring in his voice, "but sure a great tracker like you, Sergeant, will have no trouble in finding a slip of a boy and a girl."

Finnegan made no answer for a moment or two; then he rose to his feet. "Ye were kind enough to ask me a while ago to have a drink of tea. I'll be glad of it now."

"Ye're welcome," said Paddy steadily; "will ye go in and help yourself, Sergeant Finnegan?"

Followed by his trooper, the sergeant strode off to the hut. As it contained but one room, they no doubt soon satisfied themselves that no one was concealed there. In a few minutes they returned, mounted their horses, and with a curt "good-day" rode off again towards the beach.

"Ye may get out for a bit now," said our friend to us,

“but you must keep close to the pit till to-night. Then I’ll put ye in a safe place, where all the traps (police) in the country won’t find ye. Sam here will give ye some dinner, for I’m going off to town again to see your father.”

Saddling his horse, he rode leisurely off, leaving us thankful for our escape, and wondering what new experience the night would bring us.

CHAPTER III

CAPTURED

ABOUT noon Minogue's two other mates—big, swarthy-looking fellows, who, beyond giving us a friendly nod, took no further notice of us, but went about their work as usual—returned to the camp. At sunset Paddy himself rode up and told me that he had seen my father, who was much alarmed at the schoolmaster's serious condition, and thought that it would be just as well for me to keep out of the way until he decided what was best to be done. He brought with him a change of clothing for me and a pair of boots and stockings for Mary.

“Let us have some supper first,” he said, “then we'll start off.”

Immediately after supper Paddy filled a couple of saddle-bags with provisions—tea, sugar, flour, salt beef, etc. Then we started on foot, Sam and Paddy leading. For quite five or six miles we followed cattle tracks leading through the thick scrub which began at high-water mark and ran inland for about a mile or two. Although we could not see either the beach or the sea, we were never more than a few hundred yards from the water. About ten o'clock we came to the bank of a narrow creek, which was running seaward. This we

entered, and waded against the current—the water was very shallow—for quite another two miles, until we came abreast of a high bluff, thinly covered with timber on its upper part, but surrounded with a dense tangle of “lawyer” vines* and wild mulberry at the foot—fearful things to come in contact with.

“We’re all right now,” said Paddy cheerfully; “light up, Sam.”

Sam lit a lantern, and Paddy, carefully parting the hanging vines, told us to follow; and then, to my astonishment, I found we were standing in a wide, circular space, surrounded by rough walls of rock, which were pierced with dark passages and clefts.

Holding the lantern before us, Paddy led the way, and presently we found ourselves in a good-sized cave, in which were four bunks, made of green hide and stretched between four posts, and in the centre was a rough table, littered over with tin plates, mugs, etc.; at the far end was a fireplace with traces of recent use, and a number of cattle brands standing up near by. In an instant I guessed where we were—this was Paddy’s secret business-place, near the spot he used for driving in, and branding clean skins † with his own registered brand.

He and Sam remained with us for some hours, and gave us full particulars how to get in and out of the place, but warned us not to wander too far away, for we might be seen. Then giving us some fishing-tackle and a large tin box of wax vestas, they bade us goodbye till their next visit.

* The “lawyer” vine derives its name from the fiend-like tenacity with which its insidious thorns cling to the unfortunate traveller who fatuously treats it as an ordinary plant. Its analogy to legal procedure is very striking.

† “Clean skins,” *i.e.*, cattle whose owners have been unable to drive in and brand them.

Each of us taking two of the four blankets lying on the bunks, turned in, but tired as we were, we were too excited to sleep until nearly daylight, and then in spite of the squealing of the opossums and the howl of a hungry dingo somewhere near us, we fell into a sound sleep, and I did not awake till the sun was fairly high and shining into the cave through the gum-trees overhead.

Mary had boiled a billy of tea, and we again ate a hearty breakfast, and felt our spirits rise. We could hear the sea quite plainly, and as Paddy had told us of a place among some rocks where we could fish without being seen by any one, we set out to find it. There were, we found, two entrances to Mr. Minogue's private establishment—one from the creek itself, which was hidden from view by the hanging vines, and the other through a series of deep and narrow clefts in the rocky walls, wide enough for a man on foot, but impossible for a horse. We took the latter, and to our astonishment found that it brought us right out upon the open sea, between two high rocks, or rather cliffs, enclosing a small pebbly beach—evidently they were a continuation of the same spur of the coastal range of mountains in which the cave was situated.

Baiting our lines with some black and red crabs, we soon caught some fine sea bream, and I hooked a big schnapper—the handsomest and most delicate of all Australian fish. He must have weighed quite fifteen pounds, and as I had a thin line, I cut my fingers pretty severely. However, I landed him at last, and dropped him, kicking and flapping, into a little pool, where he was secure. Highly delighted at such sport, we continued fishing till it was low tide, and then as the kelp-covered rocks looked very promising for crayfish, we

decided at least to try and get one, to boil for breakfast on the following day. In a few minutes we each got one, and could have caught dozens, for they were very plentiful. The Australian crayfish, I may here mention, grows to a great size, and these we had taken were as long as a man's arm, and almost as thick as a man's thigh.

Little did we imagine that those particular wretched crustaceans were to prove our undoing.

We began our return to the cave about four o'clock, just as the bright wintry sun began to lose its warmth. I carried the "schnapper" and sea bream on one end of a nice round piece of drift wood and one of the crayfish on the other, lashed along it fore-and-aft to keep him steady; Mary, having first killed it, carried hers by its feelers. My object in taking one home alive was to present it to Paddy Minogue and his mates when they came to see us on the morrow.

We reached the entrance of the cave safely, squeezed through the narrow passages of rock with our heavy loads, and then threw them down upon the ground.

"Mary," I said, pointing to the dead crayfish, as, after having a drink of cold tea, we began to clean our spoil by the light of the fire, "isn't he a beauty? He makes me hungry to look at him. Let us boil his tail now in the bucket, and eat it for supper, and cook the rest in the morning. I can't resist looking at him."

She laughed. "Why not, Billy? I could eat a big piece of tail, even if it wasn't cold."

I cut off the tail, curled it up, and put it, with some salt, into an iron bucket used for boiling beef. In half an hour it was cooked, and turned out to cool. Then we lit a slush lamp, and finding some old and exceedingly

dirty novels—one of them, I remember, was entitled “Maria Martin: or the Murder in the Red Barn”—we read until we thought it time to make some hot Johnny-cakes to eat with the crayfish (“lobster” as we called it). This took us until pretty near midnight, and by the time we had finished our supper not even the gory “Red Barn” and its horrors could keep us awake.

I think we had been asleep about an hour, when I was awakened by a feeling of unrest in my digestive apparatus, and presently my head began to ache. In a few minutes the pain increased. I got up, and pricking up the wick of the lamp, sat down on my green-hide couch with a groan, for the pain seemed to develop all over my body.

An answering groan came from poor Mary, who was sitting up on her bed with her arms clasped round her knees. “Oh, Billy, I’m so horribly sick, my head is bursting, and I have pains all over me.”

“So have I, Mary—awful pains. I feel as if there was a packet of fish-hooks in my inside, and they were sticking into me everywhere.”

“Billy,” she moaned, “I believe that lobster was poisonous. No one eats them in June, do they? And I thought it tasted a little bitter.”

I was unable to reply; for my conscience smote me. The blacks, I knew, would never eat a crayfish if it had the least bitter taste, and a black fellow has a fine digestive power. At last, however, as fresh pangs racked my body, and my eyes seemed ready to start from their sockets, I gasped out that I feared she was right.

“If we had mustard and water,” I moaned; “that is good when you’re poisoned.”

“Let us get out and drink salt water,” suggested my

companion in misery, who tried to bear her sufferings "manfully."

We found our way in the darkness to the water front entrance of the cave, and pushing through the terrible lawyer vines, whose needle-pointed thorns severely lacerated our hands and faces, we gained the creek. At this point, however, it was quite fresh and sweet; for a mile and a half below there was a bar of rocks which kept back the inflow of the sea-water at flood-tide.

Never shall I forget that terrible journey, as we waded downwards towards the sea, every now and then falling down into the water, which was almost icy cold, and enduring the most atrocious pains and cramps all over our bodies, pains of which no two were in the same place; and terrifying even the nocturnal-prowling dingoes by an occasional howl, as that wretched lobster gave one or the other of us an extra grip in the digestive apparatus. The moment we reached the salt water we drank of it copiously, and without apologising to each other proceeded to eject our food upon the waters in the most energetic manner. In about half an hour we began to feel better, but our pains were succeeded by great weakness and faintness.

"Billy," said Mary, feebly, "I am sure I am dying; let us say our prayers, and ask God to forgive us for killing uncle."

"No," I said, "let us go to Paddy Minogue instead. He'll know what to do. I think we shall get better now if we get some hot tea or coffee with rum in it. That's what Dr. Armstrong gave Ted when he ate the poisonous mushrooms."

Short as the remaining distance was to Paddy's hut, the sun was high up before we reached it, for we were thoroughly done up. Paddy and his mates were

standing outside, talking to several horsemen, among whom was the uniformed figure of the second mounted trooper—a young man named Brassington. We were too ill to think of trying to escape now, even had we not been discovered. In an instant he jumped off his horse and arrested us.

Our pitiable condition, however, made him treat us very kindly. We were taken inside the hut, our wet clothes removed, and both of us put under the blankets, whilst Sam Banner made us hot coffee. A large mug, well stiffened with brandy, was given us each, and then we sank into a heavy slumber, but not before I had contrived to tell Paddy that we should say nothing about the cave. He nodded, and squeezed my hand in silence.

That afternoon we were taken back to town, Mary carried in front of Paddy Minogue, and I in front of Trooper Brassington. The little procession caused much excitement among the intelligent populace, whose sentiments towards us were, however, of the most friendly nature. We were not put in the lock-up; my father and one Micky Hoolan, a publican, having given bail for our appearance before Captain De Lisle in the morning.

CHAPTER IV

LIFE AT THE MILL AND ON THE RIVER

LONG before ten o'clock the Court House was besieged by the townspeople, and several women carrying babies had their feet trodden upon by big-booted stockmen and timber-getters, who, in language of a most florid character, urged them to "git out o' the way with yer 'owlin' kids." Thereupon a sailor man who had been drinking freely, said they were not men to insult women, and was immediately knocked down, falling on top of a mangy kangaroo dog, which at once set his teeth in the leg of an utter stranger who had merely been looking on. Catching the vicious animal by the throat, he strangled it into insensibility, and then flung it over the head of the crowd into a lot of bnsnmen's horses, which were tethered to the Court House fence; all the horses at once broke their bridles, jumped the fence, and tore through the town, just as the Court door opened, and the populace fell in together, the man with the bitten leg swearing profusely, and exposing the wound to view by rolling up his pants, and demanding a drink or sympathy of some sort.

"Put him outside," said Captain De Lisle, who had now taken his seat on the bench.

Trooper Brassington at once seized the suffering

stranger by the coat-collar, and ran him out towards the open door, just as the drunken sailor staggered in and sat down on a long form, only to fall off immediately backwards on the other side.

After some other trifling interruptions, the case was gone into, and Captain De Lisle very soon decided to discharge us. He, and indeed every one else, seemed highly amused at our description of the scene we had witnessed in the schoolmaster's house. In dismissing the case, however, the magistrate said that while no sensible person would believe for a moment that we intended to set the place on fire, Mr. Blackwood could, if he chose, summon us for the value of the rum, and the "Cruden's Concordance" and Bible, which we had deliberately burnt. Then he asked us how much rum was in the keg when we put it on the fire.

"Nearly full, sir," I replied innocently, "because neither Sergeant Finnegan nor the doctor had had any."

The magistrate laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks, and every one in the Court House followed suit, although Finnegan himself flushed angrily, and roared out, "Silence in the Coort!" half a dozen times.

Nearly a week passed before Mary and I recovered from the effects of the poisonous lobster, and during this time we were visited (my mother had taken Mary under her protection) by Mr. Blackwood, who, beyond the loss of his beard and eyebrows, and some severe burns, had sustained no serious hurt. Much to my surprise, he shook hands with me, and said he was glad that I was getting better. He spoke so quietly and strangely that I could only stare at him in mute astonishment. Then he asked Mary to come out with him on the beach, as he wanted to have a talk with her. She put on her sun-hood and went, and soon after I saw

them sitting side by side on a great log of drift-wood which lay on the sand. In about an hour they returned, and when Mary came into the sitting-room, I saw that she had been weeping, but she smiled in answer to my look of inquiry.

"I'm all right, Bill; and I'm very happy too. Uncle is so different now. And he kissed me, and told me that I must forgive him for all that is past. It is the first time in my life that any one has kissed me since my mother died."

I am glad to say that Mr. Blackwood did change his mode of life, and that his niece lived very happily with him for many years, till she married and went to New Zealand.

A new school-house was soon built—my father supplying the timber—and in a few months our escapade was forgotten by the townspeople.

One Sunday, however, as I was fishing for "flat-head" on one of the reaches of the river, Sergeant Finnegan rode up to where I was sitting, and dismounting, entered into a very friendly conversation with me. Now, I knew that he disliked me, so I was at once on my guard, for with all his assumed carelessness of manner, I was sure he had some object in view. Nor had I long to wait.

"Shure that's a moighty foine little place where ye two hid yourselves," he said presently.

I could not resist giving a start. He saw it, and watched my face keenly, but fortunately I said nothing—I wanted time to collect my thoughts.

"A foine little place indade," he said meditatively, as he lit his pipe, but still kept his eyes on me; "an' now, tell me—how did ye an' Mary Dick run across it so aisily?"

“Run across what?” I asked stolidly, giving all my attention to my fishing-line.

“Why, Paddy Minogue’s little retrate, to be sure.”

“What’s that?” I asked; “what is a ‘retrate’?”

He winked at me and laughed. “Ah, now thin, don’t be afther thryin’ to make me believe that yez don’t know all about it.”

“I don’t know anything about it—don’t know what you mean,” I said, as I gave my line a jerk, hooked a fish and began hauling it in.

He waited until I had landed the fish, and then began again, trying to get me to admit that Mary and I had been hidden away by Minogue. But I was too wary for him, and was also soon convinced that he had not discovered the spot, but was most anxious to do so. Finally he took out two new Bank of New South Wales five-pound notes.

“Look here, William Breachley, thim two foive pounds is yours if you’ll put me in sight of Paddy Minogue’s saycrit place. An’ I’ll give yez a foine carbine in the bargain.”

I laughed, and said I was sorry I couldn’t oblige him. He scowled at me angrily; then jumping up without another word, he mounted his horse again, and trotted off into the scrub which lined the river.

That afternoon I saw Paddy in town. He was breaking in a colt for Hoolan, the publican, and I took the opportunity of warning him that Finnegan was set on trapping him.

“I know it. He’s set his heart on seeing me get ten years. But he’ll never find that spot, I’m thinkin’. Tiger an’ Captain” (the two local black trackers) “know it well enough, but they’ll never betray us—we pay them too well for that.”

Six months passed away without anything of moment happening. I had left school, and my father kept me employed variously, sometimes helping in the mill, sometimes sending me out to prospect for timber. This latter was work after my own heart. I loved the silence and loneliness of the bush, and infinitely preferred to go on such expeditions alone instead of having a companion. Sometimes I would ride, taking with me two or three days' supply of flour, tea, and sugar, a little salt meat, matches, a double-barrelled gun, and a tomahawk. This latter I used to mark those trees I selected for felling, for by this time I was as good a judge of timber as any grown man. On other occasions—and I liked it better than riding—I would go by boat, sailing or drifting up the river with the flood-tide, and camping for the night, perhaps far up on the banks of one of the numerous creeks. As I was supposed to be away for three days at a time, I worked very energetically for the whole of the first and part of the following day; the rest of my time I spent in shooting and fishing, and otherwise enjoying myself. Kangaroos, native bears, and 'possoms were very plentiful, and in the course of a few months I had got together eight or ten dozen very good skins, all well cured and worth a good deal of money—that is, from a boy's point of view. Then, between the river and the sea-coast were a series of shallow, fresh-water lagoons, the haunt of countless thousands of black duck, teal, wood-duck, and black swans. Most of these built their nests in the reedy margins of these lagoons, or on small islands in the centre, and sometimes I would collect as many eggs as I could carry, and take them home in the boat. Most of these we would eat, others we placed under broody hens to be hatched. Often, too, I would discover a black

duck's nest in which the eggs were just hatched, and would bring away two or three of the ducklings, leaving the rest with the mother bird. My temporary duck-house was a locker which I had constructed in the stern sheets of the boat. Here I would keep the fluffy babies feeding them on weed and tiny fish about half an inch in length, which I used to catch by scooping them out of the water with a piece of ti-tree bark. As night came on I would light my camp fire, boil a billy of tea, grill the breast of a duck, teal, curlew, or any other bird I had shot, eat my supper, and then sleep until dawn. If I was tired of game, there were always plenty of fish to be caught in any of the tidal waters—such as bream, whiting, tarwhine, and flathead; further up, where the water was fresh, there were fine perch and a species of red mullet, which took the hook freely.

Now and then a party of the coast blacks would come and camp near me, knowing that I always carried some tobacco with me in the boat—for their especial benefit, being too young to smoke myself. They were a good-natured, harmless lot of people, and as both my father and mother were always very kind to them, they always made a good deal of myself and brothers, and showed their gratitude in many ways—bringing us fish and game, and huge bundles of honey tied up in ti-tree bark. I think, however, that I was their especial favourite, as they met me so often, and I would frequently accompany them when they went hunting and fishing. From them I learnt many of the secrets of Nature which proved so useful to me in my after-life—for to those poor savages the bush and the sea and the river were as an open book to a white man. I was always glad to have them come and camp near me, although the gins and the swarms of mongrel mangy dogs were very noisy.

One afternoon, as I was riding home along the sea-beach from one of these trips, I came across a small party of blacks—two men and three lubras* with a couple of piccaninnies—camped on a grassy bluff. They had come to spear king-fish, which were plentiful in a tidal creek near by, and asked me to camp with them for the night and watch the sport in the morning. As the day had been intensely hot, and my horse was a bit footsore, I was glad of an excuse to stay. The gins at once went down to the mouth of the creek, and soon returned, carrying between them about a hundredweight of oysters and a huge crab. Then they set to work, and opened thirty or forty dozen oysters, which their lords and masters and myself at once ate, I sharing with them the last of a damper which I had made the previous evening. Then the rest of the oysters and the crab were put in the hot ashes of the fire to cook.

Whilst the gins were attending to the cooking, the two bucks and myself set out along the bank of the creek to look for a wallaby or some cockatoos. We had not gone far when we heard the quacking of ducks, and creeping down through the long grass to the bank of the creek, I got a splendid shot at a mob of wood-duck which were settled on a sandbank, and as they rose I gave them the second barrel. The blacks jumped in and picked up the spoil—five fat grey and purple beauties. Highly elated at our success, we returned to the camp.

As we were lying on the sward watching the lubras preparing the ducks for grilling, one of the piccaninnies, a fat little girl of about four years of age, who was collecting wood, uttered a shrill scream of terror. Her mother dropped the duck she was plucking for me and ran over to the child, who, holding up her hand, said she

* Female aborigines—generally called “gins.”

had been bitten by a snake, and at the same moment I saw a large black snake coming directly towards us over the grass. I seized a bit of a dead branch near me, and with one smart blow broke its back. It was an ugly-looking brute about five feet in length and very thick. Then I ran up to the poor little piccaninny, who was now surrounded by her people. She had been deeply bitten on the first joint of the thumb, which was bleeding. As quickly as possible one of the gins tied a strip of green bark tightly round the child's wrist, asked me for my tomahawk, and in another instant had severed the thumb between the first and second joint. Then one of the men seared the bleeding stump with a burning brand, put a handful of wood ashes into a piece of ti-tree bark, and bound it up tightly. The poor little child stood the pain bravely, and an hour or two later, after having eaten the best part of a duck, she laid down beside the camp fire and went quietly to sleep as if nothing had occurred.

In the morning, provided with a spear by one of my sooty friends, I accompanied them down to the mouth of the creek, where we had some glorious sport, chasing and spearing king-fish in the shallow water. Some of them were of great size, and weighed quite fifty pounds. We killed twenty or thirty, and my hosts at once ripped them open, took out the roes, livers, and eyes, and immediately set to work to eat them, after simply warming them on a fire for a few minutes.

When we returned to the camp we found the little girl who had been bitten by the snake sitting by the fire, eating more oysters. She was evidently perfectly recovered, although the black snake is one of the most deadly of all the Australian reptilia. I asked her mother, whose name was Cobargo, what she would have

done if the little one had been bitten on the body instead of on the hand.

“Cut him big pfeller hole and put plenty fire inside,” she replied.* “’Spose you cut him hole quick, and burn him plenty with big pfeller fire, all right. ’Spose you no quick, you go bung” (die).

My continual association with such people as these proved, as I have before said, very useful to me in my after-life. By the time I was fifteen years of age I knew the coast up and down for a hundred miles from my home as well as the oldest settlers, and almost as well as the blacks themselves.

* On the Lower Burdekin River, in North Queensland, a young buck black fellow was bitten on the muscle of his left arm by a tiger snake. He ran to the overseer of a road-making party near by and asked him for his razor. Then he cut out part of the muscle of his arm. He recovered, though he was crippled for life.

CHAPTER V

SOME INCIDENTS OF OUR FAMILY LIFE

I HAVE mentioned that in addition to his six sons my father had two daughters. The elder of these was named Frances (we called her "Fan"), and, when I was thirteen years of age and the school-house was burnt, she was sixteen; at that particular time she was in Sydney on a visit to some of my mother's relatives. She returned home when I was fifteen, and her return was the occasion of much discord and misery to the rest of the family, for the simple reason that she thought she was in every way a superior being to every one else in the house. She certainly was a very beautiful girl, with dark hair and blue-black eyes, and of a commanding and striking appearance, especially when on horseback; but on the other hand, her temper was that of seven devils lashed together, and her vanity, which was stupendous, was only excelled by her marvellous powers of lying and deceit. Yet, strange as it may appear, Ted, Jim, and myself, to whom her presence in the house was almost hateful, were, in a way, proud of her and of the attention she received, and as the saying goes, waited on her hand and foot. She made no secret of the contempt in which she held us as ignorant "country bumpkins," but would yet make us her veriest slaves. We had never heard the expression

“country bumpkin” till she used it, and informed us that it was “the English” expression to denote country stupidity, and that all the gentlemen in Sydney laughed at country bumpkins such as we were.

My father fired up quickly. “Look here, Fan” (to be called “Fan” instead of Frances was simply poison to her), “don’t you be such a fool as to call your brothers country bumpkins. They *are* your brothers; remember that. And they will grow up to be men; decent, clean-living men, I hope—better than the well-dressed, stoney-broke loafers in top hats and frock coats who you have been meeting in Sydney. Fan, my girl, just you go easy with the boys, and don’t play up the fine lady dodge on them. They won’t stand it, and I won’t stand it. And just let me see you turn to in the morning and milk Bee and Blackspot, and don’t ever again call your mother ‘mamma,’ as if she was a kind of a mongrel poodle; and by jingo, if you ever call me ‘papa’ again, I’ll spank you, big as you are. D’ye think I’m a dog to be called ‘papa’?”

Then the worthy man relapsed into grim silence, and chewed a piece of salt meat with great violence. It was the longest speech he had made for a year or more. Fan (otherwise “Frances”) pulled out her handkerchief and wept artistically over her plate, and then Ada—dear, dear little Ada—limped over to her from the other side of the table and whispered her childish sympathy. Fan pushed her aside coldly, and, still holding her handkerchief to her eyes, went to her room. Ada, her sweet pale face now streaming with tears, followed on her crutch; to her Fan was a goddess—something to be worshipped day and night for her beauty and cleverness.

Rough and uncouth as we boys were in our manner and speech to most people, we all had the tenderest love

for poor Ada, and always spoke softly to her; for her lameness had been caused by our own gross thoughtlessness when she was but eight years of age.

She, Ted, Jim and myself had, one Sunday, ridden out to Comeroi Creek to look at the wreck of a timber schooner which had been driven ashore at the mouth of the creek during a heavy easterly gale. On our way home through the scrub we saw a native bear, with a young one clinging to its back, perched on a branch of a spotted gum-tree. Ted jumped off his horse, and climbing the tree, caught both mother and baby, and brought them down safely. Then we started off again, Ted carrying the mother, and I carrying the baby, which was no bigger than a good-sized rat. Ada was riding a newly broken-in colt, which was yet thoroughly quiet, and Ted was abreast of her, Jim and I following, for the road, or rather bush track, was narrow. Presently, however, we came to open country, and I drew up alongside of Ada, and foolishly held up the baby bear for its mother to see. She—the old bear—was sitting in front of Ted, on his saddle, her big, silly eyes apparently looking at nothing. I told Ted to hold her by her fur, as she might try to escape.

“No fear of that,” he laughed, stroking the poor creature on her great black nose—“she’ll not try to get away as long as she can see her joey;” but in another moment he gave a cry of alarm, as the bear, sighting her young, which I was holding, suddenly leapt towards it, and landed on Ada’s saddle, the creature’s strong claws clutching the horse’s withers. The colt gave a snort of terror, and then, much to our amusement, began to buckjump in a solid, workmanlike manner, little Ada sitting him most gallantly, for child as she was, she was a born rider, and knew no fear, like all

Australian bush-bred children, who can sit a horse as well as any one in the world. But the colt, as the poor mother bear began to emit her mournful grunt-like cries, and stick her claws in deeper, became maddened with fear, and bolted, head down, with the bit between his teeth, towards a clump of bangalow palms growing on the side of a bluff overlooking the sea. Five minutes later we found Ada lying senseless on the ground with a broken thigh, and the colt with his head smashed into a pulp, for he had struck fair on to the bole of a big bangalow.

We carried her home, and father, without even waiting to give us a thrashing, which, however, he promised us when he returned, jumped on Ted's horse, and rode forty miles for Dr. Armstrong, who, fortunately was fairly sober when he found him, and next morning set Ada's broken thigh, though at first he thought her leg would have to be amputated.

I shall always remember that morning, and the mental agony we boys endured as we heard the poor child's shrill screams and moaning sobs, as the fractured bone was being put in splints—there were no anæsthetics, like chloroform, in those days, to be obtained in our district, or if there were, Dr. Armstrong, who was an ex-army surgeon, knew nothing of them. Then, in the afternoon, when she had awakened from the slumber born of pain and exhaustion, and Ted and I were seated in the passage outside mother's bedroom door, blubbering, we heard her voice asking for "Will and Jim and Ted" (I was always "Will" to Ada). It sounded like heaven to us. Our mother opened the door and let us in, holding up a warning finger the while, as she bade us in a whisper not to stay more than a minute; then she closed the door.

Ada put out her arms to us, and a smile lit up her pale face, which seemed to have grown old, haggard, and thin, like that of a woman of seventy.

"I'll soon be well again," she said, as Jim stooped and put his cheek against hers. "Dr. Armstrong says I'm not going to die. Will dear, so poor Sailor Boy is dead?"

I nodded, unable to speak when I saw the tears welling up into her eyes, for she loved the poor colt, and it was easy to see that she was thinking more of the dead horse than of her own sufferings. Just then my father's heavy footstep sounded outside, and Ada, who smelt danger to us, turned to mother.

"Mother dear, *do* ask father not to beat them. Tell him it was my own fault . . . and if he beats the poor boys I shall cry all night."

Father's rough knuckles tapped at the door. "Tell the boys to come out."

Our mother motioned us to remain where we were for the moment, then opened the door, and we heard her pleading with my father. It was in vain, and in another minute we were in the passage standing before father, who, booted and spurred, stood in the centre, his legs apart, and his left hand stroking his enormous grey beard; in his right hand was a stiff-plaited green-hide riding-whip—almost as bad to look at and to feel as Mr. Blackwood's terrible supplejack. His deep-set, clear eyes regarded us steadily for a few moments from under the thick, bushy eyebrows; then, raising his whip, he pointed the way out.

"Go down to the bottom of the calf-paddock, boys," he said, as quietly as if he were telling us to come to dinner.

The calf-paddock was an enclosure of five or six acres,

in which the milkers' calves were kept, and when he said "the bottom" our hearts sank in our boots—our thrashing at such a distance from the house meant that it would be a severe one; and indeed he intended it to be, but being a thoughtful man, and Ada having to be considered, he was taking us to a place whence our howls could not be heard. We marched down to the appointed spot, and Jim and Ted at once took off their coats."

"Father," I said, as I slowly followed suit in a very unenthusiastic manner, "Ada said she hoped you would not beat us."

He looked at me with such contempt, that, coward as I was, my cheeks flushed, and even Jim and Ted scowled at me.

"Who put Ada on Sailor Boy?" he asked.

"I did, dad," said Jim, "the chesnut mare has a sore back, and so I thought Ada could ride Sailor Boy."

"You boys have broken your sister's thigh, and lost me a colt worth ten pounds, if he was worth sixpence. Ada is like to be a cripple for life, and I shall have to pay the doctor twenty pounds and keep him here for a couple of weeks. I forgive you the loss of the colt, and the twenty quid for the doctor, but I can't forgive you Ada's broken leg."

Then grasping Jim by the collar of his shirt, he gave him a fearful thrashing. Ted (who had managed to secure a leather strap on the way down, and was holding it between his teeth) then stepped forward manfully, and took his punishment without a cry, and then, trembling with pain as he was, held out the strap to me.

"Take it, Billy," he gasped, "and bite hard. I ought to have given it to Jim, but I forgot."

My father whipped it out of his hand, and then looked

at me so fiercely and yet so contemptuously, that, child as I was, I felt a keen, heartburning shame.

“Jim and Ted have the making of men in them,” he said; “*you* are a crawler, and ought to have been a girl. If you had not told me what Ada said, I’d have let you off easy, but now——”

And then he gave me, with the strap, a beating that made me sore for a month. But it did me good, and although at the time I thought that he was brutally severe, in later years I learned to judge and appreciate his motives better. He was a rough, hard man in many respects, but he was a *man* above all things, and I have no doubt but that my appeal to him for pity stirred and disgusted him to the utmost. His was a strong self-reliant nature; he abhorred above all things a lie, and, next to that, physical or moral cowardice. His code of honour was very simple, but those who knew him well, knew that under his rude, uncultured manner and slow, drawling speech there was the soul and spirit of a gentleman—one who would scorn to do, or even think of doing, anything that was wrong and dishonourable.

* * * * *

A few days after the “papa” and “mamma” episode I set off in my boat to look at some tallow-wood trees at a place called Halligan’s Gap. Ada came with me, as she wanted to collect some orchids, which were very plentiful in the scrub around the Gap. I must mention that although Dr. Armstrong had set her broken thigh very well, it was found that she had sustained some injury to her hip-bone, for which he could do nothing, and from the day she rose from her bed she had to use a crutch, and would have to use one all her life. This terrible affliction—for it was terrible to a child of her energetic disposition—had not made her petulant or

irritable as it would have made some children, but, on the contrary, had brought out to the full all her natural cheerfulness and sweetness of disposition. At the time of my escapade with Mary Dick, although she was almost heartbroken with grief and terror, she kept poor mother's heart up, and never for one moment gave way, and indeed she was, as father said, not a ray of sunshine in the house, but "fifty rays lashed together, and every one of 'em shimmerin' with smiles."

I pulled in to a little sandy beach near Halligan's Gap, and then lit a fire to boil a billy of tea, when Ada drew my attention to a horseman on the bluff above us.

"It is Lieutenant Waller," said Ada. "I wonder what he is doing here," and then her face flushed. "Oh, Will, look, there is Fan, too."

Sure enough my sister Fan now appeared, cantering along the grassy slope of the bluff. Mr. Waller helped her off her horse, and we saw them embrace. Then Ada turned her face away, and her big grey eyes met mine with a troubled look. I said nothing, but was thinking a good deal.

This Lieutenant Waller was a nephew of Captain De Lisle, our police magistrate, and had been staying in the town for some months. He was a remarkably handsome man, but a thorough-paced *roué* and gambler, and his intrigues with three or four young women of the district, which he carried on in the most shameless manner, rendered him an object of aversion to a great many people, among whom was my father. When he first came to the port he was his uncle's guest, but his mode of life soon disgusted Captain De Lisle, and they had parted bad friends, the younger man taking up his quarters at Micky Hoolan's public-house, where he found much congenial society, male and female. His

regiment was in India, whence he had come to Australia on leave.

After Ada and I had drunk our tea and eaten some beef and damper, I set out to mark the tallow-wood trees that were to be felled, whilst Ada went into the under-scrub to look for orchids. We met at our camping place about three o'clock, and as we had plenty of time, decided to wait for another hour until the tide turned, so that I should not have to pull against the stream.

We were sitting under the shade of some wattle trees, watching a school of mullet at play in the smooth water at our feet, when presently Lieutenant Waller and my sister came trotting along the beach, laughing and talking with great animation. Suddenly they caught sight of the boat, then of ourselves, and Fan pulled up short with an exclamation of dismay. Then she said a few hurried words to her companion, and came up to us with a set smile of pleasure on her beautiful face.

"Just fancy you children being here," she said affably; "when did you come? This morning!" Then she asked me when we were going back home. I replied, "Presently, as soon as the tide turns."

"Oh, then you'll be home before me." She paused a moment, and then bending over in her saddle towards me, said, with assumed carelessness, "You needn't tell father that you saw Mr. Waller and me."

"I won't tell him," I answered somewhat sullenly, "unless he asks me if I saw you."

Her black eyes flashed angrily, and she raised her whip as if she would strike me. She had a vile temper, and could never control herself when she was angry, but she saw danger in my eye, and by an effort restrained herself.

Don't be silly. He won't ask you—and I don't

want him to know that I met Mr. Waller. You won't tell, Ada darling, will you?"

She had never before used the endearing word "darling" to Ada within my memory, and it stung me into resentment when I saw that the poor child's face was a burning red, and her hands trembling.

"Leave Ada alone," I said roughly, "leave her alone; and take your chances."

Mr. Waller, who had dismounted, strolled up to us, and Fan shot him a swift glance. He took a sovereign from his pocket, and caught my hand. "There, take that, Billy, and keep your mouth shut."

His sneering, patronising manner made me boil. I thrust his hand away angrily, and turning my back on them both, told Ada that it was time for us to start for home.

Fan swung her horse round in front of me. "You uncouth, freckled-faced cub! How *dare* you be so rude to Mr. Waller!"

"A trouncing would do you good, my fine fellow," drawled Waller, as he puffed at his cigar.

"You are more likely to get one than I am, if my father knows Fan is meeting you," I retorted, now thoroughly aroused, for by this time Ada was crying softly to herself. "And you can keep your sovereigns to yourself."

Then with Ada clinging tremblingly to my arm, we went down to the boat, got in and set off home. She scarcely spoke a word during the time she was in the boat, and I could see that she was deeply distressed. She was passionately fond of Fan, and was shocked at her duplicity, for she—and indeed all of us—knew that father's anger would be something terrible if he knew that Fan had met Waller clandestinely.

We walked up to the house. It was Saturday, and work had ceased at the mill. Father rode up just as we arrived, and asked mother for a cup of tea. He had been out with Paddy Minogue looking for some strayed bullocks, and as he stretched out his huge figure in a lounge chair, and took off his spurs and leggings, he seemed unusually tired and quiet. He nodded to me, drew Ada to him for a moment and kissed her pale face, and then sat smoking and stroking his long beard meditatively. Ada sat on the verandah beside him, and leant her head against his knee.

"See any cattle about the Gap, Billy?" he asked.

"No."

"Meet any one?"

I pretended not to hear this question, having suddenly discovered that my boots were full of sand, but it was of no use. When I looked up again his steely, deep-set eyes were looking into mine.

"Did you meet any one?"

He spoke very slowly and distinctly, and Ada bent her head. My eyes fell before his stern, searching glance. I nodded.

"A lady and gentleman, Billy?"

"Yes, father."

"Did they see you and Ada?"

"Yes."

"Speak to you?"

"Yes."

He did not question me any further, but stroking Ada's fair head gently with his huge leg-of-mutton hand for a moment or two, bade her go inside, as she looked tired. Then he rose and paced to and fro on the verandah, and I noticed with something like fear that his rugged, sun-tanned face seemed to have

paled. Then he walked quietly away towards the town.

Fan came home just before dusk—alone—her cavalier having judiciously returned to his hotel by another route.

We had our evening meal as usual, father at one end of the table, mother at the other, and were almost finished before Fan came in, serenely cool and magnificent.

“I’ve been all the way to Comeroi Creek,” she said languidly (she had not been within twenty miles of it); “the country is looking very well out there.”

“Is it?” said father quietly; then, turning to the rest of us, “Jim, Ted, Billy, and you Ada, you can leave the table. I want to talk business with your mother. You can stay, Fan, as you haven’t begun yet.”

Both Ada and I knew what was coming as we all trooped out and the door was closed behind us. Ada at once went to her room, Ted and Jim, who knew nothing of the matter, into the kitchen to get their fishing-tackle, for they were going out for the night, and I to the yard to close the fowl-house door, which I saw was open. The evening was very calm and quiet, and as I passed round the end of the verandah I was arrested by the sound of my father’s voice coming from the open window of the dining-room. It sounded so clearly through the night, that I could not help over-hearing every word of what was said.

“I have sent your brothers and sister away so that I could speak to you alone,” said the deep voice. “Where have you been nearly all day, Fan?”

“Oh, don’t be angry, papa—father, I mean. Comeroi is really a very long ride.”

I heard the sound of a chair being pushed back, and

I looked in. Father had risen, and with his hands on his hips was looking at Fan; mother, with her hands clasped together, was gazing at him with a white and terrified face. Fan I could not see from where I stood.

“Were you really at Comeroi Creek all day?” began the slow, questioning voice again.

“Of course I was,” was the steadily-spoken reply.

“And you went nowhere else?”

“I went nowhere else—I swear it”—defiantly.

“When did you see Mr. Waller last?”

“To-day.”

“Where?”

“I really don’t recollect—he passed me somewhere in the town.”

“Speak to him?”

“I just said ‘Good morning.’”

Father laughed in a manner that was new to me; then his next words cut like the lash of a stock-whip.

“You are a liar. You did not go to Comeroi Creek, for I and Paddy Minogue saw you and Mr. Waller riding along the track two miles from Halligan’s Gap. And I know that you got a letter from him yesterday, but I did not think you would be so false to your mother and to me and so reckless of your own reputation as to meet this man after I had warned you not to do so. You have put yourself on the same level now as Mattie Casey and the other creatures with whom this man associates. He is a vicious, damned blackguard, and *you*, nineteen years of age, and knowing as well as I do that he is what he is, can lower yourself and insult the mother who bore you by meeting such a scoundrel, who will make a jest of you. Now listen to me——”

There was a pause, and I could hear my own heart thumping.

“More than two weeks ago I met Lieutenant Waller, and I spoke to him about you—you, my daughter—and I told him quietly that I had forbidden you to have anything to do with him. And I asked him as man to man, and as your father, if he thought it was a square, honourable thing for a man like he was to meddle with a young girl like you—a girl who he would no more think of marrying than he would think of coming to me and asking for a job at the mill. And he swore that he was sorry, and said that as I felt so sore over the matter he would not put himself in your way again. And then we shook hands over it. . . . Do you understand? *We shook hands*. I thought then that after all there was some good in him—that he was a *man* at heart. Now I know him to be a paltry liar and sneak, and he has made you a liar and a sneak too. To-night I am going to give him a thrashing. Go to bed!”

“Oh, for God’s sake, Henry, spare her!” cried my mother. “See, she has fainted.”

“Then see to her.” He put on his hat, lit his pipe, and left the house.

An hour later he knocked at the door of Captain De Lisle’s house. The old magistrate was in his study reading.

“I’ve given your nephew a hell of a thrashing, Captain,” he said simply, as he sat down. “I had to do it—for my daughter’s sake. He gave me his word of honour as a gentleman that he would not meet her. He lied, and has made her lie to me.”

“The damned scoundrel! Did you give it to him properly?”

“He won’t be able to show his face for a month. He had no chance with me, although he’s clever enough, too, with his hands.”

“I’m sorry the fellow ever put his legs under my table, Breachley, and I sympathise with you. Have a glass of grog with me?” He touched a bell. “By the way, Breachley, are you going to give me one of those kangaroo pups?”

Captain De Lisle was a gentleman from the top of his shiny bald head to his toes. After my father and he had chatted for half an hour, he walked down to our house with him.

In the middle of the street Sergeant Finnegan met them. He stared at my father.

“Mr. Waller is very badly hurted, sir,” he began.

“Well?” and Captain De Lisle spoke so sharply that the Sergeant hardly knew how to go on.

“I thought, sir, that—I was thinking, sir, that maybe ye didn’t know, and——”

“Don’t be so damned officious, Finnegan. Go home and turn in.”

CHAPTER VI

I LEAVE HOME AND MAKE A NEW FRIEND

ERE three months had passed an event occurred that changed the whole tenor of my life. Captain De Lisle was thrown from his horse while kangaroo hunting, much to the grief of every one in the district, for he was truly a loveable old man, a gentleman, sportsman, and "white man" to the backbone. Even the rough timber-getters—and timber-getters in our part were a fearfully rough lot, and nearly all fighting men—had a sincere and solid respect for the man who, when any one of them had "smashed" his monthly cheque at Micky Hoolan's "pub.," and was suffering from visions of weird dogs with flaming eyes—which pursued them as an after-effect of Micky's grog—was always ready with an admonition—and a sovereign or two. My father especially felt his loss very deeply, though it was not in his nature to show it, outside of our own family circle.

The morning after the accident Paddy Minogue rode up to our house. He was dressed with unusual care, and his dark, Spanish-like face was set and grave as he shook hands with my parents, who invited him inside, where he remained talking with them for about ten minutes.

Presently my mother came out to us—Ted, Jim, and

myself—and told us to put on our Sunday clothes, as father was taking us up to see Captain De Lisle. In a few minutes we were dressed, and with father and Paddy Minogue walking in front, arrived at “Government Cottage,” as the dead magistrate’s house was called.

I can never forget that morning. It is impressed upon my memory as long as I live. It was the first time I had ever seen a dead man.

Captain De Lisle was of a Catholic family, and so we were not surprised to find that Mrs. Finnegan, the sergeant’s wife (herself an Irishwoman) conducted us to the room in which the body lay. She was a very handsome woman, and when she saw Patrick Minogue her face paled, and then flushed deeply, but without a word she ushered us in and then withdrew.

Standing beside the bed in his full uniform, with his white-gloved hands on the hilt of his sword, was Sergeant Finnegan. He saluted as we entered, and then, turning his face away, gazed stolidly at the door.

My father, as he bent his bulky frame over the still figure on the bed, motioned to my brothers and myself to approach.

“A good man, boys; a good, straight, clean-living man,” he whispered, “honest and upright, and a gentleman.” Then he gently touched the cold, pale forehead with his rough hand and stood erect.

“O, Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?” he muttered.

Ted and I looked at the dead face—Jim, big and rough as he was, was afraid—and in a way we understood what father meant. The once round, florid face with the fierce, angry blue eyes, and the thick white moustache, was now white, calm, and placid, and the thin, sinewy right hand, which had waved a sword on many

a bloody field in India, now clasped a little tawdry crucifix which Julia Finnegan, poor sinner, had placed there.

Oh, the grand, great majesty that Death so often imprints upon the faces of men like Captain De Lisle when they die old! It sweetens and glorifies them with the light of the peace eternal; and the horror and dread of the grave and the thought of the corruption of our mortal bodies vanish from the mind of the beholder who gazes upon them.

Hat in hand, Patrick Minogue stepped on tiptoe to the foot of the bed, and then knelt and prayed silently for some minutes. Then he rose and was about to leave the room, when Finnegan spoke in a low voice.

“Shure, he died a bewtiful death—just bruk his neck clane acrost, and widout wan second’s pain, I’m thinkin’. An’ a foiner rider nivver put fut in a stirrup—not even yoursilf, Minogue, an’ you’re wan av the best in the country.”

We were amazed to hear the sergeant speak in so friendly a tone to his enemy, for I well knew the real secret of the deadly hatred they bore to each other. Minogue himself felt affected, and his sallow features flushed deeply.

“Ye’re a good man, wid a foine light hand on a horse yourself, Sergeant,” he said, speaking almost in a whisper; and then he slowly put out his hand.

“I’ll be going now, I’m thinkin’, Sergeant; an’ as I’m lavin’ the place altogether to-morrow maybe you’ll shake hands.”

Their hands met, and then Paddy walked out of the room.

On the following morning he came to wish us goodbye, and told us he was going to Victoria to live. He gave

no reasons, but I think that he acted on an honourable impulse, and that when he asked the sergeant to shake hands he then and there made up his mind never to see Julia Finnegan again.

When Captain De Lisle's will was read it was found that my father was one of the executors, and that Ada had been left a hundred pounds. The other executor was his brother, also a Captain De Lisle, who was a retired military man, and was living in Queensland, where he owned a cattle station on the Burnett River. About a month after the funeral he came to town to meet father and help wind up his brother's affairs, and remained for two or three weeks, during which time he was a frequent visitor at our house.

He took much interest in father's timber business, and one day told him that he was certain that there were vast quantities of splendid cedar on many of the Northern Queensland rivers, and that a fortune awaited any one who would go into the enterprise and take up a party of men; for cedar, even in those days, brought a big price. Finally, he offered to put five hundred pounds into the venture if my father would provide a similar sum and undertake the management of the business. The end of it was that, although father could not go himself, he decided to send Ted and me with a party of six men to explore the rivers mentioned by Captain De Lisle. I was nearly off my head with delight when, a week later, we sailed with Captain De Lisle for Sydney.

One of us was to return to report to father, if possible, within three months.

We sailed from Sydney in a brig named the *Lady Denton* (Captain Laing). She was engaged in the *bêche-de-mer* fishery in the Great Barrier Reef, and her captain agreed with Captain De Lisle to land our party

at the mouth of what is now known as the Daintree River. It was at that time unnamed, and even its existence was known to but half a dozen people, none of whom, however, had explored it further than three or four miles from its mouth, for the blacks were in great numbers, and very dangerous.

Captain De Lisle, whose home on the Burnett was eight hundred miles from the Daintree, did not come with us, as he was returning by one of the few steamers which then traded between Sydney and the Queensland ports. He, however, took especial care that our party of eight—six timber-getters and Ted and myself—were well supplied with provisions for twelve months and arms and ammunition.

The day before the brig sailed he came on board, gave Ted, who was our leader, his final instructions, and presented every one of us with new double-barrelled guns by the best English makers. Then he made us a short but forcible address, pointing out to us that we should be living for many months in a very dangerous and unknown country, quite cut off from civilisation, and in the midst of the most ferocious and cannibal blacks in Australia. Then the climate was to be guarded against, for on the littoral of the northern seaboard malarial fever was very bad, and he had seen even the blacks succumb to it. He had, however, provided us with an ample supply of medicines, and he then gave us details of how and where to make our camp, especially warned us to remember that although Ted was the youngest but one of our party, he was our leader, and that dissension would lead very probably to our entire destruction. On the other hand, he said, he felt confident that we should loyally obey our leader, and stick to each other, and try, if possible, to avoid

an encounter with the blacks. "You are," he said, in conclusion, "being paid not only big wages, but will have a share in the profits, which will be large. Now, that is all I have to say. Goodbye and good luck." Then he shook hands with each of us and went ashore.

We sailed at sunrise next morning with a westerly breeze and every one in the highest spirits, and at six o'clock were outside Sydney Heads and into the deep blue of the wide Pacific. The sun shone bright in a cloudless sky, and the chill west wind—it was in June, and our Australian winter—though it was fresh and strong, was bracing and invigorating as it sent the brig swiftly over a smooth sea.

For so small a vessel—two hundred and fifty tons—the *Lady Denton*, carried a rather large crew of thirteen white men, and was armed like one of the old-time Letters of Marque; for the *bêche-de-mer* industry on the islands of the Great Barrier was fraught with danger, inasmuch as the aboriginals who collected the nasty-looking but valuable sea-slug, had a trick of occasionally turning on the white crews, murdering them, and then looting and burning the ships. Captain Laing, however, was a veteran at the business, and the *Lady Denton* was a very fortunate ship, for he had a great influence over the savages whom he employed, and beyond losing an occasional member of his crew, had never met with any serious disaster. He himself was the *beau idéal* of a sailor—I mean of a British or an American sailor, for, except Scandinavians, who are as good as ourselves, one does not count foreigners as sailor-men, although here and there you will to-day meet a Frenchman or an Italian foremast hand who is good enough. His officers were all old hands in the *bêche-de-mer* trade, and had sailed with him for over

ten years, and the crew were British-born to a man; not one of them said "Ja" for "Yes." They were a terribly rough lot ashore, and when I saw them first they showed very strong evidences of having had a lively time, for there was scarcely one that had not a black eye, whilst some had two, and would have had ten had there been more eyes to blacken. As soon as we were clear of Sydney Heads, the captain, who had a delightful sense of humour peculiarly his own, together with a really kind disposition, called them aft. Like Laing and his officers, they were nearly all men past the prime of life—as far as appearances went—except one, of whom I shall have much to tell, for he became a true and trusted comrade to me.

They ranged up on the main deck, facing the skipper, who stood at the break of the poop smoking a cigar and stroking his carefully-trimmed, short Vandyke beard. He was a little man, but a perfect model of strength and symmetry, with very handsome features, and I at once conceived an ardent admiration for him—which deepened when I knew him better.

"Waal, boys"—he was a Nova Scotian, and spoke with a strong American twang—"waal, boys, you've all turned up I see; and a darned sick-looking lot you are. You never were very pretty at the best of times, even in your Sunday go-to-meeting clothes, but I just want you to see how you look *now*. Steward."

The steward, who was standing near him holding a large looking-glass, stepped down the poop-ladder and marched along the front of the battered seamen, holding the glass closely to each man's face in turn. They took the joke with a sort of sullen good-humour.

"There, just look at yourselves, my beautics," continued the captain softly; "don't you feel proud now

of having made such damned beasts of yourselves? I don't suppose you can rake up twenty shillings among the lot of you. What you haven't spent on snake-juice the Totties and Flossies have taken, and are boozing it away with the bullies and spielers who helped them to clean you out, you silly fools. Now look here—no lying, mind—did you bring any grog aboard with you?"

There was a shuffling of feet, and some of the men turned to each other and muttered.

"Oh, of course you have. Now, you, Shafter, and you, Sandy, just go for'ard and bring me that grog aft. Look sharp."

Two of the men went into the foc'sele, and returned with five bottles of grog.

"Is that all, boys—honest?"

"That's all, sir," replied one of the men.

"Over the side with it, then."

The five bottles were thrown overboard without hesitation—they knew what was coming.

"Now I'll give you something good to drink—not hell boiled down into a pint—though you don't deserve it. Steward, five bottles of Martell's brandy. That'll do, lads—go for'ard."

Captain Laing knew his men—and they knew and respected him. The steward took them five bottles of good, honest brandy, and they opened and drank one. The rest they placed in the care of the boatswain. Had the skipper merely served them with a nip each, after throwing their five bottles of poison overboard, they would have been discontented and grumbled; in giving them an equal quantity of good liquor, and trusting to them not to get drunk on it immediately, he appealed to their sense of honour. Had any one of them abused this confidence, he would have had a bad time—not

only would Captain Laing have "hazed" him most mercilessly, but his own shipmates would have rounded on him as "a dirty dog."

The one young man—or rather youth—among them, of whom I have spoken, had attracted my attention the moment I saw him. He was so strikingly handsome, and presented so strong a contrast to the rest of the crew when they stood together under the break of the poop, that I could see that the captain, who never appeared to notice anything, was surveying him keenly under his half-closed eyelids as he smoked his cigar.

Not more than twenty-one years of age—although he looked three or four years older at a first glance—his clearly-cut, smooth oval features were so absolutely faultless in their outlines, and so deeply bronzed by exposure to tropic suns, that the natural darkness of complexion was so intensified that I at first thought he had black blood in his veins. He was dressed in the blue jacket and trousers of an officer in the merchant service, and I could see the marks of where the two narrow bands of gold lace had once encircled the cuffs. The brass buttons of his jacket had also been removed and replaced by ones of common black horn. His hair, wavy and black as jet, showed beneath a ragged felt hat, and as he stood in line with the rest of the crew, with his shapely brown hands clasped loosely one over the other, head back and shoulders squared, he looked the personification of youthful strength and beauty. Once he had turned his face towards the poop, and as he saw Ted and myself staring hard at him, a slight smile parted his lips, and we instantly felt pleased.

Half an hour later, as my brother and myself were showing the captain the beautiful guns given to us by Captain De Lisle the steward entered the cabin, and

said that "the new hand" wanted to know if he could have something from the slop-chest.

"Ay, ay, come in, sonny," replied the captain.

The "new hand" was, of course, the young fellow in whom we were so interested. He entered the cabin hat in hand, and Laing asked him what he wanted.

"An all-round rig-out, sir, if you please," he said politely.

The ship's articles were lying on the cabin table, and the captain slowly drew them towards him and glanced at a name thereon.

"All right, my lad. Let me see. Oh, here you are. 'Harry Brandon.'" Then he turned in his chair and looked the youth in the face. "I hear you were fourth mate on the *Earl of Dalhousie*. What made you leave such a good employ to ship as a foremast hand in this brig?"

Brandon's black eyebrows knit together for an instant, and his dark face flushed angrily.

"My discharge is a good one, sir," he said pointedly.

The skipper sat bolt upright, and his quiet eyes fixed upon the young man's face.

"I did not say your discharge was not a good one. I asked you a question; there is no need for you to answer it if you don't care to do so."

In a moment Brandon's face changed. "Thank you, sir. I left the *Earl of Dalhousie* because her captain asked me to do so; he said that if I did not he would make me sorry for it. That is all, sir."

Laing eyed him for a moment, but not in an unfriendly manner. "Waal, I hope I won't have to ask you to leave my ship, my lad. Now just get what you want from the steward."

Brandon raised his hand and saluted, and followed

the steward into the store-room. In about ten minutes he came out again, carrying a bundle of seamen's clothing—such as were worn by the rest of the crew—flannel and cotton shirts, dungaree pants, a suit of oilskins, and a pair of sea-boots. He went on deck, down into the foc'stle, changed his clothes, and presently reappeared, dressed in a cotton shirt and blue dungaree pants. In his hands he carried the blue coat, vest, and trousers which he had worn. I had noticed that they were made of superfine cloth, and, being well-cut, had fitted his figure to perfection. Stepping to the side—just for'ard of the galley—he coolly threw the garments overboard.

One of the crew, a short, square-built, and red-haired man named Shafter, who was just passing along the deck with a serving mallet and a ball of spun yarn in his hand, saw the action and laughed good-naturedly.

“Chuckin' yer brass-bound togs overboard, me lord dook, are yer? Yer don't look none too pretty though in yer noo rig——”

Brandon turned on him like a tiger. “Mind your own business, you red-headed son of a——” and then followed a torrent of imprecation and blasphemy that astounded Ted and me, used as we were to the florid language of our mill hands.

The seaman dropped his serving mallet and spun yarn in astonishment, his red beard bristling with anger. “Well, of all the out-an'-out foul-mouthed young swabs as I ever seed, you are——” He gasped for breath. . . . “I'll wring your neck, you——”

He made a straight-out-from-the-shoulder blow at Brandon, who dodged it with a low savage laugh, and then caught Shafter with his left on the chin; then, before the elder man could recover himself, a second blow took him between the eyes with such force that he

nearly went over backwards into the fore hold, the hatch of which was open.

“By the howly Moses, the young un’s fit fur him!” delightedly yelled Larry Hale, one of our timber-getters. “Sthand aside every wan of yez an’ give ’em room.” In less than two minutes the deck was cleared; Larry Hale constituted himself Brandon’s second, and another of our men, named Lawson, acted for the red-haired sailor. On the poop deck, Captain Laing and his two mates stood and watched with amused interest.

The “new hand” was now apparently quite cool and collected, and when he whipped off his coarse cotton shirt and stood stripped to the waist, the rough timber-getters and equally rough crew of the brig gave a murmur of admiration—for young as he was, he showed the physique and tough, hard muscles of a fully-grown man. There was no bravado about him—nothing but a dull gleam in the dark eyes, a look which I came to know well in after-years. Shafter, disdainful to take off his shirt, and almost furious at the good-humoured jests of his shipmates and the timber-getters, turned his head for a moment, and looked aft at the captain.

The captain drew his cigar from his lips. “Oh, that’s all right, Shafter. If he wants to fight you, let him. Better come aft here on the main-deck; more room.”

Followed by the crew and the timber-men, Brandon and Shafter presently faced each other on the port side of the main hatch, with their seconds behind them. Then Brandon turned and said something to the boat-swain.

“What’s the matter?” inquired the captain sharply.

“He says the main-hatch is open, sir.”

“What the devil does that matter to him?” said Laing; “there’s plenty of room.” Then, addressing

Brandon, he inquired sarcastically if he would like the hatches put on, and a few velvet-covered chairs from the cabin brought on deck.

“No, thank you, sir,” replied the youth—and the skipper’s handsome face flushed at the mocking, contemptuous tone of his voice; “but as we nearly went over into the forehold just now, I asked the boatswain to put on the main-hatches.”

The captain threw up his hand impatiently. “Go ahead, never mind the hatches, and don’t talk.”

The fight was the quickest I ever saw—and I have seen a good many. Shafter, who was as strong as a bullock, had as much science as a cow, and in less than two minutes Brandon hit him fair and square in the mouth, and sent him over the coamings of the main-hatch into the hold. When he was brought on deck, he was unconscious, and had two broken ribs, for he had fallen across something harder than himself.

Captain Laing had the injured man placed in a bunk in the deck-house, and at once attended to him. As he was going aft again, he noticed Brandon, who was helping the carpenter with some job on the main-deck.

“You’ve nearly killed that man,” he said.

Brandon stood up and touched his cap with a pretended humility, but yet without offensiveness.

“I am very sorry, sir. I did not mean to hurt him. As you will remember, sir, I called your attention to the fact of the main-hatch being open.”

The skipper drew his hand across his mouth to hide a smile.

CHAPTER VII

BRANDON GOES OFF HIS HEAD

WE made a very quick run along the coast to the Percy Islands off Broad Sound, among which we ran in and anchored to pick up the "Black Contingent," *i.e.*, the nigger* ladies and gentlemen who always joined the ship to proceed with her to the *bêche-de-mer* fishery. They were pure, unmitigated savages, but could be trusted at any rate not to turn on the white men when so far away from their own home and attempt to cut off the brig. There were about sixty of them all told—old men, young bucks, women and children. Every one of them was stark naked, and every one smelt aloud and with great violence of that pungent ant-like odour peculiar to the Australian nigger; when they gathered together on the main-deck hatch and stank collectively, it was awful—enough, Brandon said, to blister the paint-work. Most of them were old employees of our skipper, and they greeted him with vociferous applause when he threw them two or three pounds of tobacco, and for decency's sake gave the women a bagful of men's worn-out trousers.

We put to sea the same day, running between the

* In using the term "nigger," instead of "black fellow" or "black," I adopt the Queensland expression for aboriginal.

Swain Reefs till we were outside the Great Barrier, then laid a northerly course for Trinity Opening, where we arrived two weeks later.

The brig was a very old vessel, having been built at Havre-de-Grace in 1820, but she was a wonderful sailer, and as sound as a bell, and in after-years, when I came to read Herman Melville's "Omoo" in that chapter describing the old whaler *Julia*, I fancied I was once more on board the *Lady Denton*; the two were so alike as regards their sailing qualities. Melville, after speaking of the rotten condition of the barque's standing and running gear, says: "But all this had nothing to do with her sailing; at that, brave Little Jule, plump Little Jule, was a witch. Blow high, or blow low, she was always ready for the breeze, and when she dashed the waves from her prow, and pranced and pawed the sea, you never thought of her patched sails and blistered hull. How the fleet creature would fly before the wind! rolling now and then, to be sure, but in very playfulness. Sailing to windward, no gale could bow her over; with spars erect, she looked right up into the wind's eye, and so she went."

Hitherto my sea experience had been confined to a few days' trip along the coast in one of my father's small chartered ketches or topsail schooners, and the *Lady Denton* to me was quite a big ship. At my own request, I stood watch with the mate, for already I began to have a sneaking inclination for a sailor's life, and both Captain Laing and the mate seemed rather pleased, while young Brandon, with whom I had now struck up a great friendship, one day told me that if I were only remaining longer on board he would teach me navigation. I was not surprised that he had a knowledge of navigation, for he had evidently received an

excellent education, and from something he let drop one day, I was sure his parents were people of position.

He of course lived in the fore'style with the rest of the crew, who seemed to have taken a liking to him, despite his occasional outbursts of temper, for he never shirked his duty nor attempted to put on airs of superiority. Even his former antagonist, Shafter—who was a good-hearted fellow—bore him no malice for his two broken ribs, for during the time he was laid up Brandon waited on him like a nurse, and on many occasions, when it was his watch below, he would sit beside the red-haired sailor and read to him, cut up his tobacco, and do many other little things. Quick, alert, and obedient to the captain and mates' orders, he yet never attempted to speak to them except when spoken to, though the rest of the crew, from having so long sailed under their command, addressed them with a certain respectful familiarity. Twice—after having asked the captain's permission—I wanted him to come into the main cabin and play draughts. He refused point-blank, though without discourtesy.

“I'm a foremast hand, Bill. I'd like to go well enough, and be clear of this stinking fore'style for an hour or two, but it won't do. The men would think that I wanted to do a bit of crawling, and would not hesitate to say so. Then there would be a row, and I'd get a licking perhaps.”

Captain Laing was naturally an uncommunicative man, and when I said that Harry did not care about coming into the cabin, he merely nodded; but I am sure he thought all the more of him for refusing. He, however, suggested that Ted and I could take the draughts into the deck-house. This we did, and then Brandon played many games with us and some of our men.

One night, during the mate's watch on deck, Brandon was on the look-out, where I joined him. The sea was very smooth, and the brig was running with squared yards before a warm and gentle south-east breeze. So quiet was the night, and so steady the wind, that there was scarce a sound to be heard, except the breathing of the Black Contingent lying huddled up together on the main-hatches. Overhead, the pale silver of a waning moon shone dimly beside the diamond lights of myriad stars in a cloudless firmament of deepest blue.

For some minutes we paced to and fro on the short topgallant foc'stle without speaking, Brandon, however, keeping a bright look-out ahead. Then, taking his pipe from his mouth, he stuck it in his belt, and began to talk.

"I wonder, Billy, if your brother would let me join your party?"

I started with pleasure. It was the very thing I most desired—next to a wish that had gradually but strongly grown in my heart to remain on board the brig as one of the ship's company.

"I'm sure he would, Harry. But," I added, after a moment's thought, "would Captain Laing agree? You're on the articles."

"That's the trouble, and I don't think the skipper *would* agree to my leaving the ship if I asked him. But"—and here he smiled in a way that I did not like—"I can get *him* to ask *me* to leave."

"How will you do that?"

"Oh, easily enough—leave it to me. But you are sure that your brother won't round on me and tell me that he doesn't want me?"

"I'm sure he won't," I replied. "Ted likes you, and only the other day he said that he wished you were coming ashore with us."

Brandon nodded. "Then it's settled. Not much longer shall I chew the salt horse and the untoothsome biscuit on the good ship *Lady Denton*. The sailor's life, William, is a disgusting and uninspiring one to a youth of my remarkable talents."

He spoke with such a lazy, half-mocking inflexion in his voice, that I hardly knew whether he was in earnest or not.

"Harry," I said suddenly, "there is one thing I must tell you. Ted is a terror for work, and makes the men work as hard as he does himself. If he saw me trying to shuffle out of my fair share of graft he'd 'haze' me, as you call it. Father is just the same."

Brandon laughed, and slapped me on the shoulder. "That's all right, Billy. You'll find me a good mate, and in a week or two after we get ashore I'll be able to use an axe as well as yourself. I wouldn't like Ted to fall foul of me—he's a pretty rough sort of a joker, I imagine, when he is put out."

"He is," I said, with undisguised pride. "Only Paddy Minogue could best him with the gloves; Captain De Lisle taught him his science. But he thinks a lot of your style, Harry, and told us the day you sent Shafter down the hatch that you were the quickest man with your left he ever had seen. And all our mill-hands are fighting men. There's always a fight or two on the beach on Sunday mornings."

"What a lovely little village! Billy, I'll go with you some day and witness these Sabbath-day recreations on the shining sands, the while the church bells call the sinners to repentance—you have a church there, I suppose?"

"Yes, and a jolly good old parson, and an Irish priest—Father Ryan—comes there sometimes to hold

Mass in the big room of Hoolan's 'pub.' He used to be a soldier, and he and old Captain De Lisle and Paddy Minogue were the best riders in all the district."

I remained talking with him a little while longer, and then went aft, wondering how my friend would manage to leave the brig with the captain's consent. I little imagined that he had already made up his plan of action, and was about to immediately put it into effect.

At four bells he came aft to take the wheel from a seaman named Woods—a quiet, civil, and good-humoured fellow. Mr. Bone, the mate, was pacing the deck, and I was leaning over the rail, when I heard Woods say as he gave up the wheel, "North by west half-west."

Then, to my astonishment, I heard Brandon angrily ask the man for the course.

"I just told you!" said Woods in surprise.

"You did not," said the young man; "you only muttered something that I couldn't hear."

The mate turned on his heel and asked them what they were quarrelling about.

"This man has forgotten the course, sir," said Brandon coolly, "and is half asleep as well."

Poor Woods looked at him with blazing eyes. "You young beggar! I—I—I'll ——"

"That'll do now," said Mr. Bone sternly, with an angry frown at the hapless seaman, who went off, muttering under his breath, and wild with fury at being accused of a fault he had not committed.

When eight bells struck, he waited for Brandon just for'ard of the galley, and in ten seconds the pair were hard at it, surrounded by both watches. The second mate ran for'ard and parted them, but not until Woods

had a much-ensanguined nose and Brandon an eye that by daylight had turned a lovely black.

At breakfast, just as the captain had taken his seat, we heard a sound of quarrelling on deck, then blows. Presently the mate came below, and said that "that young beggar Brandon" had been fighting with a seaman named Bill Grace.

"What for?" asked the captain.

"Sheer cussedness, I think. Said that Grace purposely trod on his foot; Grace denied it, and Brandon called him a liar. I don't know what is coming over the young fellow."

We had scarcely finished breakfast before another hubbub arose on deck, and the cook came running up with a cut lip. Brandon had thrown a tin mug at his head and struck him on the mouth, accusing him of making filthy, undrinkable coffee.

"Send the men aft," said the captain angrily. They came, and he addressed Brandon, and asked him why he had attacked the cook.

"He put something in the coffee, sir," answered the young man calmly; "I think it was tobacco."

The captain turned to the rest of the crew, and inquired if they complained about the coffee. They all emphatically asserted that it was as good as usual, and that Brandon's attack on the cook was utterly unreasonable; furthermore, they said that he had tried to pick a quarrel with every one of them.

The captain eyed Brandon steadily. "Do you hear what these men say?"

"Yes, sir," he answered politely, "and I can assure you that they are telling you lies. The coffee was undrinkable; the cook must have dropped his filthy pipe into the kettle, and these men here are simply

backing him up—being of the same kidney as himself. They are, sir, individually and collectively, the greatest liars I have ever sailed with; disgustingly dirty in their habits—worse than the niggers.”

The men looked at each other and gasped with indignation, unable to speak, and even Captain Laing looked astonished at the young man's cool effrontery.

“I believe them, and I disbelieve you,” he said curtly. “I don't know what is the matter with you, but I do know that you'll get badly knocked about if you go on this tack. That'll do now; go for'ard.”

The captain's warning had no effect on Brandon, and before noon he was put in irons for fighting with another man, whom he accused without the slightest reason of having stolen his palm and needle. At supper time he was liberated, and turned to again as if nothing had happened. To the captain and mates he was almost servile in his manner; to the men he was either sullen or grossly insulting. On the following morning he appeared with both eyes blackened—the result of punishment administered to him by two of the men, whom he deliberately insulted by calling them “packet rats.” He, however, obeyed orders with his usual smartness, and the captain could find no fault with him, and began to think that he was wrong in his head.

But matters came to a climax after the brig ran in through Trinity Opening and dropped anchor off the mouth of the Daintree River, where our party was to land. One of the boats was lowered, and at once began to make water, and Brandon loudly accused one of the men of pulling out the plug before the falls were touched. In an instant there was another fight, and the captain, now out of all patience, himself struck the young fellow a blow on the side of the head which sent

him reeling across the deck. He picked himself up, and went on working with an unmoved face.

In the afternoon, and when all our men were ashore with their gear, fixing camp, Ted and I went on board to get our own effects and settle various business details with the captain. I was also especially anxious to see Harry Brandon; by this time I quite understood the reason of his extraordinarily rude and insulting behaviour to his shipmates, but I kept my own counsel. Ted, I knew, would not be a party to such deceit, for all his rough manners.

The moment we stepped on board I looked for my friend, but could not discover him, and in a few moments I heard from Mr. Money (the second mate) that he was again in irons—this time for threatening one of the hands to “do for him” when the brig put to sea again.

When I went below Captain Laing was talking to Ted, and I was not surprised to find that Brandon was the subject of their conversation. Presently the captain told the steward to tell Mr. Bone to liberate the prisoner and bring him aft.

Harry was marched below. He presented a very ruffianly appearance, for in addition to two black eyes—one of which was completely closed—his face was dirty and blood-stained, his shirt was in rags, and the peak of his cap hanging by one end down his cheek.

The captain regarded him sternly, and then spoke with a kind of pitying disgust.

“You’re the biggest young blackguard for your age that I’ve ever come across. I don’t like putting even a nigger in irons, but you have driven me to put you in irons twice. I don’t know what has come over you, but I do know that I’ll be glad to be quit of you as a darned nuisance. Now, I’ll give you your choice: Mr. Breach-

ley here says he will take you on if you like to join his party—in fact, I have asked him to take you. If you don't care about it, back you go into irons again for a week, and then after that I'll haze the life out of you. Now, make your choice quick."

"I will go with Mr. Breachley, sir," replied Brandon, looking down. "Everything that you say, sir, is quite true, and I'm very sorry for my misconduct. But I can't help it. I got sunstroke in Calcutta two years ago, and I'm afraid I'm not quite right in my head; the least thing seems to set me off."

He spoke with such apparent sincerity that Captain Laing's face softened. "Well, I'm sorry for you, my lad. You've the makings of a good sailor-man in you, and I know you are not one of the common run of foremast hands. But, at the same time, you've caused a heap of trouble, and the men, naturally enough, have taken a dead set against you, especially for threatening to murder. So it's just as well for you to clear and go ashore. There's five pounds due to you; I won't charge you for the clothes you had. There you are." He handed him five sovereigns and told him to go ashore.

"Thank you, Captain. I shall not forget your kindness to me."

There was no mistaking his sincerity this time, for he raised his face and looked steadily at the captain for a moment or two with his one available eye as he raised his hand in salute, and something like a blush mantled his forehead.

He stepped along the main-deck and went into the fore-peak, reappearing in a few minutes with his clothes tied up in a bundle. This he threw into the boat alongside, and then walked for'ard again to where the crew

were eating their supper on the fore-hatch. They looked at him with contemptuous indifference and went on with their meal.

“Shipmates, just listen to me for a minute. I’ve got the dirty kick-out, and I deserve it, for, as the skipper says, I’m the two ends and bight of a howling fool. But you chaps mustn’t be too hard on me. I got sun-struck two years ago in Calcutta, when I was in one of Brocklebank’s ships, and every now and then I go off my nut and act like a madman, never knowing what I say or do. And now that my head is getting a bit clear, and I’ve been told of what I’ve said and done, I’m sorry, damned sorry. A better lot of shipmates than you chaps I’ve never sailed with, and whatever I may have said when I had my *furors*, as the doctors call ’em, I take it all back now, and beg your pardon. Now, boys, look here. Just to show me that you bear me no ill-will for all my foul talk, I want you to take these five sovereigns from me, and when you get back to Sydney have a night with it at the ‘Harp of Erin’ in Pitt Street.”

The revulsion of feeling was so spontaneous and genuine, that Brandon must have felt ashamed of his sham penitence, especially when Woods jumped up and with rough good-nature bade him keep his money, and then asked him to sit down and have some supper.

“Not a dashed bite will I eat unless you chaps take these five yellow boys. If you don’t I’ll sling ’em over-board.”

“Well, well, lad, just as you please,” said the oldest man good-humouredly. “We allus liked you from the fust, and ’ad we knowed about your ’ead bein’ wrong at times, we’d not ha’ taken your ’ard words so bad.”

Brandon ate his supper with them while I went to

say goodbye to Shafter, who was still laid up. As I was speaking to him Brandon came in.

“Shafter, old man, I’ve got the run from the skipper. The other chaps will tell you all about it. I’ve come to say goodbye—and to give you this.”

He put a handsome silver watch with a gold Albert attached into Shafter’s hand, and ere the astonished sailor could utter a word he had gone.

CHAPTER VIII

AN ADVENTURE

EARLY on the following morning the gallant little brig loosed sails, hove up anchor, and firing a gun in farewell, stood to the northward in pursuit of her voyage, sailing inside the Great Barrier Reef.

I need not enter into much of the details of our life on shore. From the very first we were successful in finding magnificent cedar; miles and miles of it grew on both banks of the alligator-haunted river. Despite, however, all the precautions we took, several of us were down with malarial fever in less than two months, and later on we found that the best way to recover temporarily from the disease was to get plenty of sea-air. We had with us a very good whaleboat, built by Looker of Sydney, and whenever two or more of us were down with fever Ted would send them away in the boat to recruit on one of the many islands inside the Great Barrier, where a week's rest and sea-bathing would set them up again. On such occasions Brandon would always be in charge, and in Brandon we all, from my brother down, had the greatest confidence. He was always ready for work or for any service of danger, and, despite an occasional outburst of temper, was the life and soul of the party. Then, too, his seaman's training

made him very resourceful, as we soon discovered when establishing our camp, which was fixed on a bluff about two miles from the river. That our arrival was well known to the blacks of the district was made evident before the *Lady Denton* sailed, for the smoke of many signal fires was seen all along the coast, north and south for twenty miles. We therefore kept a good watch, and two men were always left in the camp when the rest of us were away in the scrub felling the giant cedars and rafting them down to the mouth of the river, where we hauled them up on the bank, out of danger of being carried to sea if heavy rains caused a flood in the river. As a further security for the camp, every tree, sapling, and bit of undergrowth was cut down within a radius of five hundred yards of the tents, so that no cover would be afforded to the treacherous niggers.

The labour of cedar-getting was terribly exhausting, for in the dense jungle and undergrowth the heated, steaming atmosphere seemed to choke and stifle one, whilst the mosquitoes—a small, jetty-black breed—were so diabolically savage, that at times we were compelled to abandon work and return to camp, where we were comparatively free of them. But despite the fever, the continuous dread of blacks, and the mosquitoes, and a particularly venomous species of dull-green tree-ants, which fell upon our bared necks and shoulders in showers from some overhanging branch, we were a happy party, and worked well together, slept like tops at night-time, and were eager for the morning. We kept no watch set after turning in, till an hour before daylight, for we knew that we need have no fear of a night attack; it is just at dawn that the niggers like to surprise a camp, when every one is sound asleep and they have daylight to use their spears.

Brandon, as I have said, possessed the confidence of every one in the camp. Yet he never in any way presumed on his popularity, and that my brother Ted, who was an uncommunicative, reserved man, thought highly of him was evident to us all; as for myself, I was filled with the most ardent admiration for him, though at times he shocked and revolted my feelings by the use of the most horrid language and blasphemy that I ever heard. I was not what would be called a squeamish lad, and was used to, and used myself, expressions and expletives that were part and parcel of my rough bringing up. The men at my father's saw-mill all swore profusely, even as a matter of good-fellowship, and there was no especial malice nor feeling engendered if one man told another to "go to hell and be damned." Such an expression was merely the local vernacular, and meant nothing offensive. More cultured persons would have said "Confound you, go to the devil"—a mere milk-and-water, tall-hat and frock-coated way of expressing annoyance, eminently suited to the conventionalities of frock-coated people, but quite out of place, and unintelligible to rough Australian mill-men, whose only knowledge or idea of the word "confound" was associated with the National Anthem, when the town became drunk on the 24th of May. "Politics" to them meant Fenians, or the Pope, or somebody or some sect with blood-stained clubs or other weapons, who wanted to murder the Queen, and set up Anti-Christ and Baal, and the Woman of Babylon and then destroy the timber industry of New South Wales in some way. Good simple-minded people! Their ignorance harmed no one, and if their language was shocking to refined ears, it possessed the direct merit of simplicity.

Brandon's oaths, however, had something terrifying

in them, and at first gave me "a chill down the back," as Ted said one day, when he reproved him for losing his temper unnecessarily over the breaking of an axe-handle.

"We're none of us very pious, Harry Brandon, but, by God, you must stop swearing like that. I won't have it."

Brandon's face changed at once. "I'm sorry, Mr. Breachley" (he always addressed Ted as "Mr. Breachley" or "Sir" when speaking in the hearing of the men), "I'll try and put a stopper on next time."

He kept his promise. That was one of his best points—he would never break his pledged word to either friend or foe, though in too many other things he had no more conscience than a rat, and we were soon to see him exhibit to the full a terrible ferocity of disposition—a ferocity that astounded and horrified us, for we had seen how he had tended Shafter on board the brig, and indeed when any one of us had an attack of fever and ague, Brandon was always a patient and tender doctor.

On the afternoon of the day when Ted had checked him for his blasphemy, four of us—Ted, Brandon, a man named Carvery, and myself, set out through the jungle on the right bank of the river, to shoot scrub-turkeys and search for their eggs, as we were getting somewhat tired of salt beef and tinned provisions, and we knew of a place, three or four miles up the river, where scrub-turkeys were plentiful. Carvery, who was a noted shot, had brought a Terry police carbine instead of a shot-gun, as he thought it was very likely we should come across a cassowary in the open country back from the river.

About three o'clock we reached a dense scrub, in which we knew that turkeys were building one of their

huge communal nests. The place was about five hundred yards from the bank of the river, the water of which was here clear and fresh, as it was above tidal influence. We soon found the nest—it had been rifled of every egg!

“The niggers have been here!” said Carvery instantly. “Look there; they’ve been cooking the eggs!” and he pointed to the ashes of a fire around which was strewn hundreds of egg-shells. He placed his hand among the ashes.

“The ground is still hot. They were here this morning.”

Ted laughed. “Well, the poor devils have a better right to the eggs than we have. All the same, I wish we had come here first—there won’t be a turkey within a mile now; they can smell niggers better than we can. Let us go down to the river, and see if there are any ducks about.”

We came out upon the river at a spot where the bank was almost clear of timber, and covered only with coarse cane-grass, about three feet high. But although there was a fine stretch of water nearly a quarter of a mile in length, there was, to our disgust, not a duck in sight.

We sat down on the bank to rest awhile, and decide whether we should go further up the river, or swim across and go back to camp along the left-hand bank; Carvery inclining to the latter course, for he thought it was too risky for us to go further away from the camp when niggers were about. He was a thorough bushman, and had had previous experience of the Queensland blacks at Cape York, where he had been a stockman on Jardine’s famous cattle-station. But we foolishly overruled him, and decided to go on another mile or so to a

chain of lagoons, formed by the river backwater, where we were certain of getting plenty of duck and teal.

“All right,” he said good-naturedly, as he began to fill his pipe, “but I believe I can smell niggers in the air. Take my tip, boys, there’s some of ’em not far off, else we would have seen ducks about. Now, when——”

There was a sudden humming noise, and a shower of spears plunged into our midst, one of them taking poor Carvery right in the side of the neck, and passing down through his back and out below the left shoulder-blade. Most fortunately Ted was standing up at the time, gun in hand, and he fired both barrels in quick succession at a mob of about twenty blacks, who had crept up to within thirty yards of us under cover of the long grass. His promptitude saved our lives, for the niggers at once broke and ran, stooping as they fled so that we could not tell their whereabouts except by the waving and shaking of the cane grass. Brandon, however, seizing Carvery’s Terry, took careful aim at a certain spot and fired, and then turned to Ted.

“I’ve dropped one of the swine, anyway.”

My brother made him no answer, for he was attending to Carvery, who was suffering intense agony. The spear, which from the point up for about two feet, was no thicker than a quill pen, had come clean out for a length of eight or nine inches below the left shoulder-blade, the rest of the eight-foot shaft remaining unbroken.

Brandon, after thrusting another cartridge into the breech of the carbine, handed it to me, and at once turned to assist Ted. Whipping out his sheath-knife, he quickly cut a circle around the spear about a foot from where it had entered Carvery’s neck, and then broke it off.

“ You’ve had a narrow squeak, Joe,” he said, “ but a miss is as good as a mile. Now, set your teeth, for I’m going to give you h—. This bit of wood has to come out. Can you stand it? ”

“ Go ahead, sonny,” replied the wounded man, with a groan; “ yank the d——d thing out as quick as you like. I feel like a trussed fowl; but gimme a drink first.”

I ran down to the river, and filled my cap with water. Carvery drank, and then Ted gripped him round the hips and looked at Brandon.

“ Ready, Joe? ”

“ Go ahead, sonny.”

Gripping the broken end of the spear with both hands, Brandon pulled steadily, but with all his force, and drew the weapon out. Carvery swore profusely, and whilst Brandon and Ted were stanching the flow of blood, asked me to fill and light his pipe for him.

“ We’ll have to carry you, Joe,” said Ted.

The plucky fellow swore he would not let us do any such thing, declaring that he could walk, and to prove his assertion, he stood erect, though his bronzed, rough face had whitened with pain.

“ Let him take a bit of a spell first,” said Brandon, picking up the carbine; “ I want to have a look just over there in the grass before we leave. Come on, Billy. Is your gun loaded? ”

He stepped out briskly through the long cane grass for about a hundred yards, I following close behind with my gun cocked.

“ Ha, here we are! ” he exclaimed. “ I thought I’d find you, my coloured friend! ”

Seated on the ground, supporting himself on his outspread hands was one of the finest black fellows I have ever seen. He was quite six feet in height, and his

stark-naked figure was a perfect model of muscular strength. His fierce dark eyes met ours defiantly, and leaning on his left hand, he tore up a handful of soil with his right and threw it savagely in our faces.

Brandon looked at the pool of blood in which the poor wretch sat.

"Both hips smashed," he said, meditatively handling his carbine. "Billy, this poor man and brother must be put out of his misery. I am an ardent admirer of those beautiful lines—

"Lo, the poor Indian, whose untutored mind,
Sees God in clouds, and hears Him in the wind."

&c., &c.; but Mr. Pope had never seen a nigger *au naturel*, with a bunch of spears in his black paw."

He stopped, and then shouted to Ted, whom we could not see.

"Hallo!" replied my brother, "what's the matter?"

"Nothing," was the answer; "but I've found a wounded nigger here, and am settling him."

Then he stepped back a pace or two, and raising his carbine, shot the black fellow through the head.

"Your troubles are over, my friend," he said, as he opened the breech and put in another cartridge. "Come on, Billy; don't stand there gaping like a fowl with the pip."

Returning to the spot where we had been attacked, we collected all the spears we could find—sixteen in all—and broke them into small pieces. That we were not all killed was no doubt due to Ted having his gun in his hand at the moment the niggers stood up to throw their weapons. Ted himself had a narrow escape—a long, slender spear made of highly polished black wood having

passed through his jumper, just above the leather belt he wore.

Half-way to the camp, poor Carvery had to give in, so Ted took him on his back, and carried him as easily as if he were a child.

CHAPTER IX

AN UNLUCKY PLEASURE TRIP

FOR the next few days we kept a keen look-out for niggers, but although we saw the smoke of their signal fires all round, none came near enough to be seen. Captain De Lisle, however, had told us that as long as we could see these signals we need have no fear of an immediate attack—it was when there was not a sign of a black within ten miles that we should be on our guard; and our subsequent experience verified his assertions.

In ten days or so Carvery was about again, though rather weak, and as another man named Frank Banner—a brother of Paddy Minogue's mate—had a touch of fever, Ted told us (Carvery, Banner, Brandon, and myself) that we could run over to one of the islands for a couple of days' spell. So one morning we started off, sailing along in shallow water about a hundred yards off the beach.

The coast in many parts was very romantic looking, especially where a headland, clothed in brightest green, jutted out into the smooth water. All along the beaches, at high-water mark, grew dense beds of very handsome, but ill-smelling red and white flowers, called, I think, Vincas, and every quarter of a mile or so were great piles of dugong and turtle bones, put together with great regularity and method by the aborigines after their feasts.

I must here mention that one day, soon after we landed from the brig, we rounded a rocky bluff very suddenly with a strong breeze, and ran right into eight or ten blacks, who had killed two dugong, and were dragging them ashore. They gave one wild yell of rage and terror combined, and tore out of the water up the beach, where their fighting spears were lying, and then raced along the sand shouting out to us to come ashore and be eaten. We could have shot some of them quite easily, but Ted, who was with us, would not allow us to fire, though we would have much liked to do so, neither would he let us take one of the dugongs, the meat of which we all greatly prized. Sometimes we would come upon a herd of the harmless cow-like creatures feeding on the luscious sea-grass in shallow water and shoot one. Later on, though, we made a harpoon, and speared them like the blacks; green turtle, too, were very plentiful on the sandy islets just inside the Barrier Reef, and we generally returned from a fishing expedition with a full boatload of turtle, dugong, and fish to the main camp.

We had now been at work for over five months, and Ted was anxious to report to my father, so that a vessel could be sent up to load the cedar logs. So far, however, we had not seen any vessels going south, although we kept a fairly good look-out. It was Ted's intention to put me on board any vessel going to either Brisbane, Sydney, or Melbourne, and therefore, whenever I was out in the boat, I always carried with me his letters to my father, and forty pounds in gold for expenses, in case we should sight a passing vessel, and there be no time to lose.

On this particular occasion, we left camp in extra good spirits, for the weather for the past three weeks

had been delightfully cool and dry, and Carvery's rapid recovery had pleased us all, for he was a merry fellow with a good voice, and his songs, accompanied by a wheezy old accordion, kept us in a good temper after the day's hard toil was over.

Running along the coast for a couple of miles, we went ashore at a low rocky headland we had named Red Rocks on account of its colour, and where there was a very fine native well of beautifully clear water, surrounded by acacias. The place was much frequented by Torres Straits pigeons, which at this time of the year were very plump. Leaving Banner and Carvery in the boat, which they at once pushed off a little distance from the shore, so as not to be caught aground if the gentlemen of the country made a sudden appearance, Brandon and I set off, he carrying our water breaker, which we intended to fill, and I his rifle and my own double-barrelled gun.

In a few minutes we reached the native well, and after making a careful examination of the surroundings, were satisfied that no natives had visited the place since we had last been there. In less than a quarter of an hour I had shot a rock-wallaby and half a dozen pigeons, and returning to where Brandon was filling the water breaker, helped him to carry it down to the boat. Then we went back to the waterhole for our guns and the game.

The top of the point commanded a view of the beach to the north for a long distance, and as we were about to descend again I caught sight of something unusual lying on the sand about half a mile away. We soon decided from its shape that it must be wreckage of some sort recently cast ashore. Putting the wallaby and birds into the boat, we told our companions to wait, and set out along the beach to investigate.

The day was beautifully bright and clear, and we

strode quickly along on the hard yellow sand, every now and then putting up numbers of golden-winged plover, and disturbing snow-white cranes fishing on the margin of the water. As we drew nearer we came across other pieces of wreckage—deck planking, broken spars, &c., &c.; and the large object proved to be the greater portion of a deck-house, partially buried under sand and sea-grass. It had evidently belonged to a large vessel, and had not long been adrift—perhaps not more than a week or ten days, as the paint-work was still fresh and clean-looking. There was nothing of any value beyond some brasswork, and we were about to retrace our steps to the boat, when we noticed two or three casks lying on the sand a few hundred yards further on. They each contained biscuit, and two were undamaged. This was worth having and removing to the camp.

We had stooped to read the lettering cut in in the head of one of the casks, when we heard two shots in rapid succession, and springing up, we saw that the boat was being attacked by a mob of blacks, whose yells we could hear distinctly as they darted their spears at the two men, who, sick as they were, had succeeded in pulling the boat out of immediate danger. Then they stopped, and again their rifles spoke, and two of the sooty gentry fell. The rest of the mob, nothing daunted, sprang into the water, which was very shallow, and gave chase to the boat till another two shots sent them, minus one of their number, back to the shore, and picking up those who had already been killed or wounded, they disappeared over the bank into the scrub.

“By Jove, Breachley, that’s a smart piece of work of Carvery and Banner!” cried Brandon with sparkling eyes. “Oh, good Lord, look here! Run, Billy, run;

run for all your immortal soul! Back to the deck-house!"

I did not stop to look to see what was wrong, when with a disgusting whouf! whouf! a couple of spears went quivering into the sand just beside us. We were both as smart of foot almost as any nigger, but none the less it was a race for life to the deck-house with half a dozen black devils at our heels. Thirty yards or so from our cover they stopped and jabbered together for a minute or two, undecided whether to make a final rush or not. This gave us time to get our breath. Brandon was the first to recover himself, and to notice that both barrels of my gun were choked with sand.

"Shake it out, quick," he said, "unless you want to blow your hand off. But don't fire just yet. Perhaps the beggars will come closer."

He knelt as he spoke, rested his rifle on a piece of the wreckage, and fired, and a black fellow in the centre of the group wobbled about for a second or two, and then pitched forward on his face, just as I fired both my barrels of No. 3 shot into the rest of them, and a second dropped, but rose to his knees and tried to crawl away after his companions, who made for the scrub, but Brandon stepping out from cover sent a bullet and rolled him over.

"Load as quick as you can, Billy. Got any bullets in your bag? No! What a pity; we might get another chance at them presently, but shot is no good unless you're very close. Hurrah! there's the boat coming along under sail. They can see us, too. Now stand by for a run up to the top of the bank. I must have a look round to see if any of the black swine are lying down in the vincas."

Not at all relishing the idea, but ashamed to let him

think I was funking, we ran to the top of the bank, which was covered with a dense carpet of vincas. Not a nigger was to be seen at first, till looking across a swamp a quarter of a mile wide we saw at least fifty of them standing together under a clump of screw-pines. Brandon raised his rifle and fired a shot over; they vanished the moment they heard the hum of the bullet.

The boat ran in just abreast of the deck-house, and Frank Banner and Carvery got out, and we all shook hands. Then we went to look at the two naked figures lying near us on the sand. That nearest to us was quite an old man with a white beard. He was still breathing when Banner turned him over on his back and silently pointed to his face; it nearly turned me sick when I saw that the contents of at least one barrel of my gun had struck him in the face, destroying his eyes. Brandon's bullet had broken his back. The first man also lay upon his face, his right hand still grasping his long slender spear and throwing stick, and his wooden shield was on the sand near by. This was the third time within a few days that I had seen the effect of the heavy, soft-nosed Terry bullet. This poor wretch had been hit in the chest, and the bullet, "mush-rooming," had torn out through his back, where there was a hole as big as a small teacup! In after-years I was to see Sniders used very often, and their man-stopping and smashing power sometimes made me shudder. Nevertheless, I would rather have a Snider or Martini-Henry for work in a tight place with savages than any of the new-fashioned Mausers, Lee-Metford, or other small-bored weapons with hardened bullets, which simply drill a hole through a bone instead of smashing it. A native, especially an Australian aboriginal, thinks nothing of such a wound, which would disable a white man.

Getting into the boat, we pushed off, and then anchored a couple of cable lengths from the shore, for the wind had dropped, and we wanted to get something to eat, and also to talk over the adventure. Both Banner and Carvery admitted that they were neatly surprised, and never expected to escape the first rush made at the boat, which, had it not been some little distance from the beach, would certainly have been captured. They had seen four of their assailants fall, and a fifth was shot through the head when chasing the boat and sank, in proof whereof Banner pointed out to me the number of sharks swimming around us.

“Who says a shark won’t eat a nigger?” said Brandon, speaking with his mouth full of beef and biscuit. “They’d eat a priest or a Plymouth Brother if they were hungry. Nothing is too holy nor smellfull for Jack’s belly.”

By the time we had finished our dinner a dead calm had set in, the sun was intensely hot, and there was every indication of a heavy blow coming on from the south-east within a few hours. This was a rather serious thing to contemplate, for we could not take shelter on the mainland with safety anywhere in the vicinity, as we well knew that the blacks were watching our every movement from the high bluffs north and south. To attempt to beat the boat back to the mouth of the Daintree would be dangerous, for there would be both a strong northerly current and a head sea, and neither Carvery nor Banner was fit to stand a night’s exposure; to remain at anchor where we were was impossible, for a heavy surf would soon be rolling in in such shallow water, although we had the mighty Great Barrier Reef to windward.

Brandon soon came to a decision.

“What we want to do is to get back to Mr. Breachley and report this row with the niggers; but that we can’t do with a south-east blow coming on, so there’s no use talking about it. Then we can’t run ashore here for two reasons, one being that we’d lose the boat through not being able to haul her up out of danger, and the other is that we don’t want our pretty little hands and tootsies to be grilling on niggers’ fires for their breakfast to-morrow. They do like man, don’t they, Carvery?”

“Eat you without salt,” replied Carvery—“from Bundaberg on the Burnett River, right up to Cape York, the niggers are cannibals. I’ve seen the gins carrying bits o’ cooked man meat in their dilly bags. Jest you ask me or Captain de Lisle to tell you something o’ the feeds he an’ me ’as seen. Once——”

“Thank you, Carvery, I will. But at present I am cloyed with coarse meat and biscuit, and so you can tell me your yarn another time, when I’m hungry, and you want to annoy me.” Then he dropped his jesting manner, and continued—

“I think the best thing for us to do is to run for Weary Bay, forty miles to the northward. Once we get under the lee of Cape Tribulation, we should be all right, and can lie snug at anchor or haul up ashore until this gale blows itself out. I don’t pretend to know exactly where I’m taking you, but Mr. Money used to let me look at his chart of the coast, and I think we’ll get along all right.”

“Right you are, Harry,” said Frank Banner; “you’re the boss, and if you said Californy, Californy it is.”

Brandon and I at once set to work to re-stow the boat and reef down the main-sail and jib in readiness, for already the water was rippling with the first breath of the coming blow, which we knew would not develop its

full strength for many hours to come. But the boat was light, and we had not time to go ashore and get some stone ballast; so, lifting our anchor, we headed away N. by E. for Cape Tribulation, but still running close to the land.

A mile from where Brandon and I had had our encounter we passed within a hundred yards or less of one of the many rocky bluffs which studded the coast hereabout, and Banner's quick eye at once discerned a number of "bucks" standing or sitting among the rocks and watching us pass. Brandon's face lit up; he hauled in the main-sheet very slowly, and brought the boat up a couple of points.

"Get your Terrys out, boys," he said, drawing his own rifle to him and eyeing the watching savages on the rocks.

Carvery, who was seated on the bottom boards of the boat, smoking his pipe, protested.

"What's the good of shooting at niggers when they can't hurt us?" he growled. "Let 'em alone. They can't hurt us, I say."

Brandon answered him with cold, savage fury—"I know that as well as you do, but they would if they could. And I mean to hurt them—I mean to kill or hurt every nigger as long as God gives me the chance to do it. And I'll bet any man here a pound of tobacco that in less than ten seconds I'll topple one of those beggars over."

"Oh, for God's sake, leave 'em alone," said Carvery disgustedly.

Brandon laughed contemptuously, and picked up his rifle. Banner followed suit. Then, as the boat still headed in towards the point, Brandon, whose face was now purpling with passion, spoke to Carvery, and asked him if he meant to dispute his authority in the boat.

“No,” replied Carvery roughly, “but I won’t shoot when there’s no need for it. Do your own nigger-killing, and be damned to you.”

Brandon looked at me inquiringly. I shook my head. Such unnecessary vindictiveness appalled me.

“Take that clump of five bucks standing on the top of the boulder, Frank,” he said to Banner; “I’ll settle that pot-bellied beggar sitting down with the shield on his arm. He’s one of the mob who chased Tom and myself this morning. I know him by his paunch.”

He put the tiller in my hand, and then he and Banner fired almost together. One of the five ebony targets standing on the boulder, fell, and the “pot-bellied beggar” leapt to his feet, stood erect for a moment, shaking his spear, and then dropped in an inert mass. The usual wild yell and evanishment followed.

“The Reverend Joseph Carvery will now offer up prayers for the souls of our dear departed black brothers,” said Brandon mockingly, as he eased off the main-sheet again.

“You’re a damned young cut-throat,” said Carvery; “you ought to be an officer in the Black Police, and go in for nigger-shooting as a regular business.” Brandon made no answer, giving his attention to the boat.

Half an hour later we were spinning along before the breeze, which was steadily freshening. At four o’clock it was blowing a solid gale, and the boat was leaping and springing to a swift chasing sea, Brandon now steering with an oar instead of the rudder. The noise of the surf on the beaches was something tremendous, and the sea ahead and astern was white with foam and flying spume.

As darkness came on, our anxiety to get under the lee of Cape Tribulation increased, for there were numerous

reefs in our course which we could not discern in such a wild sea. Twice we narrowly escaped broaching to, and Brandon nearly went overboard.

“We’ll have to lower the peak, Billy, and shake out the reef in the jib at the same time. She’s getting the best of me, and we’ll broach to in earnest if we carry on like this. Stand by, and wait for a bit of a lull.”

We waited our chance, and first lowered the peak, then got the jib down, took out the reef, and hoisted it again without mishap; the boat then steered easier, and I was able to give Brandon a spell, which he greatly needed. Both Carvery and Banner, I could see, were impressed with his pluck and seamanship, and the former mixed some rum and water, and handed it to him to drink. Then he offered to fill his pipe, for his hands were stiff and swollen.

“Thanks, I’ll be glad if you will. I can do with a smoke now. Steady there, Billy! don’t check her like that when she’s going downhill—let her come up easily, or you’ll get twisted off your feet, and go flying overboard. The jib lifts her beautifully.”

We passed Cape Tribulation in the darkness, the roaring of the furious surf against the rocks making a terrifying clamour, and then, once round the headland, were in smoother water, and able to haul in a bit more to the land; in another hour, although the wind had not decreased, the sea was nothing to speak of, and we ate our supper in comfort. Then Brandon, fearful of our running on to a reef or low sandy islet in the darkness, determined to anchor till daylight, if the water was not too deep. We brought to whilst I sounded with a fishing line—there was no bottom at forty fathoms, too deep for our short kellick line.

“Never mind, boys. We must go on. Hoist the

jib again. Bill, you go for'ard and keep your eyes skinned."

The night was very dark, and I could only discern the outline of the shore by the white line of breakers on our port hand. Ahead I could not see further than a dozen yards. I had been on the look-out for an hour or so when I thought I saw a light ahead. Standing up on the for'ard thwart, I obtained a better view.

"Light ahead, Harry! Two, three—half a dozen!"

"Niggers' fires most likely."

"No," I answered, "they are not fires. I believe it's a steamer lying nearly head on to us——"

My further remarks were cut short by the boat running plump on to a sandbank; she heeled over at once, and in less than a minute swung broadside on to the sea, and half-filled.

Brandon, the rapidity of whose orders was only excelled by the masterly blasphemy with which they were accompanied, at once let go the main and jib halyards, and then we all jumped out and tried to push the boat off—no easy task in such a wind, and with a sea that lifted us off our feet as we tried to cant her round, either stem or stern on. Brandon was aft, grasping the gunwale, and urging us on to greater exertions, when the sand yielded beneath his feet. As the boat rose to a wave his legs went under the keel, and when she bumped again the bones of his right leg snapped like a carrot.

"Out with her, out with her!" he cried, never for a moment thinking of telling us of the injury he had sustained; "bend to it, you fellows."

We got afloat again at last, and Brandon, clambering in unaided, told Banner to run up the jib, and asked me to come to the steer oar.

“My leg is broken, and I can’t steer, but don’t bother about me just now. Don’t hoist the main-sail; let her run with the jib. Can you see the lights?”

“Quite close, Harry. It’s a big steamer lying at anchor. I can see her lights rising and falling to the swell.”

“Right. Run down to her with the jib, and be sure you don’t run past her. Are any of you fellows hurt?”

“We are all right, Harry,” I replied in a shaking voice.

“Then give me some rum—a good stiff tot; I feel deadly sick. Carvery, old man, I hope this won’t do your wound any harm. Billy, where the —— were your eyes?”

He rattled on like this—merely to keep *our* spirits up—and then after drinking some rum, dragged himself up from the bottom boards into the stern sheets beside me, so as to con the boat, but not until he had insisted upon each of us taking a tot of rum. No wonder we almost loved him—much as we dreaded him for his violent temper; for he never thought of himself first in time of danger.

In less than half an hour we were alongside the steamer, which was the *Generaal Pel* Dutch mail-boat, bound from Batavia to Sydney. The captain and officers received us most kindly, and the doctor at once took charge of Brandon. Carvery, Banner, and myself were given a change of clothes. They were taken for’ard, and I was brought through the brilliantly lighted saloon, where a number of passengers were dining, into a spare cabin, where a steward brought me a cup of coffee and some biscuits.

Presently the captain came in, and seating himself in front of me, began in a not unkindly manner to question

me in English. I answered his queries in a manner which satisfied him, I imagine, for he soon rose and asked me if I would like to see "Mr. Brandon."

I followed him into another cabin, where "Mr." Brandon, his leg having been set, was conversing volubly with the Dutch doctor in French. He was also smoking a cheroot with great placidity.

"I have told Captain Huysman, William," he said in a drawling, affected manner, "that you are the brother of the leader of a cedar-exploring expedition to the Daintree River, and that I am, in a manner, the nautical leader. Perhaps you had better show the letters you are carrying for your brother to the captain."

"I have offered to show them to the captain, but as the pouch was wet he said he would not look at them till to-morrow."

Captain Huysman laughed good-naturedly. "I certainly might want to see those letters by and by; but please don't think that I doubt your story. I am sure that none of you are escapees from New Caledonia. If you were it would be awkward, for we have a French officer on board."

Shaking hands with both Harry and myself, he left the doctor's cabin, and I sat down beside Brandon.

"Breachley," said Harry, speaking loudly, so that the doctor could hear, "I've told Captain Huysman that we are quite prepared to pay our passages to Sydney."

"Quite right, Harry. I have forty pounds in gold, which will cover our passages."

Brandon pressed my hand, and then whispered, "Put on side, Billy; put on side, and plenty of it. I've told the simple truth, and you must back me up—but, *put on side*. You are the brother of the leader of an expedition. I am your, and your brother's friend. And you and I

are going on to Sydney—you, because you have to take Ted's report on to your father, and I because I have a broken leg, and this measly-faced swine of a Dutch doctor says that I can't be moved for another week or so without the danger of amputation. . . . And, Billy, there is the sweetest, sweetest woman in all the world on board this ship. She was here just now. Find out her name, and come back and tell me."

CHAPTER X

THE HEADACHE OF MADAME DE LANGLE

“THE sweetest, sweetest woman in all the world,” (vide Mr. Harry Brandon) was Madame de Langle, the young wife of General Bertrand de Langle—a stern-faced but kindly-eyed Frenchman of sixty years, who shook hands with me next morning and asked me to sit next to him at the saloon table.

In a few minutes we became friends—he a grizzled Algerian warrior with the red ribbon of honour in his coat, and I a rough, uncouth Australian boy. Together we paced the after-deck of the *Generaal Pel*, and talked, till Madame joined us—Madame, with her soft, pinky-white cheeks, and red lips and fluffy golden hair.

I don't know how she was dressed ; I only know that when I first saw her my heart echoed Brandon's words—“the sweetest, sweetest woman in all the world.” I had seen women as beautiful as Madame de Langle, even in my native town, but they were coarsely dressed, and spoke coarsely, like Julia Finnegan, who, although she was a remarkably handsome woman, with a face and figure that were perfect in their beauty, had a voice that was repellent and discordant, though I have no doubt it was musical enough to the ear of Paddy Minogue.

Madame de Langle came to me with outstretched hand.

“ Ah, my poor boy. How are you zis morning? You cannot speak French, like your comrade wis ze broken leg? ”

“ No, Madame, I cannot speak French.”

“ Never mind. You shall learn by and by. I speak English, but not well, I think. My husband does speak it *very* well.”

The soft tone of her voice and her fair beauty quickly possessed and enthralled me, and, young as I was, when she bent her graceful head, and smiled at me, as she held my hand, a sense of supreme delight thrilled every nerve and fibre of my body, and made me tremble. It was so long since I had seen a woman of my own colour that her charms nearly took my breath away.

I think she was quick to discern my sudden, boyish passion, and that it did not displease her, for she laughed softly, and then tripped below to breakfast, her husband and myself following.

The *Generaal Pel* had only anchored for shelter from the gale but a few hours previously to our running ashore. She was in charge of an English pilot—a Captain Hannay—who had met her at Thursday Island in Torres Straits, to pilot her down inside the Great Barrier, and was proceeding as far as Brisbane with her; at that place he would await her return from Sydney. He was a very amusing man, and a great favourite with all the lady passengers, of whom there were nearly a dozen on board. I soon struck up an acquaintance with him, and immediately after breakfast he came with me to have a chat with Harry Brandon, for until the weather moderated, and the steamer lifted her anchor again, he had nothing to do.

Captain Huysman, later on in the morning agreed to give Brandon and myself saloon passages to Sydney for

a very moderate sum—twenty pounds, and also said he would tow the boat as far as the mouth of the Daintree River, from where Carvery and Banner could make their way up the river to the camp. This promise he fulfilled on the following day, and when the two men bade Brandon and myself goodbye, they took with them a long letter I had written to Ted. I learnt afterwards that Ted was very pleased at our happening to fall across the steamer, as he knew I should be in Sydney in a fortnight, and thus be able to send his letter and account of the success of the cedar venture much more quickly to my father and Captain de Lisle than if I had taken passage in a sailing ship.

Early on the morning of our comrade's departure the steamer ran through a sea as smooth as a mountain lake, and shimmering under the bright rays of a tropic sun. In a few hours we were off the mouth of the Daintree, the engines were stopped, and Carvery and Banner, bidding Harry and myself a warm farewell, got into the boat and pushed off, the steamer firing a gun, the sound of which, we knew, would bring some of our party down from the camp to the shore.

The *Generaal Pel*, though not a fast steamer, was a very handsome vessel; she was brig-rigged, with raking masts like some of the Peninsular and Oriental boats of those days—and to my mind a brig-rigged steamer with a graceful sheer, is the *beau idéal* of naval beauty. All the officers were, of course, Hollanders, the crew being principally Javanese or Malays, and wearing a smart man-of-war style of uniform. Her passenger accommodation was splendid, and the discipline, cleanliness, and seamanship maintained gave me a high impression of Dutchmen as sailors—an impression that was confirmed in after-years, when I learnt more of them.

Most of the ladies came to see Harry, and made much of him, for he was too handsome a patient not to be interesting. Two of them were sisters, named Flemming, and were travelling with their mother. Their father was a rich planter somewhere in the East Indies, and the ladies were making a six months' stay in Australia. Neither of the two girls was exactly pretty, but they were very lively and engaging in their manner, and before many days had passed I could see that the elder (who was about twenty-four years of age) was always glad of an excuse to see Brandon, who, however, had eyes only for Madame de Langle. She, too, was a pretty constant visitor, and a silly jealousy took hold of me when one day Harry bluntly asked me to leave his cabin for half an hour, as he expected a visit from her. He made no concealment to me of his admiration for her, but was very careful that others should not know it, and for that reason he not only tolerated, but encouraged visits from the other ladies, though after they had gone he would swear at them as "d——d, gabbling nuisances," &c. Before he had been on board a week there was plainly an understanding between him and the beautiful French-woman, who met his advances half-way. Her maid, Hortense Suret, was an admirable watch-dog, and took care to give Madame warning if she saw the General or any one else coming.

One day I went on the bridge to talk to Captain Hannay, whose quaint Americanisms and humorous anecdotes were infinitely diverting. He asked me how Harry was progressing.

"First rate," I replied.

"Had any womenfolk with him yet this morning?"

I laughed, and said that several of the ladies had, as usual, called in for a few minutes.

"Yellow-haired one been this morning?" he asked, closing one eye and chewing his Manila. I nodded.

"She's mighty pretty, eh?"

"Very," I said shortly.

"And I reckon she's got more solid devilry in her little finger than all the other women on board together. Guess the old man's a pretty confiding sort. My! can't she look at you as if she was sorter challenging a fellow to come and kiss her! I'm not dying with grief that she's somebody else's wife instead of mine. Guess she wants a powerful lot of watching. She'd flirt with a dead man if there wasn't a live one handy."

Madame de Langle certainly was a born flirt, and flirted pretty extensively with all the officers of the ship, from the handsome black-bearded Captain Huysman to the putty-faced dull-eyed doctor, but she did it so openly, and in such a charming manner, that even her husband would smile. Then too, strangely enough, she was a favourite with all the other lady passengers, none of whom tried to make mischief—which brews easily on board ship. But there was something deeper than a mere flirtation going on between her and Harry Brandon. To me, knowing my feeling of admiration for him, she was particularly gracious, and would chat with me for an hour at a time. It is needless to say that, conceited boy as I was, I imagined I was in love, and was hugely flattered, though every now and then the disturbing thought of Harry would cross my silly mind. But in a few days I was destined to get a shock which did me good.

The *Generaal Pel* steamed into Moreton Bay and anchored. A tug came out for the mails, and as there were several hundred tons of sugar to be put ashore, the captain told the Sydney passengers that we would not

sail for Sydney until the following day, and that those who wished to remain on shore overnight could do so. Every one of them was delighted at spending a day and night in Brisbane—forty miles up the river—and at once went on board the tug. I also went, so as to send a telegram to my father's agent in Sydney, telling him of my return, &c., and also to buy some clothing for Harry and myself; for that which we were wearing we had borrowed from the officers.

We made the passage up the muddy, dirty river in a few hours, and I at once went about my business, promising to lunch with General and Madame de Langle at the leading hotel at two o'clock. The day was intensely hot, and Queen Street, Brisbane, the main business thoroughfare, is, in summer, a perfect purgatory, so I was very glad when I had finished making my purchases, sent my telegram, written a letter to my sister Ada, and got back to the hotel. The General was awaiting me in the cool, shady vestibule, conversing with the French Consul. His wife, he said, was lying down, for the heat had been too much for her, and he was sorry she had come on shore. She, however, joined us at lunch, though she did look very pale and done up. Presently she said to me in her pretty, petulant way—

“Oh, zis is the most dread-ful place! The heat, the sun, is terrible. And to-night the French gentlemen of Brisbane give a dinner to my husband, and me, poor me, I must stay here all alone! Oh, I wish I could get back to the *Generaal Pel*; the heat here will kill me. Yes, it will kill me, Bertrand.”

“It certainly will be cooler out in the Bay, Madame,” I said, “and I shall be glad to sleep on board. There is a steamer going down at five o'clock, and I think I

shall return by her. I don't know anybody in Brisbane, and shall be thankful to get on board again and do some fishing to-night."

She clapped her little white hands and laughed. "You must take me wis you. Bertrand, you must let me go."

Both the General and Consul (who was an American and spoke in English) laughed, the latter saying that several French ladies intended to do themselves the honour of calling on her in the afternoon, and would feel keenly disappointed if they could not see her.

"Ah, zey must forgive me, Mr. Hall. Oh, I cannot receive any one. I do not look nice, and I do not feel well. Bertrand, you must explain to them."

The General smiled good-naturedly, and then, turning to me, said that he would leave Madame in my care for conveyance to the *Generaal Pel*, and that he would return as early as possible in the morning.

Immediately after lunch, the lady went upstairs to rest again, telling me that she would be ready to accompany me to Queen Street wharf at a quarter to five. Until then I strolled about the city, making a few more purchases, one of which was a bunch of lovely carnations for my divinity.

When I called at the hotel at the appointed time, she was in the ladies' sitting-room, waiting. I, blushing from the crown of my silly head to my feet, placed the flowers in her hands. No one else was in the room.

"Ah, you dear, kind boy. Zere!"

She bent forward, and kissed me on the lips.

Hardly knowing whether I was treading on air or not, I walked beside her downstairs to the hall, and then to the steamer, which cast off as soon as we were on board. At ten o'clock we were back on board the

Generaal Pel, and Madame at once went to her state-room, after bidding me good-night, little knowing or caring about the wild passion she had aroused in my heart.

I found Brandon asleep, so did not disturb him. Then, unable to rest quietly, I got my fishing-lines and went on deck again out into the cool night. As I dropped my line over the side, I was joined by one of the officers, who was keeping watch, and an hour passed very pleasantly, for the fish were biting well. Then I tired of the sport, and walked the quarter-deck with the officer until eight bells were struck and he was relieved, and soon after I went below for my rug and pillow, intending to lie down on deck. My footsteps made no sound on the thick matting of the deserted, dimly-lighted saloon, so I disturbed no one as I walked to my state-room, which was on the starboard side, next to Harry's. His door was partly opened, and his lamp was burning. I looked in; he was still sound asleep.

Without lighting my own lamp, I had just taken off my boots, and put on Chinese-grass deck-slippers, when I heard a door open on the port side of the saloon, and, looking, up saw Hortense Suret come out of Madame de Langle's state-room. She was fully dressed, and, walking swiftly round the after-end of the long saloon table, passed my door without glancing inside, and stopped at Harry's state-room. She was there but a second or two—then his lamp was extinguished, and Hortense went on, round the for'ard end of the table, back to her mistress's door. She gave one single gentle tap, but did not enter, for turning her back, she seated herself at the table, produced a book, and began to read.

A moment later Madame slipped out. She was in her dressing-gown, and glided past my door without a

sound. Then I heard the bolt of Harry's door being gently fastened.

What was I to do? I thought. I could not sit there like a fool, yet I must not let them think that I was awake. There was Hortense almost directly opposite to me, her keen eyes and ears on the alert. I pressed my hands tightly to my jealous ears for a few minutes, and tried to collect my thoughts. Get away from where I was I must—to remain and hear those soft, tender sighs and murmurings of affection, which, whispered as they were, seemed to my excited brain to sound like thunder, would be beyond endurance, but I must leave the saloon in a way that would not create suspicion in Hortense's mind.

Just then some incoming steamer sounded her syren three times in quick succession. Putting on a very sleepy look, I came out, raised my hands over my head, and yawned loudly.

Hortense looked up from her book, fixed her beady eyes on my face, and smiled. Picking up my rug and pillow, I walked over to her. She could speak English pretty well.

“You no sleep?” she said inquiringly.

“That steamer's whistle awakened me,” I said.

She smiled again. “Oh, yes, a very loud noise. So now you go sleep on ze deck.”

I nodded, and asked if Madame was not well, as she (Hortense) was sitting up. Alas, no, Madame had the most dreadful headache and fatigue from the heat. She was so fragile, &c., &c.

I said I hoped, nay, I was sure, she would feel better in the morning; then I asked the wretch if my friend Mr. Brandon had had a good day, as it was so very hot, and that as he was asleep when I came on board, I did not disturb him.

Hortense was an admirable, a noble liar. I had given her the very cue she wanted.

“Oh, yes,” she replied. He had had a very good day, but only about an hour after I had returned he told one of the stewards that he did not wish to be disturbed; “and so you see, Mistare Breachley, he have lock his door, ze poor sick young gentleman.”

“I won’t disturb him, Hortense,” I replied solemnly, though with secret rage. “Good-night.”

I went on deck again, and fished till morning. Fishing is a splendid thing for meditation, and I meditated a good deal during the next three or four hours. I was rapidly gaining experience.

CHAPTER XI

IN SYDNEY

SOME extraordinary luck seems so often to attend the intriguing, unfaithful woman with the straightforward, confiding husband. A day after leaving Moreton Bay three of the Javanese stokers on board the *Generaal Pel* developed small-pox, and when we steamed into Sydney Harbour, the authorities promptly ordered us into quarantine for a minimum of twenty-one days, and so, instead of coming up to a wharf and disembarking her passengers, the steamer came to an anchor off the quarantine station on North Head. Here, however, every possible comfort was provided for us in buildings situated in extensive grounds, and commanding a view of one of the most beautiful harbours in the world.

General de Langle, who, when the port doctor came on board, was dressed in his full uniform of a general of division, to receive the French Consul and the commander of the French corvette *Limier*, then in port, and awaiting his arrival, was thoroughly upset, and stamped up and down the quarter-deck, twirling his white moustache and using very strong language. Madame walked beside him, her little hand on his arm, her blue eyes raised to his, and wept in sympathy. Unfaithful

to him as she was, I daresay she shared his feelings of the bitter disappointment to him of the prospect of a three weeks' quarantine, when his presence and authority were urgently needed in New Caledonia; for at Brisbane news had arrived of the likelihood of a revolt of the natives of that colony.

Burning with anxiety, he sent off a despatch to the Governor, and another to the commander of the *Limier*, pointing out to the former the urgent necessity for his immediate departure for New Caledonia. In less than two hours he received a courteous reply from the Governor, informing him that he, in view of the dangerous condition of affairs, could at once leave the *Generaal Pel* and go on board the *Limier*, providing that the captain of that vessel would at once proceed to sea. With the Governor's letter came one from the captain of the warship saying that the *Limier* was then lifting her anchor. She soon appeared in the roadway, and sent a boat to our steamer. Bidding his wife a hurried farewell, the white-haired old soldier waved his hand to the rest of the passengers, ran down the gangway, and in another ten minutes the *Limier* was going full speed through the heads, while Jessie and May Flemming petted and kissed the weeping wife, and themselves wept profusely, out of sheer sympathy for such sweet and wifely emotion.

"Ah, it will be terrible, terrible for me!" she sobbed to them in French. "My dear, brave Bertrand—to be parted from him so suddenly! And he has said that I must stay here in Sydney till this impending revolution is crushed! Oh, I shall die! My loneliness will kill me! Oh, I cannot bear to think of it!"

Supported by Hortense—who, by the way, despite her piggy, little black eyes, was by no means bad-look-

ing, and had a neat figure, with a monkeyish twist and curve—and the two Flemming girls, the bereft wife went below. Her grief quite affected me for the moment, until I looked at Harry, who, comfortably ensconced in a cane lounge-chair under the awning, was eyeing the scene with a languid interest, and smoking one of Huysman's excellent cigars. His cool *insouciance* at first angered me. How could he be so calm, I wondered, when even strangers on the quarter-deck looked on pityingly at Madame's outburst of sorrow?

We soon settled down comfortably in our quarantine quarters. Brandon, two other passengers and I had a room all to ourselves, and as we numbered only twenty-six all told of both sexes (we had landed over a dozen people at Brisbane), there was plenty of room in the spacious building. Every day parcels of books and newspapers and baskets of fruit were sent from Sydney, and although time hung heavily on our hands occasionally, we did not make matters worse by grumbling. The two Flemming girls and myself took long rambles over the rough bush country and along the sea-shore almost every day, and sometimes Madame de Langle would come. Both the two girls and their mother had noticed, I think, that she took a somewhat strong interest in Harry, but whatever they thought, they kept to themselves. Both Jessie and May Flemming were good-natured, innocent girls, and full of fun, but at the same time, had they known as much as I did of the lady, they would have hardly been so affectionate to her, nor have shown so much interest in my comrade. Jessie, the elder girl, I was sure, had a secret admiration for him, and could not help showing it in her face when he spoke to her.

One day, when he was lying on a cane lounge under

a shady verandah, and the quarantine doctor, Mrs. Flemming, and myself were having a cup of tea in another part of the building, we saw Jessie go along the verandah and give him a plate of fruit. She placed it on a little table beside him, and remained standing talking to him, and presently I noticed that he was holding her hand, and seemed to be speaking earnestly to her. I moved my chair so as to obstruct Mrs. Flemming's view. She did not notice them for five minutes or more; then I saw her frown slightly, and she half rose from her seat, but sat down again. Presently Jessie passed us, and I saw her mother look at her keenly. The girl's face was dyed with blushes, and she did not return for the cup of tea which was awaiting her at our table. Madame de Langle and her sister had gone out collecting flannel flowers, and this Brandon knew, otherwise he would have been more careful; for he seldom conversed with, or even looked at, the Flemming girls when Madame was near.

The three weeks passed, and then, to our disgust, we had to undergo another fourteen days, quarantine. I was now by this time anxious to return home, as although I had sent my father, through his agent, full particulars of the expedition, I was tired of such enforced idleness, and wanted to be on hand when the vessel he would charter to load the cedar at the Daintree was ready to sail. Brandon, too, was getting morose and irritable at the delay, and the general's wife, when the doctor announced to us a further fortnight's detention, cried out of sheer disappointment. No doubt Harry dried her tears later on, for that the pair met frequently without being observed I well knew, and when they could not meet, Hortense was letter-carrier to both.

I must mention that a few days after his accident Harry and I had had a long talk as to our future movements, and he then promised to accompany me and meet my people when I returned home, and also that if my father sent me away as supercargo in the chartered vessel to the *Daintree*, that he would try very hard for a berth in her as mate or second mate. But as the weeks went by he had gradually ceased to allude to the matter, and as I saw he tried to get away from the subject whenever it cropped up, I made no further reference to it.

The last day but one of our stay, to the joy of everybody, arrived at last, and was to be celebrated by a picnic in a pretty, romantic little dell situated within the quarantine limits, but quite near the town of Manly—the seaside resort of Sydney.

The first to set off were the married ladies (among whom was Madame) and their husbands, escorted by the quarantine doctor; then followed May Flemming with Hortense, and Mrs. Flemming's two Javanese maids, who were carrying baskets, &c.; then Harry, limping along quickly enough on crutches, with Jessie Flemming and a little girl passenger walking beside him; then, last of all, a group of four single men and myself, carrying two baskets of crockery, liquids, &c.

The path was somewhat rough and stony in places, but the dense surrounding bush smelled sweet with native flowers, and the twittering of birds filled the soft, warm air.

Before following the others, our party, who were all of the thirsty breed, opened the liquor hamper to "see that everything was safely packed," and thought there were a few bottles of Tennant too many. These we opened and drank, and by the time we started we were quite half a mile in the rear, and therefore were surprised

when we came upon Harry and Miss Flemming seated on a moss-covered boulder. Both laughed when I called them a pair of snails.

“Indeed, we are not,” said the young lady; “but, although Mr. Brandon can really get along faster than I can, that little impetuous Nellie Ward tore on ahead, and as we don’t know this track, and might get lost and tread on horrid snakes, I said I would not go on until some more men came.”

“Miss Flemming, I *am* surprised at you lending yourself to such paltry subterfuge,” said an Irishman named Lucy. “D’ye think I can’t see ‘the blush of shame mantling that fair cheek’? We know well enough what it is that the ‘poor crippled craythur’ beside you wants. And here it is.”

The hamper was set down and a bottle of Tennant opened. Brandon drank a foaming tumblerful with an air of great satisfaction (though I knew he detested ale) and then took possession of the bottle and glass as well.

“Proceed on thy way, my discerning and Christian friends,” he said, with a laugh; “I shall be responsible to the caretaker of our prison for this valuable tumbler. Go on ahead; we’ll follow. Lucy, you ought to go first of all, and keep talking; any snake that hears that beautiful brogue of yours will think it’s blessed Saint Pathrick himself that’s coming, and flee for its life.”

With much laughter we started off, leaving him and Miss Flemming still seated on the boulder, and arrived at the appointed place quite an hour before them. When they did come I noticed that, although Brandon was as cool as usual, Jessie Flemming’s face was radiant—she looked quite pretty.

We spent a most delightful afternoon, returning at sunset, eagerly waiting for the morrow. Brandon and

I arranged to stay at the same hotel; the Flemmings were only remaining in Sydney for a day or two, and were then going on a visit to the country town of Maitland on the Hunter River, where they had relatives, and Madame de Langle, I heard her say, intended to stay at the Royal Hotel.

As soon as we landed in Sydney there was a general leave-taking, and Harry and I were soon established at the Custom House Hotel, a very good but inexpensive place kept by a pleasant widow whom nearly every one called "mother." She is, I believe, still alive, and ought to live for ever, for not only was she a splendid cook, but a typical English landlady of the old style; no trouble was too great for her to take over even a stranger, and the merchant captains who were the principal *habitués* of the house did give her great trouble, especially by the habit some of them had of coming home at daylight, and, staggering upstairs to her door, begging her in wearied and almost inarticulate tones to let them have the key of the bar-room, as they were ill.

Whilst Harry and I were at lunch in the coffee-room, a young, well-dressed man came in and sat at a table near us. Suddenly he caught sight of my companion, and stared somewhat rudely at him; Harry looking up just then, their eyes met. The stranger gave him a rather distant inclination, and then, getting up, went to a seat further off.

Harry laughed at my look of inquiry.

"I'll tell you about him by and by. His name is Murray; he's a wool-broker or shipping agent, or something like that, and came out in the *Earl of Dalhousie*, my old ship."

During lunch he asked me what I intended doing in

the afternoon. I suggested that we should go for a drive about the city.

“No, thank you. I have an engagement at three o’clock.” Then he added carelessly, “I’ve some news for you, Billy, my boy. Miss Flemming and I are engaged.”

He laughed at the surprise I exhibited, and went on : “Yes, we became engaged yesterday. I kept her behind the others purposely so as to have a quiet talk with her. We are keeping it quiet, however, for the present. Her mother has the bad taste not to like me. But,” he added, with a sneer, “I mean to marry the girl all the same.”

“I like her very much, Harry,” I said, for want of something better to say.

“So do I—and she has plenty of money. That’s why her d——d old cat of a mother watches her so whenever she sees her speaking to me.”

Shortly before three o’clock he went off in a hansom, leaving me to my own devices ; and as I had no business to attend to, I set out soon after along Macquarie Street to walk to the Museum. Just as I was passing one of the large boarding-houses in Macquarie Street I saw May Flemming seated at a window. She at once came out to the steps and asked me to come in.

“Mamma and Jessie are just going out shopping for an hour or two, and I am staying in to write up my diary. I’m nearly six weeks in arrears. Do come in, Billy, and talk to me instead.”

May and I had always been great friends. She was always bubbling over with good-humour, and never too tired to do anything except sit still and keep silent.

Presently Mrs. Flemming and her elder daughter came down. They were, of course, surprised to see me.

"I brought the youth in," said May, tossing her diary on the floor. "I tapped on ye window and smiled at him, and then I ran to the door and beckoned to him this way with my lily-white finger, and here he is, and here shall he stay until you come back, unless he will take me out to the Museum. I want to see the stuffed anthropophagi. Diarying is silly."

Mrs. Flemming laughed. "You are a pair of ne'er-do-weels. Take her with you, Mr. Breachley. Come, Jessie."

That Miss Flemming wanted to ask me where Harry was, I was sure, but her mother gave her no opportunity. I had thought it quite possible after what he had told me at lunch, that, as he went off in such a hurry, he had arranged to meet her somewhere.

May Flemming was one of those heaven-sent girls who can put on a hat and contrive to look nice inside of ten minutes when an emergency arises. She tripped downstairs into the drawing-room, took a momentary survey of herself in the pier-glass, and then swung round.

"Come on, I'm ready. Oh, you're a most untidy person; your tie is all askew. There, now it's right—don't you dare, sir. You are 'over bold for your years'—and people can see us from the street."

As we walked across Hyde Park through the beautiful avenue of shady trees, May suddenly asked me, "Where is Mr. Brandon?"

"I don't know; he went out after lunch——" And then I unthinkingly added: "I thought that perhaps he had gone to call on you."

"On us! Oh no! Mother does not like him, and I am sure he does not like her."

I made no answer, and May walked beside me in silence for a while; then she put her hand on my arm.

"Billy dear, will you tell me something—something I want to know, and which I think you *can* tell me?"

"What is it, May?"

"Will you tell me truly—that is, if you can—where Mr. Brandon has gone?"

I looked at her in genuine surprise—I was not yet old enough to lie with grace, even had there been necessity for it.

"I don't know, May. I said so just now."

"Thank you, Billy. But tell me, please, why you thought Mr. Brandon would call to see us? Tom, I don't want to worm any secrets from you; but I think my sister is very unhappy about Mr. Brandon; and to see her unhappy makes me miserable. Please, *do* tell me."

"Tell you what, May?"

"Tell me if Mr. Brandon is in love with Jess."

I could not resist the pleading of her clear, honest grey eyes.

"I don't know whether I am doing right in telling you, May. Harry told me only this morning that Jessie had promised to marry him."

"Do you think he really loves her?"

"Of course he must love her—else he would not want to marry her," I replied; I was beginning to feel uncomfortable.

May shook her head doubtfully. "I wish I were sure. And I don't think it very manly of him to bind Jessie down to secrecy as far as mother is concerned. It's wrong, very wrong."

Then the subject was dropped, and by the time we reached the Museum the girl was her lively self again. We spent quite two hours in the beautiful building, examining the various collections, and walked across the

park towards the city, for May insisted on our having a cup of tea.

“Very well, May. We’ll go to Compagnoni’s, in Pitt Street. Let us take a hansom, and we’ll get there in ten minutes.”

The streets were very crowded at that hour, and the cab had to proceed very slowly. At the corner of Market Street we were blocked for a few minutes, and as we waited, a hansom going the other way passed us at a quick trot; in it were Madame de Langle and Harry. They could not help seeing us, and smiled as they passed. May’s face flushed and her mouth set, but she said nothing.

Our afternoon tea was not a brilliant success, for the poor girl, I could see, was both angry and distressed. I took her home, and, promising to call again before they left Sydney, returned to my hotel.

At dinner time Harry came into the smoking-room, where I was reading the papers. He nodded sullenly to me, sat down and puffed at his cigar for a minute or two and spoke.

“What the devil made you bring that confounded girl down town this afternoon?”

“Because I chose,” I retorted angrily, very much resenting the tone in which he spoke.

“Then why couldn’t you have gone somewhere else?” He jumped up and went out of the room again.

CHAPTER XII

BRANDON INSTRUCTS ME

AT breakfast next morning, Harry was in a much pleasanter mood. He found a letter from Jessie Flemming lying beside his plate.

"I thought so," he said as he read, and then put it in his pocket; "the dear girl is very angry, and I must meet her at eleven o'clock and 'explain.' I am a whale at explanations of this sort. How do you get to the Domain gates? I am to meet her there."

After breakfast we went for a walk along the Circular Quay, to look at the shipping. Lying abreast of the Ordnance Stores was a magnificent full-rigged ship named the *Naval Brigade*, and as we stood on the wharf admiring her graceful lines and lofty, tapering spars, a number of lumpers came down her gangway.

"Hallo, Mr. Brandon. How are you, sir?" said one of them, a sandy-bearded man, running up to Harry and shaking hands with him vigorously.

"And how are you, Pat. What are you doing in Sydney?"

"Got a shore job now, sir—I am working for a stevedore, and make pretty good money at times. Where have you been, sir, since you left the old *Dalhousie*?"

Harry told him, and then asked the man, whose name was Pat O'Day, to come up to our hotel for half an hour's chat in the evening; then we went on again to look at the other ships.

"That's an amusing fellow. He was boatswain of the *Earl of Dalhousie*—and a better boatswain and smarter all-round seaman never ate salt junk and weevily biscuit. His only fault is his fondness for liquor—when he gets too much he turns into a nuisance, then into a brute beast. He's wonderfully humorous—especially when he's only slightly sprung—like all Paddies. An Irishman is always brilliant, so my old dad says, when he's hiccoughy, and ready to borrow your last shilling."

As we were returning along the Circular Quay, Harry asked me how I was off for money.

"I'll get you some this morning, Harry," I said. "My father's agent told me yesterday that I can have twenty or thirty pounds if I want it."

He laughed. "I don't want any from you, Billy. I can lend you some if you like. Anyway, here is the fifteen pounds I owe you—ten for my passage money, and five which you lent me;" and he handed me three five-pound notes.

"I really don't want it, Harry," I said, "and, besides that, there are over thirty-five pounds due to you from Ted for wages—which my father will pay—or, as far as that goes, Mr. Hagan" (my father's agent) "will give it to you if I ask him to do so."

"Don't trouble him, old man. I've plenty. I found a letter here from my mother with a draft enclosed for fifty pounds. And I can get more if I want it. I am giving that pudding-faced Dutch doctor ten pounds; and even then I shall be twenty-five pounds to the good."

I had never heard him mention his mother or father but once, when he had told me that they lived in Norfolk, and that he was regarded as the "black sheep" of the family, for, as he said, having been kicked out of the Navy for misconduct when he was a midshipman, and then entering the merchant service as a fourth mate in the Black Ball Line of Liverpool.

"Just as you please, Harry," I said; and then I asked him, as I hoped to be leaving in a week or so, if he intended accompanying me home to meet my father, as there was a schooner sailing for the north coast ports.

"I'll tell you when you're ready to start, Billy," he said carelessly. "Let it stand over until then. I must now go and make my peace with mine own precious Jessica—my big-mouthed, full-figured pearl of great price!"

He returned to lunch with a look of supreme contentment on his dark, handsome face, and pressed me to share a bottle of champagne with him.

I had, I am sorry to say, learnt to occasionally drink spirits when I was on the Daintree, and when we were wet through and exhausted with a day's toil. Carvery who had had such a long experience in North Queensland, was a firm believer in spirits as a preventive of fever, which, he maintained, was caused by two things, drinking river water, and mosquitoes; so when working in the scrub and unable to light a fire on account of heavy rain we always drank rain water mixed pretty stiffly with good old Jamaica rum. But champagne was a new thing to me, and I demurred to Harry's suggestion.

"Bosh! It's the best thing in the world. And you must drink with me—to the health of the sweetest,

sweetest woman in the world, the girl who, in spite of her mammy's interference, will be my wife within six months."

A large bottle of champagne was brought, and as Harry filled my glass I said laughingly that I had heard him say the words "the sweetest, sweetest woman in the world" before.

"William, your memory of a trivial remark is astounding. Of course, Madame de Langle is the 'sweetest, sweetest woman in the world;' and of course Jessie Flemming is also the 'sweetest, sweetest woman in the world.' You will understand all these things when you are older. Has she ever kissed you? She has a beastly way of kissing one when one doesn't want it."

"Who?" I asked.

"Miss Flemming, my innocent. Don't stare at me as if I had asked you if you had ever committed murder—I'm not one of the jealous breed." He drank off his champagne, and filled the glass again. "Billy, I'm in luck—unless the devil, or Providence, or something of the kind intervenes. All going well, I shall be married, as I said, within six months, or at any rate before the interesting Flemming family return to Batavia. She—the dear, sweet creature—has given me her promise, and she's the kind of a girl to keep her promise if she had fifty old devils of mothers watching her."

Then he gave me some further details, frankly admitting that he was not very fond of Miss Flemming, but wanted her fortune, which, he said somewhat brutally, "made amends for her face." She believed that he was passionately fond of her, and had promised to marry him on her return to Sydney whether her mother consented or not. "In fact," he added, "I believe I could get her

to do so now, if there was time, but they are going away this afternoon. Oh, and that reminds me, Billy—you are to be our friend in need, and, like a good fellow, will correspond with her. The old woman likes you, and won't suspect that your letters will cover mine. You must, however, write to May first."

"Thank you; you *are* kind. Any other use you can put me to?"

"Come, I know you'll do it, old chap. I would do the same for you."

"All right," I said resignedly; "and in any case I promised to write to May now and then."

"Good boy. And when she comes back, make love to her properly. She'll have money too, though not as much as the beauteous Jessie."

"What rot you do talk!" I said; "why I'm only a youngster."

"Well, what of that? You take my advice, and hang on to May Flemming; she's not bad looking, and, as I said, will have money. Oh, I forgot to tell you that the little devil tried to put silly d——d ideas into her sister's head about my being out driving with Madame de Langle. But it's all right now; though it took some explaining. And I shall 'never, never, no never' be anything but a good boy in the future. Billy, do you think I'm a fool?"

After lunch I went to bid the Flemmings good-bye, and saw them drive away. When I returned, Harry, who had dressed himself with more than usual care, met me on the stairs.

"See you again about six, Billy."

"Hang you, you're always going out," I grumbled; "where are you going now?"

"Out for a drive to Bondi, with the other 'sweet

woman.' Praised be the Lord, the coast is now clear."

I spent some of the afternoon in the beautiful Botanical Gardens, lying on the grass and looking at the warships anchored just abreast. When I returned at four o'clock I was astonished to learn that Harry had been in and gone out again, taking his bag with him. He had, however, left a note for me with the landlady.

He was sorry to have missed me, he wrote, but could not wait as he was pressed for time; was going into the country for a day or so with some people.

That was all. I did not see him again for two weeks.

About five o'clock the sailor O'Day came in and inquired for Harry. He was sent in to me in the smoking-room. He was disappointed when I told him that my comrade had left town and would be away for a day or two, and was going to leave, when I asked him to sit down and have a smoke and yarn. He was, as Harry had said, a very amusing, witty fellow, and had an extraordinary fund of anecdote, and half an hour passed pleasantly enough.

Presently a gentleman came in and ordered a cup of coffee. I recognised him as the man who had stared so at Harry the day we first came to the hotel, and whose name he had told me was Murray. On this occasion he also looked at my companion; then he smiled, and came over with outstretched hand.

"Why, O'Day! I am glad to see you again," he said, shaking hands warmly with the sailor; and then, turning to me, "O'Day and I are old friends. I came out in the *Earl of Dalhousie*, and Pat kept us passengers alive."

At my suggestion he had his coffee brought to our table, and stayed with us quite half an hour. Only

once was Brandon's name mentioned, and that was by O'Day mentioning the cause of his call. Murray merely nodded, and said curtly, "I saw Mr. Brandon here some days ago," and then turned the conversation.

During our talk I told him something about myself and our adventures on the *Daintree*, which interested him greatly, also of our passage down in the *Generaal Pcl*, casually mentioning the Flemming family, whom, he told me, he knew by name on account of business transactions with their Australian relatives, who were squatters on the Hunter River district. Murray himself was the manager of a large commission agency firm, whose offices were quite near the hotel.

"I am glad I have met you," he said, as he rose; "will you look in and see me at my office?—any morning you please. Then you must come over to my place at Lavender Bay."

After he had left, O'Day spoke of him as "a real gentleman," who, because he (O'Day) had done him some little service on board, had given him a five-pound note. "But he's got a mortal hatred of Mr. Brandon."

I did not want to know the reason of the "mortal hatred," so did not ask; but presently the sailor, speaking of Brandon's personal courage, and his abilities as a seaman, alluded to his violent temper.

"It's a great curse to him, sir, intirely; just as much as liquor has been a curse to me. His temper and his fine handsome face and figure are like to prove his ruin."

"Why his face?" I asked.

"The women, sir. The women like him, and he's mighty fond of women—and that's why Mr. Murray has reason to hate him. The curse of loving women's beauty is as bad for a gentleman like Mr. Brandon as the curse of drinking is to a common rough sailor-man

like me. God protect every wan of us from both. Good-night, sir. Maybe when Mr. Brandon comes back, ye'll ask me to come in again."

I assured him we should not lose sight of him, for his genuine, straightforward manner had caused me to take a liking to the man.

After he had gone I changed my clothes and went out to call on Madame de Langle, for she had asked me to do so, and I sincerely believe that she meant it, for on the passage down in the Dutch steamer she and I had had many long talks—in fact she took such interest in me as any highly-educated, clever woman would take in a lad who wanted to improve his mind and manners and shed the rough bark of an uncultured boyhood. And I have no doubt but that my association with her and Brandon, despite the evil effect their *amour* had upon my quick imagination and temperament, did me much good.

Reaching her hotel, and sending up my name, Hortense Suret came down to me in a waiting-room, smiling in her usual monkeyish manner. The first words she uttered turned a partly conceived suspicion, which a few hours before had become engendered in my mind, into what I now deemed a certainty of fact; and an angry jealousy of Brandon surged through my silly brain.

"Ah, vat a peety, Mistare Breachley. You are too late to see Madame. She go to ze country to-day wis some friends—oh, I cannot remember ze name of ze place! But zey see how pale and *triste* she look, for she think, think always of ze Général—no lettare will come yet for so many week. So zeze friends take her away wis them to ze country—somewhere where it is cool, cool; and it is in the mountains. Ah, poor Madame is not strong"—she placed her hands on her bosom, and tried

to look sad—"she is not strong here, in ze chest. Ze Général is very much afraid she may have the consump."

Her artfulness tickled me, and I laughed. "Oh, I hope not, Hortense. Madame de Langle does not look like a person in consumption."

I spoke with knowledge, for there were many consumptive people in the district where I was born.

"Ze grief, ze tear, ze con-stant cry, make her worse. Ah, you do not know."

Then came her masterpiece.

"And where is Mistare Brandon? You and Mistare Brandon are ze inseparables! Why do he not come wis you? It is not polite of him. Madame will be angry when I tell her that you have come alone."

"Mr. Brandon has gone into the country, Hortense. He went away suddenly this afternoon. Perhaps he, too, has consumption."

The girl threw off all disguise, slapped my cheek, and laughed.

CHAPTER XIII

I VISIT MY AUNT SELINA

THE aunt with whom my sister Frances was living resided at Waverley, a suburb of Sydney, overlooking the sea. They both knew that I was in Sydney, for I had written to them, but so far had not expressed any desire to see me, and after waiting a fortnight, I wrote again, and received a somewhat chilling note from my sister, asking me to call, with a "kindly-worded" P.S., begging me to look as little countrified as possible. I smiled, for I knew that I had changed very greatly since she had last seen me, especially during the past eight months, and that though I was very brown, I was not in the least countrified, either in speech, manners, or appearance, and although when in camp with my rough mates, I affected to sneer at, and despise a cultured taste in dress, I was in reality as vain as a girl in the matter of clothes, and copied as far as I could the style and cut of Brandon's. Then, too, I knew that for my age I was tall, well set-up and good-looking, and although not so spruce as a bank clerk, I believed myself to be of a much more striking appearance than any city youth ever born, my vanity, as secret as it was stupendous, having been fostered of late in many innocent ways by the ladies on board the *Generaal Pel*. Brandon once confided to me that he could "succeed"

with any woman if he cared to try, and I was already determining to emulate his powers in this respect; in fact, his influence over me was so great that he was rapidly undermining my whole moral fabric, which, I fear, was never intended by nature to resist attack, and was anxious to crumble to dust as quickly as it could crumble.

My aunt's house was situated in very pretty grounds on the heights of Waverley, and when I reached there, at five in the afternoon, I found her and Frances at home. The effusive welcome they gave me when I entered the room made me smile inwardly, for Frances at least had expected to see the same rough, unkempt lad, with thick boots and cabbage-tree hat, with whom she would not even walk down the village street. Both ladies kissed me—Aunt Selina for the first time in my life, and Frances for about the fifth—and at once proceeded to lie with great cheerfulness and vivacity. They “had been out of town”; “Auntie” had been so unwell; Frances “had *quite* thought I would have come and seen them the day I landed,” &c., &c. And finally they insisted on my staying to dinner.

This Aunt Selina, who was my mother's senior by at least ten years (though to have hinted at such a fact would have been a deadly insult) was a widow, a merciful Providence having removed her husband to another sphere a few years after his marriage. He left his wife a little property, which brought her in about three hundred pounds a year, and as soon as possible she set to work to achieve two things—to reduce her waist, and get another husband. In the former she succeeded; in the second she had failed, though she had now carried on the pursuit for quite twenty years, and, to use a sporting phrase, was still going strong. She detested my

father for a somewhat unkind remark he had once made to her, a year or so after her widowhood. He and her husband had met several times in Sydney, and were on very friendly terms, though father never liked Aunt Selina. Her inordinate vanity and unblushing selfishness were too well known not only to him but to her own sisters also. When she married Mr. Lutton he was a wealthy man, being owner of some valuable coal-mining properties at Newcastle, and lived in a manner befitting his income; he was very fond of racing and all other outdoor sports, and when a sudden reverse of fortune came, he felt it keenly, but faced it manfully, and promptly cut down his expenses in every possible way, much to his wife's disgust and anger. It was not in her nature to comprehend his character—to her shallow mind and greedy disposition his was the action not of an honourable man, but of a fool, and from that time forth the poor man had no happiness in his home. It was a source of continual bitterness to her to see him year by year steadily paying off his liabilities, and refusing to avail himself of the Bankruptcy Act, and then at his death to find she had but three hundred a year left to her. She considered she had been robbed, and it was in connection with this that the quarrel arose between her and father. Lutton, I must mention, though a great favourite with almost every one, was not so with the local clergy, on account of his being part proprietor of a Sydney paper devoted to Freethought principles, though at the same time they always cheerfully came to him for subscriptions connected with their own churches, and never had to beg in vain. These gentry always spoke of Lutton as "an atheist"—at which he would smile in good-natured contempt, and never try to convince them to the contrary

He had been dead twelve months when father went to Sydney on business, and naturally enough called to see Aunt Selina, primarily at mother's request. In his slow, heavy way he began to condole with her, when she cut him short, inveighing bitterly at her husband's folly in not making better provision for her.

"Well, Selina, he did his best, I'm sure. And I am certain that you must feel proud of his having paid his creditors in full before he died."

She blazed with anger. What were the creditors to her? she asked. His duty was to her. He had behaved shamefully, cruelly! The Rev. Mr. Bonham Joyce had that very morning expressed his great sympathy for her, although he (Lutton) had been almost rude to him. But what could be expected of an atheist?

"Oh, come, Selina. Poor Lutton was no atheist."

"He was a wretched, wretched atheist. Mr. Bonham Joyce fears that he is now in perdition."

"Then Mr. Bonham Joyce is a d——d fool, and you are no woman to let another man speak of your dead husband like that. If the poor fellow has gone to hell, I daresay he likes it better than being with you. Good-day, Selina."

Since that day they had never met again, though Frances later on went to live with her, my father allowing Aunt Selina a hundred a year for her maintenance.

There was not the slightest physical resemblance between my mother and Aunt Selina; the former was tall and stout, with black hair and a ruddy complexion, and had a pleasant, girlish voice, though she was past forty. Aunt Selina was of medium height, with light hair, a small waist, and what she (the vain old fool of fifty!)

considered a very fine figure. Her voice, I think, was the most unpleasant I had ever heard—it was mincingly raspish, and after an hour or so got on one's nerves. She costumed herself like a girl of twenty or twenty-five; and the first time I saw her in evening dress she nearly made me ill, and quite took away my appetite—her thin, pinched face, rouged lips and cheeks matching an expanse of bony chest that made her resemble a very thin and badly-plucked chicken. I could not help staring at her for a moment or two when she simperingly asked me if I thought she looked nice. I said, "Very."

On the *Generaal Pel* the ladies always dressed for dinner, and Madame de Langle and the Flemming girls were pretty to look at, and so were Mrs. Flemming and the other older ladies, though there was one immense German woman who, when she laughed, always reminded me of a dugong, for her enormous fat arms and bosom, Brandon declared, "shook audibly"; but this wretched aunt of mine made me blush to think such a creature could be my mother's sister. Frances's dress was cut fairly low, but then she was a plump, well-shaped girl, not a hoary old ruin of fifty.

In the course of the evening of this my first visit I hinted that father and Captain de Lisle were likely to make their fortunes in a few years out of cedar. This item of news was received with great interest, and Mrs. Lutton at once said, "Dear man, he deserves it. Have I not often said, dear Frances, that your father deserves good-fortune?"

"Oh, yes, Auntie," said dear Frances, "quite often. I must write and tell him how pleased we are to—to have dear Will with us to-night."

Presently Frances asked me about the passengers who were with me in quarantine, and I quickly rose in their estimation when I said that both General and Madame de Langle had been very kind to me, and that I hoped to see the latter again in a few days. My aunt, who was a tuft-hunter by instinct, at once became deeply concerned in Madame's welfare, especially when I told her that she was a member of a noble French family, and her father was an ambassador, and before five minutes had passed she announced her intention of calling on her.

"Poor thing!" she minced, "how very distressing for one so young to be alone in a strange city, and her husband away fighting! We certainly must call, Frances. It is clearly our duty to do so on William's account. I am his aunt, and you are his sister. Does she know I live in Sydney, William?"

"Yes," I answered briefly, filled with alarm at the idea of her intruding herself, though I certainly wanted Frances to meet Madame, and indeed the latter had told me she would be glad to meet my sister. In a way I was proud of Frances's beauty, and wanted to see them together; but my aunt was a horse of another colour, and her affectation and pushfulness would, I knew, only disgust and irritate where she meant to be impressive and warm-hearted.

"Is she pretty, Will?" asked my sister.

"Pretty is no word for her. All the men on board the steamer say she is the most beautiful, dainty little woman they have ever seen, and Mrs. Flemming told me that when she married the General the newspapers said she was one of a family noted all over Europe for their beauty."

Aunt Selina clasped her skinny, bony hands together,

and looked upwards in ecstacy, declaring that she felt as if she loved her already. Then she set to work to find out exactly when the lady was coming back. This was my chance. I did not know for certain, I said, but the moment she did return I would let them know, mentally vowing that my aunt at least should never meet her if I could prevent it.

Of Brandon I said scarcely anything; they were too interested at the prospect of meeting "the wife of a distinguished French officer" to make any inquiries about such an uninteresting person, though my aunt asked me if Captain Huysman and Mr. Lucy were married.

"The captain is, I know, as he showed me his wife's portrait; but Mr. Lucy is a bachelor. He's awfully well off too," I added (not mendaciously), to see the effect. "He is a very nice fellow, and I thought of asking him to come out with me to-day."

"I shall be glad to see *any* friends of yours, William. You must ask him out—say next Thursday," simpered my aunt.

CHAPTER XIV

A WALKING-STICK AND A SUNSHADE

SOME things happen so very curiously—"so dam-
nably curiously, and so out of place," as Brandon
mockingly said to me one day long afterwards, when he
and I met under strange circumstances.

A few days after my visit to Mrs. Lutton I received
a letter from my father telling me not to come home, as
he himself was coming to Sydney in a week or ten days,
to arrange for the chartering of a vessel to proceed to
the Daintree River for the cedar. She was also to take
up ten fresh men with six months' supplies, and bring
back those of Ted's party whose time would be up or
who wanted to return for a spell. I was to go with the
vessel, and return with her to either Sydney or Mel-
bourne, as might be decided upon. He also told me to
draw forty pounds from his agent, and make certain
purchases for my mother and himself and send them
down by the first schooner.

I went to the agent's office, drew the money, and on
returning to the hotel found Pat O'Day waiting for me
with a note from Mr. Murray, asking me if I could join
him in a three days' fishing excursion to the famous
Botany Bay.

"You must come, sir," said O'Day. "There's Mr.

Murray, two other gentlemen, and myself; I'm the sailing-master."

"How's that?" I inquired. "Have you given up shore work?"

"Not at all, sir. But whenever Mr. Murray makes one of these trips I always go with him. He gives me a fiver, and treats me like a king."

I at once wrote a note accepting the invitation, and, a few hours later, crossed over to Lavender Bay, where the yacht was lying ready to slip her moorings. Murray introduced me to his two friends—both business men like himself—who were very jolly fellows. The yacht was about five tons, very fast, and very comfortable, and we made a merry party, as we spun along over the smooth waters of Sydney Harbour out into the blue roll of the sun-lit Pacific.

Murray was a quiet, unassuming man, with a somewhat grave manner, which at times made him look much older than he really was; but I "took" to him from the first, as O'Day had said I should. He carefully avoided mentioning Brandon's name, and once when I did speak of him casually his lips closed firmly together and his brow clouded over. As we sailed along the coast I told him of my father's intended visit, and of my own future movements, in which he seemed interested. Then, remembering that I had promised to bring Mr. Lucy to dine at my aunt's on the following Thursday, which would be the day we were to return from our fishing trip, I asked if there was a post-office at Botany Bay, explaining my reason for inquiring. He said that there was.

"Then I must send Lucy a note," I remarked; "I don't care about going there by myself and dining with my aunt and sister." Then I made some jocular

observation about my aunt's solicitude for myself now that she had found out I was fit to be invited to dinner and would not disgrace her by my outlandish appearance and manners; adding that as long as Lucy came, I should rather enjoy going, as my aunt would make us laugh for a month afterwards.

Murray shook his head, and in a not unkindly manner said I should not make fun of my relatives. Then he made a suggestion.

“Why not write and ask your aunt and sister, and your friend Lucy, to come down to Botany for the day, and dine with us? My mother and sister are coming down to-morrow, and will put up at the hotel there. If the weather is fine, we can give all the ladies a sail round Botany Bay. My mother, I am sure, will be very pleased to meet Miss Breachley and your aunt. She and my sister always drive down from Sydney to Botany, when I sail round there in the yacht, and stay at the big hotel there for a few days.”

I thanked him for his invitation, and as soon as we reached our anchorage at La Perouse, a place on the shores of Botany Bay named after the ill-fated French explorer, I walked along to the hotel, which I found was pretty full of visitors, and from there despatched a note to Lucy, asking him to call and see my aunt and sister and see if they could come; then I wrote to Frances and my aunt as well.

On the following afternoon Mrs. and Miss Murray arrived, and went for a sail with us. In the evening I received answers to my letters—Lucy had been to see my aunt, and wrote me such an amusing letter that I could not resist laughing immoderately as I read it. He had evidently enjoyed his call immensely, and Aunt Selina, I could see, had laid herself out to fascinate him,

and had quite succeeded—from one point of view, at least—for Lucy was a man with an intense sense of humour. They had accepted his offer to escort them down on the Thursday morning, and Frances herself wrote, asking me to convey her and Aunt Selina's thanks to my friend Murray for his polite invitation.

The hotel being rather full of visitors, Mrs. and Miss Murray had taken one of the bungalow cottages belonging to, and situated in, its grounds, their meals, when they desired, being sent over to them. In those days, Botany Bay was a rather select and favoured seaside resort, and the place was famous for its wild flowers. This was, of course, long before the construction of a tramway from Sydney brought out the lowest city riff-raff and ruffians—racing men, sprinters, and others of that kidney, and turned the place into a "sporting resort," which means that it became the stamping ground of roguery, vice, and the vilest debauchery—especially on Sundays. However, this is but an instance of history repeating itself—for some of the progenitors of many of these scoundrels themselves landed at Botany Bay, when Arthur Phillip sailed in there with his load of convicts in the First Fleet, and sent a gang of them on shore to clear the land, with the idea of founding the settlement there.

Early on the second morning Lucy, with my aunt and sister drove up opposite to where the yacht was anchored, and we all went ashore to meet them, as Murray had arranged to have our lunch under some shady trees on La Perouse beach. My aunt was most effusive, and smiled and gushed over the Murrays and the rest of our party to such an extent that at first I felt angry, but, catching Lucy's eye, had to smile. My sister looked handsomer than ever, but there was such a

sullen look of discontent on her face, which she hardly tried to conceal, that, drawing her aside, I asked her what was the matter.

"*That* gibbering old fool," she said resentfully. "Would you believe it! Why, she's actually jealous of me; I have a beautiful dress, which, after I had put on, she made me take off again! Said it did not suit me, made me look too old, and did not 'harmonise' with that ridiculous thing *she* is wearing. 'Harmonise!' The only thing that would match *her* face would be a dried sheep-skin—with the skin outside. Oh! the old pig-beast."

"Never mind, Fan," I said, feeling really sorry for her. "You shall wear your swell dress when we go to see Madame de Langle. And we'll not let Aunt Selina know when we are going. To tell you the truth, I don't want her to come. I'm ashamed of the silly old fool."

This mollified my sister considerably, and smiles soon came back to her beautiful face, especially when she found three gentlemen besides Lucy eager to talk to her.

After I had helped to spread our cloth under the trees, Pat O'Day and myself rigged a sail overhead as a sunshade. Lucy came to help us, and I asked him in a whisper how he liked my aunt.

"By the powers, Bill, she's great! I know you don't mind what I say, but I never came across anything like her in my life. She's worth a thousand pounds to a freak museum. Oh, Lord! she's a terror, but I've been having whips of fun with her. But she hasn't been nice to Miss Breachley, and I mean to pay her out for that."

"Do," I said, as I looked in wondering disgust,

mingled with an almost irresistible desire to yell with laughter, at my aunt's awful get-up.

Being summer weather, she had elected to wear "something light and simple," and had chosen a very fine white muslin with tiny forget-me-nots on it, which made her sallow, wrinkled, and be-rouged face look worse than ever. Her hair had evidently grown a lot since I last had seen her, and had grown in two different shades of yellow, and it was difficult to decide which shade matched her skin best, the one the colour of household soap, or that of the buttercup tint. Her hat was of white straw, looped up at one side, and covered with about a clothes basketful of artificial flowers—poppies and forget-me-nots—and she was corseted up so tightly that every time she uttered her shrill cackle of a laugh the wretched woman must have suffered great pain; but what annoyed me most of all was that her dress was so thin that her bony arms and shoulders showed as clearly as if she had them uncovered. A profusion of vilely new and vulgar-looking gold and black enamelled bracelets encircled her bony wrists, and as a crowning atrocity she had skirts much too short, open-work silk stockings, and satin shoes.

"How sweetly pretty it is here," she said simperingly to Miss Murray, as Lucy handed her a glass of claret. "I do declare that the air and bright sunshine and scenery make one feel young." Then she cackled.

Lucy said something to her in a whisper, and the old ruin raised her eyes to him so languishingly that even Murray, catching my eye, had to turn his face aside to smile.

All through the lunch, which was a very merry one, Lucy, with a face like a judge, attended to my aunt's wants, entreating her in low, lover-like tones, and with

tender looks, to try a little of this or of that, and occasionally paying her some ridiculous compliment, which she swallowed with avidity. At last, however, he saw that my sister was beginning to feel annoyed at her aunt's folly, ceased his nonsense, and left her alone for awhile.

"I wish we could all dine here like this to-night, Walter," said Mrs. Murray to her son, "but I suppose we should be devoured by mosquitoes. I'm sorry, too, that the dining-table in the cottage is so small—it would certainly be pleasanter than that great dining-room in the hotel, with a hundred or more of other diners around us. But there's no help for it; however, the head waiter is keeping us one of those tables by the windows, looking out upon the garden."

"That'll do splendidly, mother. There's to be a concert this evening, I hear, in the ball-room; the Carandini quartette are coming from Sydney. It will be a treat to hear them."

After a delightful afternoon, the four ladies went to the hotel to rest a little before dinner, which was to be at seven o'clock, while Murray and the rest of us went on board the yacht to wash and change our clothes.

The yacht's dingy being very small, we came on shore two at a time. I was last of all, as Pat O'Day told me that he had just seen a shark cruising about, and I lost about ten minutes in helping him to fix up the shark line and hook, so when I landed I had to follow after my friends alone.

The hotel verandah was crowded with visitors sitting out in the cool on cane chairs and lounges; and, knowing there was still plenty of time before dinner, I sauntered leisurely around the verandah towards the smoking-room bar, where I knew I should find Murray

and the others. I was just about to push open the door, when something lying on a bamboo lounge at the end of the verandah caught my eye—a lady's sunshade and a gentleman's stick. I knew them both.

I went over and was staring at the articles with open mouth, when a waiter came along, took them up, and carried them inside.

“What the blazes is the matter with you, little Billy Boy?” said Lucy to me, as, a minute or two later, I was in the smoking-room, drinking a glass of lager-beer; “why, you look as dull as a stuffed owl.”

“I feel a bit headachy, I think,” I muttered confusedly, as we went into the drawing-room to join the ladies.

CHAPTER XV

MR. AND MRS. HENRY BRANDON DINE

“WHAT shall I do? What *can* I do?” I kept asking myself, as I took my seat beside Mrs. Murray. Something horrible would happen, I was sure, unless I could devise some means to prevent it. Young as I was, I wondered at the mad folly of Brandon and Madame de Langle at coming to this place together, so near to Sydney, and with more than a hundred people staying in it! But angry with, and jealous of, him as I was, there was but one thought uppermost in my mind—how could I warn them? Lucy, if he saw either of them alone, was bound to speak to them; Murray knew Brandon, and knew *of* Madame de Langle, and I had distinctly during lunch told every one in answer to my wretched old aunt’s persistent inquiries about Madame de Langle, that she had gone away to the Blue Mountains for a few weeks with some friends, as she was ill.

Then again—and the thought was a pleasing one to me—perhaps Brandon *might* have met Madame de Langle accidentally, and they had merely come to spend the day at Botany; perhaps Brandon’s sudden disappearance had had nothing to do with her departure, and I was wronging her upon mere suspicion. Then I remembered Hortense Suret’s laughing reply to me when

I had asked her to tell me when she really expected her mistress back, as I wanted Brandon to come home with me on a visit to my people.

"Ah, what has Mistare Brandon's return to do with Madame?" she had said, as she playfully slapped my cheek, and told me not to ask questions about things which did not concern me.

"What is the matter, Mr. Breachley?" said Mrs. Murray presently. "You are not eating anything scarcely."

"I have a rather bad headache," I said; "in fact, it is so bad that I hardly know what I'm saying or doing. I think I'll go away for five or ten minutes, if you'll pardon me."

"Dear lad," said Aunt Selina, "he does look pale. His dear father was so subject to these distressing headaches."

Inwardly I thanked the old gabbler from my heart. I had never heard of my father having had a headache in his life, but that was of no consequence to me; I was only anxious to get away for a while to think by myself. I *must* see Harry, or, failing him, Madame de Langle, and warn them not to come into the dining-room.

"I think I must have got a touch of the sun this morning," I said, as I rose, "but if I put my head in cold water for five minutes I'll be all right. I always did that when I was on the Daintree."

I took myself off amid many expressions of sympathy from our party, and walked out on to the verandah facing the garden. Here I sat down to think, and soon evolved a plan—a note to Harry, if I could get it given to him, would be far better than my attempting to see him. Jumping up, I went into the smoking-room, hurriedly wrote a few lines, and enclosed the note in

an envelope which I carefully gummed. All I said was :

“HARRY,—Don't come down to the dining-room or outside *anywhere* this evening. Lucy, Murray, and some ladies are dining here.—Yours, W. B.”

Now, how was I to address it? Harry had probably assumed some other name, and, if so, of what earthly use was my note unless I found out what that name was? And how could I find out that? Undecided what to do, I went out of the smoking-room, and in the hall I met the waiter whom I had seen remove the sunshade and stick. Here was the very man who could help me! He was carrying a tray with some drinks to a couple of men who were seated just outside.

“Waiter,” I said, “I want to speak to you for a moment. As quick as possible, please.”

“Yes, sir. I'll come back at once.”

As soon as he returned I asked—

“Waiter, can you tell me the name of that gentleman and lady whose sunshade and stick I saw you take away from that seat over there? I believe they are friends of mine.” Then, as the man, or rather youth, shook his head doubtfully, I added quickly, “The gentleman's very dark, lady very fair.”

“Oh, now I do know who you mean, sir; but there's such a lot of people here, I couldn't remember at first: you mean Mr. and Mrs. Brandon, sir—French, they are, I think, or at least the lady is.”

“That's it,” I said hurriedly—“Mr. Brandon. Now, look here, I'm with a party here, dining, and must go back to them immediately; and if you can give this note to Mr. Brandon at once I'll give you half a sovereign. Here—here it is now;” and I put the money and letter in his hand.

“Thank you, sir, thank you. I’ll go at once. I know their number, I think.” He darted along the hall and up the wide staircase as I uttered a sigh of satisfaction and seated myself on a hall chair for five minutes. Then, just as I was about to return to the dining-room, back he came, letter in hand.

“Very sorry, sir, but they went out about ten minutes ago, the chambermaid says. They were dressed for dinner.”

“Oh, Lord!” I groaned.

“But she thinks they were going out into the sea-garden first, as they went along the other passage, and the lady had a cloak——”

“I see, I see. Now do, like a good chap, hurry after them; and here—here is an extra half-crown for your trouble. I particularly want them to have that letter at once, or as quickly as ever you possibly can.”

“Any answer, sir?”

“No, no,” I replied impatiently; “go on, or you’ll miss them.”

“No fear, sir. They generally go for a stroll right round the sea-garden before they go in to dinner; it’s very quiet then, sir.”

He ran down the wide, curving path towards the sea-garden, and again I breathed freely. Just then Lucy came through from the dining-room looking for me.

“Well, old chap. How do you feel? You do look a bit flurried. Now look here, before you come in again let me get you a stiff brandy-and-soda here in the smoking-room. Best thing in all creation for a sudden headache—champagne is poison for it. And I’ll take one myself. We won’t be two minutes over it.”

“Then let us go into the bar,” I said, afraid that my messenger might return and speak to me, and cause

Lucy to wonder what was in the wind. So into the bar we went, and I thoroughly enjoyed that brandy-and-soda. We remained about eight or ten minutes; then, feeling that I had done my duty to my neighbour Brandon, we returned to our friends, and I resumed my seat beside Mrs. Murray, declaring that I "felt splendid," and meant to eat a good dinner.

"Oh, I am so glad, Mr. Breachley," she said; and then, as she slightly raised her head and looked down to the far end of the room, "Oh, dear, what handsome young people! . . . Ah! there—how annoying; they have just sat down, and I can't see them now. Such a lovely woman, or rather girl, I should say. We shall get a look at them presently, I hope, when some of the people leave the intervening tables."

I gave a sickly smile, but made no answer, as a dismal foreboding again assailed me. Presently I took a side-long glance in the direction she had indicated, and just succeeded in obtaining a momentary view of Madame de Langle's face. She was leaning over the little table, smiling and talking to Harry, whose back was towards me. I put my hand to my forehead involuntarily. I must make another attempt, if I did not see the waiter give them my note in a few minutes. Surely he must have missed them and would appear presently. Harry would not be such a madman as to reject my warning had he received it. All would be right in a few minutes, and they could leave the room without being seen by the only two of our party, except myself—who would recognise Brandon—Lucy and Murray. The latter, perhaps, if by any chance he did see Harry, was hardly likely to draw even my attention to the fact, and Madame de Langle he did not know by sight. But with Lucy it was different. He knew them both, and liked them

both, and was always talking to me of them, and I knew that if by any ill-luck he saw them, he would quickly draw his own conclusions, even if he said nothing.

Ten minutes passed, and then something like a groan escaped me when I saw that the objects of my solicitude were still at the table.

“Is your head bad again, Will dear?” asked Frances.

“Horribly,” I said. “Please don’t feel altogether too angry with me, but I’ll go and lie down somewhere for a quarter of an hour. I feel so horribly giddy, too. Now, just stay where you are, Lucy; if you dare to leave your seat I won’t leave mine. I’m not a baby.”

Once outside again, my spirits rose. I could do it yet, I reasoned. At the same end of the dining-room in which Harry and “the sweetest woman in all the world” were sitting, so beautifully and so serenely unconscious of danger, I had noticed that there was a second entrance door, leading out on to the front lawn, through which every now and then guests were entering or leaving. But how to get to this door I did not exactly know, for the hotel was a very large building, and consisted of many wooden wings and additions. To write a second note and find a second messenger would mean too much time, and in another half-hour or less many of the diners—half at least—would have left to be in time for the concert; and the quicker the room was emptied the more certain would it be that Mrs. Murray would point out the “handsome young people” to the rest of our party, and Madame de Langle and Brandon be recognised by Lucy at least.

Going out through the main door of the hotel, I slipped quickly along the path to the corner of the hotel, turned to the right, and presently saw the bright lights reflected

through the dining-room windows, followed them along, and came to a second entrance—that through which Harry and Madame de Langle had doubtless passed after coming in from their short walk in the sea-garden.

Walking as slowly as I could, so as not to attract attention, I walked into the vestibule. The door of a card-room on my right was open, and standing just inside it, I had a good view of my comrade and his lady-love, for they were not ten paces away from me. They were dining very leisurely, and evidently not going to the concert, although in evening dress. Presently the waiter who was attending to them came towards me. I made him a quiet but expressive gesture to come to me, and then drew back a little into the card-room, holding some loose silver—all the money I had with me—in my hand in readiness.

“Waiter, I want you”—slipping the coins into his hand—“to at once go to that gentleman you are waiting upon, and——”

“Which gentleman, sir?”

“Mr. Brandon. And tell him that a gentleman wishes to see him for just one moment on very important business—say most pressing business, and I shall be deeply obliged if he will come at once.”

“Your name, sir?”

I was just about to give my name, when I thought of how it would startle Madame de Langle.

“Look here, waiter, Mr. Brandon is an intimate friend of mine, but—well, the fact is, Mrs. Brandon would not be pleased to know it was me; do you see——”

The man nodded, but at first seemed rather doubtful—I daresay he had experienced a little of Brandon’s

erratic temper—but seeing that I was evidently staying at the hotel, and feeling the money in his paw, he consented to carry my message.

“Ask him to come with you,” I said. “I’ll wait for him at the verandah, just beside that big aloe there.”

Under the shadow of the aloe I waited, and in a few seconds Harry Brandon came out, preceded by the waiter, who, indicating the place where I stood, discreetly went inside.

“Who is it?” said Brandon, stepping quickly towards me. “Who is it, and what do you want?”

“It is I, Harry,” I began hurriedly—“I came to——”

In an instant he sprang at me, and his right hand grasped my throat as he uttered a savage curse, and shook me to and fro as if I were a boy of ten.

“You damned, prying young hound, I’ll strangle you!” he hissed through his set teeth.

“Harry!” I gasped, “for God’s sake, listen——” then as I felt he was strangling me, and I saw the fearful look of passion in his eyes, I lost all control of myself, and struck him three or four times in the face in quick succession, for I was as tall as he was and a little longer-armed.

But I had not the ghost of a chance with him. First jerking me towards him, he then hurled me backwards over the low verandah coping on to the pavement below. I fell on my head—and took no further interest in the proceedings.

When I next came to my senses I was in Sydney Hospital, where I had been for a week.

CHAPTER XVI

“ A DREADFUL MUDDLE ”

“ OH, Will, it was dreadful—really dreadful! When they carried you up on the verandah, all smothered in blood I felt that I *must* faint, although I heard some one say that you were dying. But I think that Aunt Selina’s fearful screams frightened me more than anything else. Oh, they were something horrible, really horrible! ”

Frances had come to see me, and was telling me of all the pleasant things that had happened. Murray and Lucy had both called frequently to inquire after me, but were not allowed to see me; but the matron had told my sister that as soon as I was fit to see any one she would send her word, so Frances was the first visitor to whom I was allowed to talk. Fan had her good points as well as her bad ones, and I think she felt intensely sorry for me, for her voice was very soft and tender when she first sat beside my bed, and her eyes filled with tears when she saw the rag-and-bone like appearance I presented.

“ Tell me the whole yarn from the beginning,” I said; “ but, first of all, where is Brandon? ”

“ In prison. The magistrate refused to accept bail, though Mr. Lucy came forward. He (the magistrate I

mean) said he would commit him to gaol until you recovered—if you did recover—before he would consider the question of bail. Oh, Will, whatever was the cause of it all ? ”

I considered a moment. “ I hardly know myself. What did Harry Brandon say ? ”

“ Nothing ! Absolutely nothing ! Oh, it seems to be a dreadful muddle ! Mr. Luey, I know, likes you, and yet he wants, or appears to want, to shield that dreadful young Brandon from punishment. Mr. Murray, on the other hand, called Brandon ‘ one of the greatest young scoundrels unhung,’ in the presence of about fifty people. What does it all mean, Will, and who is Marcia Walenne ? ”

“ Marcia who ? ”

“ Marcia Walenne. When Mr. Murray and another man seized Brandon and held him till the police came I heard Murray say to him, ‘ You damned young ruffian ! I once told you that if I had been Marcia Walenne’s father I would have shot you like a rat ! You escaped then, but you won’t escape now ’ ; or it was something like that—I can’t remember exactly, everything was so awful and sudden, and every one was so excited.”

“ I have never heard the name before, Fan,” I said. “ I *do* know that Murray has an intense dislike to Brandon. They came out from England together in the same ship ; but what there is between them I don’t know. Now, go ahead and tell me the whole yarn of how I come to be here stretched out like a trussed fowl.”

As we talked the assistant house-surgeon, a ruddy-faced, genial man, came along with the matron.

“ Now, now, *now*, Miss Breachley ! This won’t do. I let you in specially to-day, which is not visitors’ day,

and here you are—not behaving nicely. I won't have all this talking. I won't have it!"

Fan looked at the doctor (she married him a year or two later) with an indignant expression.

"Then why did you let me come in at all, Dr. Mariner? Do you think I am to sit beside my brother with my handkerchief to my eyes, instead of talking to him, poor boy? You know perfectly well, Dr. Mariner, that you *distinctly* told me that I could come to-day and talk to him. And I want to talk to him—talk a lot. If you forbid me, I'll have him taken away, out of this horrid place and I'll never speak to you again."

The doctor took it all most good-humouredly, and I could see by the expression of his face that he admired my sister very much. He sat down near me and chatted for about ten minutes, telling me that my thick skull had ruined two flags of pavement, and that I could leave the hospital in a few days. Then, shaking hands with Fan, and telling her she could stay another half an hour if she liked, he went off.

Then Fan began.

"He's such a nice man, Will dear. I've been here every day to inquire about you, and he *has* been so kind. He's rather plain though, isn't he? but——"

"Oh, never mind the beastly old doctor, Fan; go and tell me——"

"He's not old, Will, you silly boy. He's only thirty, and I heard mother say—well, never mind, he's *not* old, and he's *not* beastly, and he saved you from dying. Now I *will* go on. Is your pillow all right?"

"Right as rain, old Fan."

"You slangy boy! Now before I tell you the 'whole yarn' as you call it, I must let you know that poor Mr. Lucy is most anxious to see you; in fact he came

here with me this afternoon; but Dr. Mariner would not let him come in. So he is coming to-morrow, but I am to see him again this afternoon, and let him know how you are.”

“What a beast!”

“Who?”

“Why, the doctor, of course. Lucy is all right.”

“Mr. Lucy is ‘all right,’ as *you* say, Will dear; and Dr. Mariner is *not* a beast, as *I* say.”

“Go ahead, then.”

“About ten or fifteen minutes after you had left us the second time we saw a lot of people at the further end of the room jump up from their seats and run outside, and some one called out, ‘A man has been murdered!’ and another that some one had fallen from one of the upper windows on to the pavement and was killed. Every one remaining in the room—ladies and all—followed the others, we among them, out into the vestibule, where we saw Mr. Brandon being held by two men, a waiter and one of the gentlemen staying at the hotel. His face was covered with blood, and whilst everybody was crowding around, and asking all sorts of questions, you were carried in by Mr. Murray’s man, Pat O’Day, and a waiter.

“‘Get away, ladies,’ said O’Day, ‘get away, and for God’s sake, Mr. Murray, send for a doctor. I think Mr. Breachley is dying. He’s been fighting with Mr. Brandon.’

“In an instant Aunt Selina gave a most *horrible* scream, and flopped—yes, Will, flopped is the only word—into Mr. Lucy’s arms, and almost at the same instant another lady, who had just come into the vestibule, pushed every one aside and rushed up to Mr. Brandon. He said something to her in a low voice

—asked her to go away, I think—but I can't say, for now Aunt Selina gave another shriek, and began to kick and wriggle and really go into hysterics, and Mr. Lucy just picked her up, bundled her into the card-room, and left her to the care of some ladies. I did not scream, thank goodness, but when I saw your face I all but fainted, but managed to keep up, and when you were placed on a sofa, Mr. Murray let me stay beside you till the doctor came. Then whilst we were waiting I saw Mr. Lucy go up to the lady—who had flung her arms round Mr. Brandon—say something to her, take her by the arm, and lead her away. Oh, Will, she was as white as a sheet, and was scarcely able to stand, she was trembling so, and the bosom of her dress and one cheek were red with blood from Mr. Brandon's face.

“Fortunately there was a doctor in the concert hall, and just as Mrs. Brandon and Mr. Lucy went out, he came in; and made every one except Mr. Murray, Pat O'Day, a waiter, and myself go away, for by this time Aunt Selina's screams had brought every soul in the place about us, and the verandah and vestibule were simply packed with curious people.

“Then in came the police—a sergeant and two constables—and Mr. Murray took them into a side room. In a few minutes he came out, and then he spoke to Mr. Brandon, who was still being held by the gentleman and the waiter, and called him a scoundrel, and said that about Marcia Walenne. Then the police came out, and just as they were taking Mr. Brandon away Mr. Lucy stopped them and whispered something to him, and, to our intense astonishment, the two shook hands.

“All this time Aunt Selina's shrieks and horrible

laughter were going on, and the doctor, who was busy looking at your head, became so angry that Mr. Lucy told a waiter to go in and throw a bucket of water over her, which was at once done. Then Mr. Murray, after telling me that you would not die, asked me to go back to Sydney with his mother and sister and Aunt Selina, and although I did not like leaving you, I did so, as he had a carriage waiting. The landlady brought a change of clothes for poor aunt—oh, Will, undressing her was like taking a clock to pieces—and Mrs. Murray and I dressed her, and helped her to the carriage, and just as we were leaving I saw Mr. Lucy and Mrs. Brandon come out of the main entrance. He was partly leading, partly carrying her, and put her into a hansom, which at once drove off.

“In the morning Mr. Murray called to see me, and said that you were getting on all right, and were to be taken away from the hotel to the hospital, and here you have been ever since, and oh, Will dear, it seems such a dreadful muddle. Do tell me what you were fighting about?”

“I can’t, Fan; I really can’t. And I really believe that Harry Brandon was not quite right in his head when he threw me over the coping. He imagined I was trying to do him an injury. I must see him.”

“Write to him.”

I shook my head. Then I thought of Lucy, in whom I could now confide; for, from what my sister had told me, it was evident that he knew Madame de Langle’s secret, and had befriended her by taking her away. Yes, I could, and certainly would trust him.

“Will,” broke in Fan, “did *you* know that Mr. Brandon was married? Mr. Lucy didn’t, neither did Mr. Murray, and they both seem to avoid speaking on

the subject. When we went out to the vestibule, and some one cried, 'Here is his wife coming,' Mrs. Murray at once recognised her as the lady she had tried to point out to you as being so pretty. Mr. Brandon she did not at first recognise, as his face was bent down, and covered with blood as well."

"Poor Harry! I did not mean to hurt him. In fact, I was as mad as he for the moment."

"Did you ever meet her, Will? Do you know her at all?"

I had to make a stand. "Fan dear, don't ask me any more questions, there's a good girl. My head feels dizzy again."

She at once ceased her inquiries, and after remaining another ten minutes, rose to leave, promising me to ask the doctor to let Lucy see me as early as possible in the morning.

"Tell Mr. Lucy, Fan, that he must do all he can to get Harry out on bail. It makes me quite miserable to think of him being in a common gaol."

At eleven o'clock on the following morning Dr. Mariner came to me with a smile on his face.

"Your friend will be up in a minute. He says he's got some good news for you, and that he won't stay more than a quarter of an hour. Now, how are you this morning?"

"Grand, doctor, grand. I want to get up."

"Do you, now? Well, you can't, so let me hear no more about getting up for another couple of days at least. Now, here's your friend."

Lucy entered, and pressed my hand warmly. "Billy, my boy, you're a brick, you're a jewel of a boy. Brandon knows now, *why* you wanted to see him; and he's worrying his soul out about you. The worst of it

is, I can't get the magistrate who sent him to quod to let him out on bail, though I have just told him that you were absolutely out of all danger, and would not prosecute, as the whole affair was a fearfully stupid blunder, and that you and Brandon are much attached to each other. Was that right?”

“Right! Yes, indeed. Just the thing. How very kind of you.”

“Oh, well, the magistrate said he would have to see you himself. So make haste and get on your feet again.”

Then suddenly his manner became grave as he put his hand on mine and looked steadily into my face.

“Billy, my boy, this is a sad, a shocking, terrible business. You are very young, but you acted a man's part in trying to get that letter to Brandon.”

“*Did* he get it, then?”

“Yes, he did—this morning. I gave it to him; but I'll tell you all about it presently. But, Bill, I could hardly bring myself to shake hands with him, when I remember what misery he has caused. What is left to that wretched woman now but disgrace—or death!”

I was silent.

“It was the maddest, maddest, rottenest thing I've ever heard of. But, bad as she is, Bill, I pity her from my heart; as for him, he's a born devil as far as women go, and if he had his deserts, he ought to have a bullet through his brains. I like the young fellow for many things, but I can't get over this—it's altogether too bad, too bad entirely; and if what Murray tells me about another young lady is true, then he's a thorough-paced villain.”

I thought I knew to whom he referred—the Marcia Walenne whom my sister had mentioned—but I said

nothing, as Lucy went on to say that Madame de Langle for two or three days was quite prostrated and nearly out of her mind.

“Where is she?”

“In Melbourne, poor wretch. I brought her to Sydney in a state of collapse, and a devil of a time I had of it, too, I tell ye now.”

As soon as possible he had, he said, driven Madame de Langle to a quiet hotel—the Oxford, in King Street—a place much frequented by commercial men, and the landlord of which was well known to him, and became very sympathetic when Lucy told him that the lady was a personal friend of his, and had just received some distressing news which had quite prostrated her, and he wished her to have perfect rest and quiet for a day or two. Then off he went to the Royal Hotel for Hortense Suret, whom he brought to her mistress. In fact, he had acted most generously throughout, and had tried to spare Madame de Langle’s feelings as much as possible.

“But of course I had to talk to her a little, and I told her what I thought she had best do. She seemed half-dazed, but promised to follow my advice, and has done so. At first she was nearly mad with terror at the prospect of your dying and the gay Mr. Harry dangling from the end of a noose—where he ought to be, I’m thinking, this minute. However, I assured her that you were in no danger, though you did get a mighty hard crack.”

“But tell me about the note.”

Lucy laughed this time. “Ah, that’s as curious a thing as ever happened. Of course, when the row occurred, and I saw Brandon and—ahem, *Mrs.* Brandon, I partly guessed what had given you that alleged head-

ache ; but, of course, I had no idea that you had tried to send him a letter.”

Then he told me that two or three days later, after an interview with Madame de Langle, he went out to the hotel at Botany, saw the landlord, settled the bill, and gave him an order for “Mr. and Mrs. Brandon’s” luggage, which Hortense, who went with him, packed. Whilst he was waiting for her, he went to the smoking-room for a drink, and there saw the waiter lad to whom I had given my letter. When the drink was brought the waiter, who had recognised him as one of our party, asked him how I was, and then, after a deal of hesitation, drew the note from his pocket, and told him that I had written it.

“‘It was this way, sir,’ he said,” resumed Lucy, “‘I runned round and round for nigh on ten minutes, and couldn’t find Mr. Brandon and his wife, and then, not looking where I was going, I tripped and fell right into a cactus bed, scratched my hands bad, and lost the letter. I searched and searched, but couldn’t find it, so went back for a light, and came back and looked again. Then I had to cut back to the smoking-room, for fear of losing my place, and just then I heard the row. I didn’t like to tell no one about the letter, bein’ afraid as I might get into trouble with the police. But in the morning I found it, and have kep’ it in my pocket, not knowing what to do with it.’

“I gave him a few shillings, and told him to say nothing about the matter ; then, when I returned to Sydney, gave the letter to Hortense and desired her to give it to her mistress and tell her that she had better open it.

“She did open it, and in ten minutes the whole thing was clear. She asked me to come upstairs and see her,

and I found her crying. She is very, very grateful to you, Billy, and so, too, is Brandon, for when I took him the note this morning he trembled like a girl as he read it. . . . But he's a damned bad egg and a devil with women all the same. I wouldn't trust a nun with him for five minutes, if she was a bit young."

CHAPTER XVII

I AM "SHANGHAED"

AS soon as ever I was able to leave the hospital, I went with Lucy and called upon the magistrate before whom Harry Brandon had been brought after the "dreadful muddle." He was really a very good-natured man, and when I assured him on my word of honour that I had not the slightest ill-will towards Brandon, and felt very miserable at his not being allowed out on bail, he at once accepted it from Lucy, fixing the amount at the lowest sum possible. Then, armed with the necessary document, Lucy and I drove off to the gaol, and in half an hour Harry was outside with us, and driving into town to an hotel.

Lucy ordered lunch, and in the meantime we went into the smoking room, for the good-natured Irishman had told us that he had something to say to us.

"Brandon," he said, as soon as we had seated ourselves, "I don't want to be long-winded, nor attempt to read you a lecture—it's not in my line, and I'm not the proper living sort of man to do it. But you've made a beastly mess of things, and it is only by the merest chance that instead of Billy here being seated beside us drinking a glass of lager beer, he is not lying under six feet of ground and you sitting in the condemned cell listening

to a parson. They hang people mighty quickly in New South Wales, Mr. Brandon."

He spoke so earnestly that Harry was deeply impressed.

"I know I'm a thundering blackguard, Lucy," he said slowly, "but as true as there is a God above, I did not know what I was doing—I was mad."

"Let it all pass, Harry, old boy," I said, placing my hand on his shoulder. "I would do anything in the world for you, and I know you did not mean to hurt me——"

He did not reply for a moment, but bent his glance to the ground, and clasped his hands between his knees—"Billy, you are the only fellow I ever liked, the only good friend I have ever had——"

"Wait a bit, wait a bit," interrupted Lucy, "you have another man who will be a friend to you if you will let him, and that is myself."

"You have proved that, Lucy, by your generosity in getting me out of gaol to-day——"

The Irishman's eyes flashed, and he banged his hand on the table. "Hold your tongue, ye young divil! Do ye think I meant *that*? No, no, my boy! 'Tis not a matter of fifty or a hundred pounds that I'm thinking of, for I know that you're honourable enough in money matters, but now I'm appealing to ye and asking as a favour that which I could demand as a right. And—if your heart is in the right place, you'll do what I ask."

"I will do . . . anything you ask."

Lucy rose, and taking him by the arm, the two walked to the further end of the room and conversed for about ten minutes. Then I saw them shake hands, and Brandon walked over to me, and held out his hand to me.

"Billy, old boy, I must say goodbye. I am leaving Sydney this afternoon. There is a steamer leaving for New Zealand at five o'clock."

I looked at him in astonishment. "This is sudden, Harry."

"Yes, it is. But you see, I've promised Mr. Lucy; and it is for my own good. . . . No, I won't stay for lunch, old man. I've several matters to attend to, and there's not much time. So goodbye."

"But I'm not going to say goodbye like this," I protested. "I'll come down and see you off at any rate."

Brandon looked inquiringly at Lucy, who shook his head.

"No, Billy, you had better not. It is best for Brandon to get away quietly. Any officious policeman who happened to know he was out on bail might stop him, and that would only make matters worse."

So we parted with a warm hand grasp, he promising to write to me from New Zealand, and tell me of his future movements, and vowing that we should meet again—"If I am alive, Bill, I'll be back in Australia two years from to-day. I've promised Mr. Lucy to do certain things, and I'll stick to my promise. Goodbye, Bill. You have always been a good mate to me, always, always, and . . . Billy, old chum, have you truly forgiven me?"

He spoke so earnestly that I was quite affected, and could only reply by wringing his hand. Then the bold Lucy came to the rescue with a bottle of champagne.

"Come, boys, we'll have a parting drink together."

The wine was drunk, though not very merrily, for I was distressed at parting from my friend so suddenly, and he looked pale and ill at ease—quite unlike his

usual self. Once more he shook our hands, and then quietly walked out of the room without turning his head, and descended the hotel steps into the street. Then Lucy and I went to his room, collected and packed his belongings, and labelled his bag, "Mr. Blake, Passenger to Auckland, ss. *Claude Hamilton*," and sent it on board.

"Well, I'm glad he's gone," said Lucy, during lunch, and then he told me that not only had Brandon promised to clear out of Australia for at least two years, but had pledged his word to write and break off his engagement with Miss Flemming. How Lucy came to know of this affair I did not inquire, but think he heard of it from Murray.

"How did he take your interference?" I asked.

"Very quietly indeed; in fact, to do him justice, he is thoroughly repentant and miserable over his attack on you. Then, in addition to that, he rather likes me, and I think I understand his nature. I pleaded with him as one man with another, and then said after a bit, 'Are you going to be such a damned wretch as to make me write and tell the poor girl the story of Marcia Walenne and her child?'"

"What did he say to that?" I asked.

"Only a few words. He said very quietly, 'Don't do that, Lucy. I will break with Miss Flemming; but let me do it in my own way—in about a month from now.' And that quite contented me, for I know he will keep to his word."

"He will never break a promise—you may depend upon him," I said.

A few days after this my father arrived. He seemed very pleased to see me again, and said he was well satisfied with the way in which I had worked, cautioned

me against spending too much money on dress, and gave me two ten-pound notes, as an outward and visible sign that I had found grace in his eyes. And then came an unlooked-for and bitter disappointment—he had changed his mind about sending me away with the second expedition, as he intended going himself. I was to remain in Sydney in charge of the office of "Breachley and De Lisle," at a salary of three pounds a week. I felt myself aggrieved, and knowing it would be futile to attempt to induce my father to change his mind, a stupid and sullen resentment took possession of me, and I determined that as soon as the second expedition had started, I would strike out for myself, and leave the business of Breachley and De Lisle to be taken care of by some less ambitious youth than myself. To become a mere clerk in an office instead of leading a life of adventure was such an appalling and disgusting prospect, that I kept on swearing inwardly to myself that I would never do it—not if fifty fathers wished it. But my natural cunning came to my aid after a while, and I took care not to let my father know how I was raging inwardly at what my vitiated and perverse mind called his injustice to me, so for the following three weeks I worked hard assisting him in getting ready for his departure. Instead of chartering, he bought a fine old roomy barque of four hundred tons, with a cabin as spacious as that of one of the old-time East Indiamen, and the task of helping to load her with machinery and stores afforded me, as the undertakers say, a melancholy pleasure.

One glorious afternoon, nearly a month after Brandon's departure, and after Lucy had paid the estreated bail, I returned to the hotel earlier than usual to meet my sister, Lucy, and Dr. Mariner, and accompany them

to the theatre to see the famous Ristori in "Queen Elizabeth." Lucy was awaiting me, and as usual had brought his Irish thirst, which was in fine form. We had just ordered a couple of bottles of Tennant, when the postman came into the bar, and brought me two letters, and a newspaper for Lucy.

"Hurrah, Lucy," I cried, "here's a letter from Harry—the other is from May Flemming."

I tore Brandon's letter open, and then uttered an exclamation of disgust! It contained but half a dozen lines:—

"DEAR BILLY,—I'm all right, and very much alive. Have just shipped on the *Nebraska*, a rotten old side-wheeler, bound for San Francisco, sailing to-morrow. Lucy will know what to do with the paper. Write to me c/o British Consul, San Francisco.

"Yours, H. B."

My friend opened the Auckland paper, and there in the local news we saw this:—

"On arrival of the *Claude Hamilton* last night, it was found that a steerage passenger named H. Blake was missing. It is supposed that he fell overboard as the steamer was coming up the Harbour. He was about twenty-three years of age, and said he was a sailor."

"What does it mean?" I asked Lucy.

"It means that that is his way of breaking off his engagement with Miss Flemming."

"The cruel dog!" I said angrily.

"No. I think he has studied the thing out in the right way. It's better for the poor girl to believe he's

dead than for him to break her heart by a letter telling her he could not marry her. So I must write to May Flemming, and send her this paper to show to her sister. It seems a cruel thing, Billy, but it is not. It is better for that poor girl to weep over her dead lover than to think he is still alive and faithless. He'd break her heart and squander her fortune in twelve months if she married him. And she's young, and will soon get over it. So don't worry, my boy."

Lucy was quite right, for in less than three years I received a letter from May Flemming telling me that her sister, after remaining faithful for twelve months to the memory of the lover who was drowned (temporarily), married a tea planter in Ceylon, and was very, very happy, it being "*a real love match.*" As for dear little May herself, I never saw her again, though we corresponded for many, many years, until she too married, and forgot all about "Black Sheep Billy Breachley," as the merry-hearted girl used to call me.

As for poor Madame de Langle, she returned home with her husband to France, whence she wrote a piteous letter to Lucy, imploring him to tell her some news of Harry Brandon, and ending up by saying she was on the point of entering some religious house to end her days. Lucy, like a sensible man, sent her a copy of the paper he had forwarded to Jessie Flemming, and she troubled him no more. But five or six years after, Lucy, home in Europe for a holiday, met her at Nice, looking as beautiful as ever, and surrounded by a crowd of admirers, so evidently her intention of entering the religious house aforesaid had cooled down somewhat, and she had resigned herself to struggle on a bit longer with the vanities of this wicked world.

I have never forgotten her as the most beautiful and

ethereal-like woman I have ever seen, and I can quite understand both Brandon playing such a dishonourable part (I would cheerfully have done the same in the days of my youth had she given me encouragement), and her infatuation for him.

Soon after my father and his timber-getters had sailed for the Daintree, I decided to make a brief visit home, for I wanted to see my mother and my favourite sister Ada again. Lucy had gone away up the country somewhere, so I started alone, taking passage in a small topsail schooner named the *Hannah*. When twenty miles to the north of Newcastle, we were met with a heavy north-east gale, and had to turn tail and run before it into Newcastle for shelter after having our decks continuously swept by the furious sea.

The port was crammed with large vessels, all coal-laden, and bound principally to California and South American ports, but most of them were unable to put to sea, owing to being short-handed. Hundreds of men had deserted, attracted by the gold discoveries in the Shotover River in New Zealand, and the masters and agents were at their wits' ends to get crews, and all day long one could see anxious captains interviewing the street corner loafers, urging them to ship, and offering them a substantial advance. They would take almost anybody who could stand on his feet, and indeed one humorous Yankee mate stopped a hearse returning from a funeral, and asked the driver and his seedy, black-coated attendant and gin-smelling ghouls if they "wanted a pleasure trip to Honolulu and £10 each into the bargain." Much to his surprise, one of the "mutes," a fat, greasy-faced young man, got down off the hearse, and at once went with the American to the shipping office to sign on.

The little *Hannah* lay in port three days, until the gale blew itself out, and during this time I stayed at the principal hotel, spending money freely, drinking more than was good for me, and making the acquaintance of the various tawdry peroxide-haired barmaids in the hotels.

One evening about nine o'clock, the skipper of the *Hannah* came to look me up, and said he would sail at daylight. Promising to be on board by eleven that night I bade him good-night, and then, accompanied by an intelligent and bibulous American named Carey, I went to the theatre, where an alleged performance of "Monte Cristo" was being given.

Dissatisfied with this, we adjourned to a noted hotel, where gambling and other frivolous pursuits were indulged in, and by eleven o'clock my companion was comfortably drunk and asleep in his chair, and I was not much behind as far as his first-named condition went. However, I was sufficiently sober to know that I must get on board, and also to know that my evening's amusement had cost me twelve or fifteen sovereigns. I managed to find my way outside, and down to the wharf, where I sought in vain for a waterman. Then I tried to hail the *Hannah*, of which I saw a duplicate lying astern of the original, or *vice-versâ*, but my voice did not amount to much more than an incoherent mutter, and consequently no one heard me.

Just then a man came along the wharf towards me, and asked me what vessel I wanted. Lurching up against him, I said 'twas the *Hannah*.

"Just so," he said good-naturedly, "but I guess you can't make 'em hear. But as I am going off to my own ship, I'll put you aboard your hooker." Then, pro-

ducing a large flask, the kind-hearted man poured me out a very large drink of rum or some other satisfying spirit, and assisted me down the steps into his boat, which was awaiting him. His kindness did not stop here, for when I pitched over on to my nose in the bottom of the boat, he told me not to worry, and covered me over with his top-coat.

When I awoke about ten o'clock in the morning, with a head feeling like a furnace, I saw I was in a strange sleeping place—a large and comfortable foc'stle. Making my way on deck, I found I was on board a fine American barque, spinning along at a great rate, and that Newcastle was fifteen miles astern.

“Well, sonny, how do you feel?” said the mate (my friend of the previous night).

“D—— bad,” I replied sullenly, at once realising that I had been shanghaied.

“Well, tell the cook to give you some tea or coffee, and try and eat something. And don't look so mad. Now, look here, this is a darned pleasant ship for pleasant people, and you hev a darned pleasant face. If you hadn't, I guess I wouldn't hev kept my boat's crew pulling all round Newcastle harbour trying to find the ship you belonged to. And ez I couldn't find her, and you was too drunk to speak, I just brought you aboard here.”

The absurdity of this yarn made me smile. I said I knew I had been shanghaied, and must make the best of it.

“Now, that's sensible. I'll have you in my watch and make a sailor of you in no time.”

“What ship is this?”

“The *Ethan Allan*, of San Francisco. Now, move along and get rid of your bulbous head. You needn't turn to for an hour or two.”

I need not enter into details of the voyage, except to say that I was never better treated or better fed in any ship than I was on board the *Ethan Allan*, though she was short-handed. As soon as the mate, whose name was Peters, found I was no greenhorn, and was not inclined to shirk my work, he gave me many things in the way of clothing, and the captain also shed the light of his countenance on me and did me many favours.

We made a smart run to San Francisco, where I was paid off with thirty dollars, and another five from the captain, and I actually felt regret at saying goodbye to the barque—on which I had learnt much seamanship.

The first thing I did was of course to write home and tell my mother of my whereabouts. Shanghaieing, in Newcastle, was by no means uncommon in those days, so I was hopeful she had perhaps soon learnt from the local police there, every member of which had had a drink with me, what had become of me. In my letter to her I said that I must admit I had taken "just a little too much to drink," which was the cause of my misadventure, and that, as I knew what my father's opinion of me would be, I thought it best for me not to return home until I heard from him.

My letter posted, off I went to the British Consulate, to see if I could learn anything of Brandon. Nothing was known of him except that he had called and recorded his name for letters; but had not appeared since. Disappointed at this, I went to the shipping office, and there found that Harry had been paid off a few days after the *Nebraska* had arrived, and no one of the name of Brandon or Blake had since signed on for any other ship.

Work was plentiful in California at that time, and I soon found employment as a packer in Bancroft's book

store in Market Street, at fifteen dollars a week. But a fortnight of this convinced me that it was beneath my dignity to be hammering nails all day; I aspired to something better, threw up my "position," and became conductor on a horse-tram running between the city and Lone Mountain, at a better rate of pay. This was a billet that suited me very well, although the hours were long; but unfortunately one of the superintendents, who was a rank Fenian, learning I was a Britisher, dismissed me after a week's employment.

One day I made the acquaintance of the janitor of the gymnasium of a society called, let me say the "Association of Young Men for the Promotion of Christian Culture," or some such title, in Bush Street. He convinced me that I was eminently fitted to enrol myself among these good young men, so I joined, and very glad I was of doing so, for I not only went in for a proper course of athletics, but I made many acquaintances that grew into the friendship of a lifetime, young men of all ranks and positions in life. We of the gymnasium, however, were only Cultured Christian young men in theory, and seldom visited the lecture-rooms or attended the nightly religious services conducted by the superintendent and a score or so of acidulated, bony old virgins.

The librarian, however, was a very pretty young widow, a Mrs. Raymond, who had travelled extensively in England, and was free of the absurd notions then prevailing among untravelled Americans of England and English life generally. We had very many long talks, and when she one day told me that she had a brother who was a saw-mill proprietor in the State, I asked her to give me a letter to him, saying it might prove useful to me. I frequently

escorted her home to her lodgings in Howard Street, and we finally became great friends. She was a bright, happy little woman, but very nervous and timid, and she had a shrinking dread of one of the principal officials of the Association, an elderly gentleman with a pious visage and a fishy eye, who persisted in trying to take more than a fatherly interest in the fair librarian. This old beast was continually coming into the library when she was alone, and under the pretence of being "deeply concerned" about her loneliness in San Francisco, her religious state of mind, &c., &c., would try to take her hand and otherwise annoy the poor little woman, who was terrified of losing her position if she offended him by openly resenting his odious advances.

Now, it so happened that when she confided this to me, I remembered that one of my gymnasium friends, a Canadian hydraulic engineer, had once casually spoken to me of this pious old gentleman, and said that he had had to clear out of the State of Ohio for being concerned in some banking fraud, and that he had served a term of imprisonment.

"Will you let me tell Dunstan, Mrs. Raymond?" I said. "He knows something very serious about this fishy-eyed old villain, and, in fact, I'm almost sure he said that he is passing under an assumed name."

Mrs. Raymond stopped in her walk and clasped her hands, and said between a laugh and a sob that she wished something could be done to stop his persecution; and then she added, in a whisper, and with a vivid blush of shame, "I must tell you, Mr. Breachley, that yesterday he tried to put his arm round my waist and kiss me. And I'm so dreadfully, so horribly afraid of him. I can't write and tell my brother, and I don't

know what to do. And whenever the old thing comes near me I get cold, right down to my toes."

"Come," I said, "let us go and see Dunstan at the Lick House."

She knew and liked Dunstan, and assented. Retracing our steps, we were soon at the Lick House, and found Dunstan was in. I went into the subject at once and told him the object of our visit.

"The old reprobate!" he exclaimed indignantly. "I am so glad you have told me, Mrs. Raymond. You can rest assured that that man will just be fired out of his position in that Association within forty-eight hours. I know him well, though he doesn't know me—after ten years or so. His real name is Hooman, and only his being sent to prison for three years saved him being lynched in Cleveland. He has grown a long beard, but I can prove his identity as easy as falling off a log—a telegram will do it all, and I'll send it right away."

He sent the telegram, and then accompanied the little lady and myself to her lodgings, where we left her, her pretty face looking brighter and happier than it had for many weeks past.

At three o'clock on the following afternoon Dunstan, a reporter friend of ours on the *Chronicle*, named Jack Kellog, and myself, presented ourselves at Mr. ——'s office in the Association's building, and asked to see that gentleman on important business.

We were, after some delay, ushered into the good man's presence, and he asked us in a patronising manner to state our business, as his time was valuable. Dunstan at once set to work with a vengeance.

"Mr. ——," he began, "we shall not occupy your time long; don't be afraid of that. This is Mr. Kellog,

of the *Chronicle*; this is Mr. Breachley, and my name is Dunstan; we are all three members of this Association. It has come to our knowledge that you have grossly insulted the librarian of the institution. Now, sit down and listen quietly. We have come to see that you now, this moment, write out your resignation of the position you hold, and give it to us to post to the president of the Association. If this is not done we shall make public in the press of this city the story of your career in Ohio. I have here in my hand an official telegram from the chief of police in Cleveland city, giving your true name, and particulars of the crime which sent you to prison in that city. You have five minutes in which to decide."

And in five minutes Mr. —— did decide. With a face livid with hatred, he wrote out his resignation, and then leant back in his chair gasping, and trembling in every limb. Dunstan read the document carefully, and said it was satisfactory.

"Now, Mr. ——, our business is ended. You have done the only thing you could do, and we, on our part, promise to keep the matter absolutely secret, on one condition——"

"I will give you one thousand dollars——"

"I guess you won't. The one condition is that you do not enter this building again after you quit it to-day. If you do, then we shall make public the reason of our troubling you this afternoon. So, understand, you must quit right away if you want to save yourself, you damned old fraud."

A little before lunch-time the next morning, we went to see Mrs. Raymond in the library. She came to us with her two hands outstretched.

"You dear, good friends," she said with tear-filled

eyes ; “ he left yesterday, and there’s such a commotion over it.”

“ Come out and get something to eat,” we said together.

We had a delightful lunch at the “ Monico ” in California Street, at which Kellog joined us, and the little woman’s happiness filled our hearts with the greatest pleasure.

I remained in San Francisco for some months after this, sometimes assisting Dunstan in his office work, sometimes finding other employment, but never keeping at anything very long. In the end I made some very undesirable acquaintances, especially that of a man named Hasard, who was the proprietor of a combined shooting saloon and faro bank. He certainly was a magnificent shot, and in a few months taught me to shoot nearly as well as himself with a Winchester rifle, though I could not come near him with a revolver. He was a Louisiana man, had been through the war with Lee, and then found his way to California. His establishment was superintended domestically by two very handsome young women who enjoyed equal authority. He was a rather humorous man when in liquor, and would bewail—or pretend to bewail—his fate to me by asserting that they were both such excellent, well-conducted girls that he could not affront one by marrying the other.

After some months of a thoroughly vicious existence, I paid the first penalty by an attack of pneumonia—superinduced by getting drunk one night and going to sleep under the trees in the Plaza—which nearly cost me my life. The gambler and his two housekeepers were certainly very kind to me, and did all they could for me by giving me a comfortable room in the house, and get-

ting a good doctor. Just as I was recovering, dear little Mrs. Raymond discovered my location and came to see me. She had been told of the character of my host's house, but that was not going to stop her from coming. In ten minutes she had possession of me morally, and, within a week, I was on my way to her brother's saw mill at Gilroy, and there I remained for six months, working steadily, and leading a clean, healthy existence with Mrs. Raymond's brother and the rough mill men.

Then, as I have said, the paragraph in the paper about the *Lancefield* brought me back to 'Frisco.

CHAPTER XVIII

INSIDE THE GOLDEN GATE

ALL the morning I had been sitting on one of the grassy hills overlooking San Francisco Bay, sunning myself and watching the bright sunlight and swiftly-passing cloud shadows play upon the noble expanse of water far below. About a mile away were the frowning batteries of Alcatraz; between them and the white walls of the old Presidio lay a fleet of merchant ships; and nearer in, and seemingly so close beneath that you could almost throw a stone upon their shining white decks, were two Russian warships, the *Almaz* and *Vitiaz*. Ten miles away, on the Contra Costa side of the Bay, the lower slopes of Mount Tamalpais showed green and bright under the glowing rays of the noonday sun, and presently, as I laid back upon the grass and closed my eyes contentedly, the sound of soft, murmuring music floated up to me from the waters of the bay, as the bands of the warships began to play the Russian Hymn and from the fleet of ships came the faint, sharp tinkle of eight bells.

I was happy enough that warm Sunday morning—happier, I think, than I had been for the past two years,

since the day when I had said goodbye in Sydney to Brandon and my sister Frances.

* * * *

I had walked all the way from my lodgings in the city to climb the sea hills because I felt I wanted to be by myself, to look out upon the harbour and over to the Golden Gate beyond to the rolling bosom of the Pacific, which I had not seen for a long time, for I had just arrived from Gilroy, an inland town back east of Santa Cruz, where for nearly six months I had been working at a sawmill.

Lying beside me on the grass was a newspaper—the *Daily Alta California*—and it was that paper which had made me throw up my employment and hurry away to San Francisco, which I had reached about a fortnight previously. The foreman of the mill, a good-natured American, had lent it to me to read, as he knew I took an interest in any shipping news; and almost the first thing I saw was this:—

“The Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands, papers state that with the American whaling fleet now lying there is the British colonial ship *Lancefield*, of Launceston, Tasmania. She has not made a good catch, and is in such bad repair that she is discharging there, and coming to this port to be thoroughly overhauled. Her captain states that when cruising off the Tonga Islands he picked up a boat containing two white men—Peter Arndt, second officer, and Morgan Breachley, boat-steerer—and four natives belonging to the colonial whaler *Fanny Fisher*. They had fastened to a sperm whale, but had to cut, owing to darkness and bad weather coming on, and had not seen their ship since. The master of the *Lancefield* was in luck in dropping

across them, as he was very short-handed, owing to desertions."

The moment I had read this I knew that the "Morgan Breachley" was my brother. When we at home had last heard from him, he had told us he was going to Hobart Town to ship on the *Fanny Fisher*.

I at once went to the boss at the saw-mill, and told him I wanted to leave, and the reason therefor. He grumbled at first, but after extracting a half-promise from me that I would come back, paid me off with a good grace. My comrades at this mill were all a decent set of men, nearly every one of them being native-born Americans, and I was rather sorry to leave them. The prospect, however, of meeting my brother, whom I had not seen for so many years, was too great to be resisted, so, with over five hundred dollars in gold in my pocket, I said goodbye to Gilroy, took the stage-coach from there to San José, and was in San Francisco the next day.

After finding suitable lodgings in Third Street, off Market Street, I found my way to the Merchants' Exchange, where a friendly clerk gave me the latest shipping news, but said it was hardly likely anything further would be heard of the *Lancefield* until the Honolulu mail-boat *Idaho* arrived, which would be in a few days. At last that venerable marine antiquity put in an appearance, and I was soon on board, and to my delight heard that the *Lancefield* had been sighted, and passed, three days previously.

So on this particular Sunday I had left my room early, eaten an "able seaman's" breakfast at a good restaurant in California Street, and then climbed the hills overlooking the harbour in the hope that the

expected ship might sail, perhaps, through the Golden Gate that very day.

I had brought with me a flask of Angelica wine, and some turkey sandwiches, and so as the afternoon wore on I had some lunch, lit my pipe, and descended the hill to the shore to what was known as Meigg's Wharf, a very noted but not fashionable resort, frequented by the riff-raff, bummers, and water thieves of the city, on account of a menagerie, the grog-shops, and a minor faro den. The menagerie was a pretty extensive one, and was kept by an Englishman—an ex-man-of-war's-man of about sixty years of age, named Tod Barrow. He had a great and deserved reputation as a fighting man, and was the terror of his customers, who, when they got too much Bourbon aboard, would often indulge in a free fight, and draw their pistols on each other. On these occasions it was Barrow's practice to call at once his two stalwart sons to his aid, knock down one or two of the offenders, and pitch them over the shore end of the wharf into the soft mud below. He certainly was a man of the most resolute character, despised the use of the pistol in a quarrel, and, curiously enough, had gained the respect of the ruffians who frequented his establishment. He one day told me that he had never been fired at during all the years he had carried on the place.

This old fellow had been recommended to me by the friendly clerk at the Merchants' Exchange as a good man to whom to go if I wanted a waterman's boat at any time. "He's a darned rough old sort, but good-natured in his way, and won't rob you. Besides his other vocations, he does a little in the crimping line, but does it decently, I'm told."

Passing through a long refreshment-room, I was

shown Mr. Tod Barrow's private door, knocked, and a gruff, boatswain's mate-like voice bellowed out, "Come in," and I found the old man seated at a table making up his accounts. I told him my business, and he promised me I could have a boat whenever I wanted one, which would be as soon as the *Lancefield* dropped anchor in the Bay.

"But what do you want to go aboard a filthy blubber-hunter for, young feller?" he inquired, putting down his pen and burying his ruddy beak in a foaming seidel of lager-beer which was just then handed to him. "Surely a respectable young man like you ain't a-going to ship on a lousy whaler! Now, if you want a ship, I'm the man for you. What d'ye say to sixty dollars for the run home to Liverpool in a big wheat ship?—good solid English tucker, and a nice, kind man for a skipper?" Then he bawled out to the attendant to bring another seidel of lager.

"You can have rum or whisky, or any — thing you like," he added.

I preferred the lager, and then explained to him that I had no intention of shipping, and only wanted to get aboard the *Lancefield* to see my brother, whom I was in hopes of inducing to remain in California with me—"That is," I added, "if the captain will let him leave."

"Let him leave! He shall, young feller. Don't you trouble about that. I'm just the right man to come to; and if your brother wants to skip, and can pay for his board with me for a few weeks, skip he shall. So you're a Britisher like me, eh, sonny? Will you stop and have a cup of tea? I'm not like these bloody coffee-swilling Yanks, but sticks to my native customs—which is tea—good Chiny tea."

“Thank you, I should like a cup of good tea. They don’t drink tea at the place where I’m staying. Being Australian born, I’m a great tea-drinker when I can get it.”

“And you’ll get it here—a whole — bucketful if you like. You’ve come to the right place.”

Then, being a really hospitable man, though his language was shocking, he asked me to come and have a look at his “— menagerie.” He had about the best collection of parrots and macaws I have ever seen outside a zoological gardens, and nineteen of every twenty birds had been taught by the *habitués* of the place to blaspheme and curse most horribly; in fact, one would imagine, if the birds had not been visible, that an Australian football match was being played, as the shrieks, yells, oaths, blasphemies, with accompanying human laughter, poisoned the Sabbath air. Many of the poor birds were walking about on the sanded saloon floor, or perched on the tables, or on backs of chairs, and the moment we entered a fine white cockatoo asked us, in a grave sort of voice, what the (Hades) we wanted.

“Cocktails, you d—— swine!” replied a green parrot amiably, and in an instant half a dozen birds were screaming out the word “Cocktails” all over the place, amid the loud laughter of the bummers and bullies seated in the saloon playing cards and drinking.

It was very amusing, but also disgusting, so I was glad to follow my companion to the snake-shed and bear-pits. In the latter was a fine grizzly bear, which my host told me he intended to sell to the menagerie at Woodward’s Gardens for \$500. Presently we came to a work-shed, in which were a small portable engine and boiler, used for driving a circular saw. It was very much out of order, and the old fellow grumblingly

informed me that he had no time to put it in repair, even if he had known how, and that he could not get an engineer to come and see to it. I saw, after examination, that I could do all that was required in a couple of days, and offered my services. This pleased him greatly, and in a few minutes I made arrangements to come and start work on the following Tuesday morning, unless the *Lancefield* turned up in the meantime, in which case I was to come at my convenience.

I had tea with this curious character and his old housekeeper, and quite enjoyed myself. He told me many of his adventures when he first came to California in the wild days of '49, and I, in return, told him a good deal about myself. He gave me some excellent advice, and when I told him I had nearly five hundred dollars in my bag in my lodgings, urged me to make a point of banking it the first thing in the morning.

“Don't trust no one in this place,” he said, as he wrote me down the name of the cashier of his own bank in Montgomery Street; “you take this to Mr. Byrne, and tell him I sent you. Never trust no —— lodging-house-keeper under the sun; they're all —— sharks and the natural enemies of honest men. I take a sailor-man to board now and again, but no one can say that Tod Barrow robbed him of a cent, or tried to overhaul his belongings.”

Promising to take this advice, I bade him good-night, and set off home just after dark.

At ten o'clock in the morning, I was at the bank corner, and there, to my surprise, was my friend, awaiting me with a large family smile illuminating his rubicund countenance. In an instant an undefined suspicion as to his integrity flashed through my mind. “He's going to ask me to give him the money to bank,

or work some dodge on me," I thought, but in a few seconds I was blushing at myself.

"Ha, here you are. Come, hurry up, the bank door is just opening. If I'd ha' known where you lived, I'd been up afore breakfast—the *Lancefield* is in, and has anchored right abreast my place, and a damned rotten thing she is to look at."

He took me in to the bank; I quickly deposited my money, all but fifty dollars, and in another ten minutes we were walking quickly down to the bottom of Montgomery Street; then, turning to the left, climbed the steep cobble-stoned Vallejo Street, and thence descended the hills to his establishment, where he insisted on my drinking a huge tumbler of rum and milk with him.

The boat was all ready, manned by four whisky-eyed, bulbous-nosed toughs, and we at once started for the whaler, which was lying about half a mile distant. When we got close to her we saw that she was a four-boat vessel, between three and four hundred tons, and presented, outboard at any rate, a most filthy and deplorable appearance, while aloft her look would have disgraced a north country collier brig whose skipper and crew had been drunk for a month.

A police boat came alongside simultaneously with ours. Seizing the abominably dirty man-ropes of the ladder, I followed Barrow on deck. Almost the first man I cast eyes on was my brother. He was as filthy and ragged as the rest of the crew, ship, and gear, and for a moment did not recognise me when I rushed up to him and seized his hand.

"Hi there, you! What the hell are you doing there, talking to my men?" said an angry voice from the poop.

It was the captain who addressed me, and still holding

Morgan's hand, I did not for the moment answer. Then, as the order was again repeated, I hurriedly whispered to Morgan that I would see him again, and that my friend could get him out of the ship within twenty-four hours.

“Thank God for that, Billy! She's a hell afloat.”

Then I went aft. Tod Barrow had seized the captain's hand, and was shaking it warmly as if he had known him all his life.

“Glad to meet you, Captain. Glad to see you. This gentleman here”—nodding to the police officer—“will tell you who I am, and all I can do for you if you wants anything done. Ain't that so, Mr. Rogan?”

“That is so,” replied the police officer, who doubtless had had many unofficial transactions with my friend; “Mr. Barrow is a very respectable man.”

The captain then gave the three of us a surly invitation to come below and have a glass of grog. He was a morose, ill-humoured-looking beast, and his officers seemed to match him thoroughly.

CHAPTER XIX

THE "MUSS" ON THE "LANCEFIELD"

"NOW, Captain," began Barrow, as soon as we were all seated, "just tell me if you want any fresh men; if so, I'm the man for you."

"You might wait till I ask you," was the sullen reply.

"But that's just what I don't intend to do," said Barrow with a laugh, "I want to know at once—can't afford to lose no time. Of course you don't know me and don't know 'Frisco, but I'm the man to teach you. Look here, I've only to say the word, and I could take every man out of this old hooker of yours before sundown if I wanted to; and what is more, I can block you from getting a fresh crew—if you stayed here for six months. But there, you and me ain't agoin' to quarrel. I'm a business man, and I'm only a-making these perlimentary remarks as a business man—just to prevent you from going off on the wrong tack, and making a mess of things."

"What's your game? What do you want? Say it, and clear out."

"Easy, easy does it, captain. Well, first of all, I'll be obliged to you to let one of your hands, a man named Breachley, come ashore with me right away. This lad

here is his brother, and they haven't seen each other for a good many years. I'll be responsible to you for him."

"Will you now?" sneered the captain. "Now just listen to me—neither that man nor any other man of mine will go over the side of this ship until I let him go of my own free will, or kick him over. And you'll get kicked out of this cabin yourself if——"

"Steady now, captain. Don't get cross," said Barrow with the most perfect good temper, as he rose from his seat. "You've got a heap of things to learn, and I'm the man to teach you some of 'em. You've insulted me—and it's pretty rough for a man of my years to be sauced by the skipper of a greasy whaler—but I'll let that pass. Now before I go, I'll ask you once more, are you going to let that young chap come ashore—for a few hours at any rate?"

An oath, with an opprobrious epithet implying that Barrow, on the immediate maternal side of his family, was descended from the canine race, brought matters to a climax, for the old man's face, always of a deep red, became purple with sudden rage. Seizing the water carafe, which was standing on the cabin table, by its neck, he hurled at the captain with terrific force, and struck him fair and square on the chest. Then bidding me follow, he ran up the companion, bellowing like a wounded bull, for our four toughs.

"Where are you, my bully boys? Here's hell to pay, an' no —— pitch hot! This here skull-cracking swab of a blubber-hunting skipper has been an' committed an aggravated assault on me when I was quiet and peaceable. Where are ye, bully boys?"

"Here we are, boss," replied the "bully boys," as they ran aft towards us, and I saw that every one of them was carrying a slung shot. As they ran up on the poop,

the three mates and cooper of the whaler made a sudden rush at Barrow, and tried to throw him off the poop on to the main deck, but the old man was too good for them, and sent one of them down in an instant, and then in another five seconds there was a general fight going on. The captain, steward, and carpenter now appeared and gallantly went to the aid of the mates, who had provided themselves with belaying pins, and fought with desperation. Rogan, the police officer, with his four men, made no attempt to interfere, but jumping up on the rail, they held on to the mizzen rigging, and placidly chewed their nasty green cigars as they watched the conflict.

So suddenly did the *fracas* begin that for a moment or two I could only gaze at the scene in astonishment, but when I saw one of the "toughs" fall like a log on the deck, and one of the whaleship officers—the man who had felled him—stoop over his prostrate body and begin to batter in his skull with a belaying pin, I came to my senses. Whipping out a pin from between the feet of the policemen standing on the rail, I jumped across the deck, and dealt the officer such a swinging crack across the eyes, that I had a horrible suspicion I had killed him, for he fell quietly over on his side, and lay there motionless. But all the brute instinct to fight was now aroused in me, and was quickened by the carpenter making a furious rush at me, and all but succeeding in catching me on the top of my head with the first blow he aimed. And then came wild cries and oaths, and variegated blasphemy, as nearly half of the crew raced aft—my brother Morgan and another boatsteerer leading—not to the rescue of their officers, but to help to overcome them.

But the captain and mates of the *Lancefield*, tyrants,

“hazers” and all-round brutes as they were, were not the sort of men to cave in quickly. The captain and carpenter, I afterwards learnt, were Englishmen, the mates and cooper Americans, but they stuck to each other like men, and fought like tigers, and did not give in till they were beaten and kicked into insensibility by three of Barrow’s toughs and their own crew. And indeed Barrow, aided by Morgan, a fellow-boatsteerer of his named Collins, and myself, had our work cut out to prevent the captain from being murdered by a young half-caste Maori seaman, who, sheath knife in hand, made the most frantic and maddened efforts to get at him as he lay bleeding and unconscious on the deck. Frothing and foaming at the mouth like a mad dog, his eyes seeming literally to be starting from his head, and the veins in his forehead swelling to bursting point, his strength was superhuman, and the whole four of us could scarcely hold him as he swayed to and fro on the quarter-deck. The knife which he held in his hand Morgan in vain attempted to wrest from his grip, and only when he was flung down on his side and his outstretched arm was pulled out to full length, was he rendered weaponless by a man stamping on the blade and breaking it off short to the haft. Then and only then did the policemen interfere.

“Guess we’ll hev’ to ornament this young man,” said Rogan their chief, nonchalantly chewing his cigar, as he came forward with a pair of handcuffs. “He’s altogether too noisy, and he’ll be hurting some one if he ain’t attended to right away.”

He snapped the handcuffs on the Maori’s wrists, and then from the half-caste’s lips came a strange sobbing, almost pitiful wail.

“Oh, fo’ Christ’s sake, let me up! If I can’t kill

him myself, let me see him die. Look at my lef' han' ! Look at my lef' han' !" And then the poor devil wept like a child.

Rogan, the case-hardened police-officer, lifted the Maori's manacled hands and looked at the left one. It was minus the first joints of three fingers, the stumps of which were raw and bleeding through the bandages having been torn off in the fight.

"Who did this?" he asked.

"The captain! the captain!" cried half a dozen voices, and then one of the boatsteerers told us that one day when the boats were being lowered after whales, the Maori did not move quickly enough to please the brutal skipper, who, as the man was about to drop into the boat, seized an iron belaying pin, and smashed his hand against the rail.

"Strikes me this ain't much of a hooker, boys," cried Barrow to the crew. "Now, look here. If any of you want to clear out, now's your chance. I'm the man for you—I can stow you all away, and get you all decent ships."

They were only too delighted, and responded with a cheer, and in five minutes more than twenty of them tumbled into our boat—all she could carry—carrying with them their scanty belongings. The police did not attempt to interfere—in fact, they seemed to enjoy the thing. At this time, however, English ships and Englishmen generally were not in favour in California, for the *Alabama* Arbitration affair was going on, and all over the Northern and Western States there was a feeling of intense anger against England, and a great portion of the daily press was calling for war. I San Francisco itself—one of the most cosmopolitan and mongrel cities in the world, and the refuge of the

European thief, absconder, murderer, and all-round scoundrel generally—there was manifested the bitterest hatred to all things English. The City authorities (the Board of Supervisors) some few of whom were perhaps native-born Americans, lent themselves to any movement calculated to bring the British nation into contempt and hatred. The Fenian organisation in the city was very strong. There were two volunteer regiments, comprised of the lowest ruffians of Irish extraction in the state, whose Sunday parades and drunken orgies were patronised by the German Jew bankers, politicians, state officials, and others who courted the Irish vote and “bossed” the city. One of these volunteer regiments was called the “Sarsfield Guards,” the name of the other I forget. The Sarsfield blackguards were uniformed like French Zouaves, and fifty per cent. of them, officers and privates, had seen the interior of a prison for a lengthened period. I well remember one Sunday, when these precious blackguards, under the auspices of the state officials, marched through the city on their way to a picnic, across the bay to San Rafael. Their route from their armoury took them down California Street, at the lower end of which was the British Consulate. Here the procession stopped, the kettle-drums beat a defiance, and the noble regiment faced to the right at the word of command, and in solemn silence pointed their empty rifles at the British coat of arms over the Consulate door. Being Sunday, the office was of course closed, but suddenly one of the windows in the caretaker’s apartments in the second storey opened, and a fat-faced old man put out his head.

“Be off out of this, ye great silly fools,” he cried wrathfully, “or I’ll come down an’ put the dog on ye,” and he held up to view a most ferocious-looking

bull-dog, who was well known in San Francisco as the Consulate guardian.

The drums beat again, and the patriots went off at a quick march to enjoy their hebdomadary drunk, returning in the evening as usual covered with blood and mud and Contra Costa dust, for bad whisky was cheap, and the Sarsfield Guards and other Fenian corps were the brave boys to tackle it.

We arrived in the boat at the Menagerie wharf in excellent spirits, and, Barrow leading the way, and bidding us follow him, led us into the bar. Here, although a few of the men had a little money, he forbade them to spend a cent—for that day at least—and amiably told them that they could all get drunk at his expense, and might make a start at once, provided they kept to a large outhouse in the back yard. This generous offer was promptly and thankfully accepted by the poor devils, who, after a preliminary drink at the bar, were provided with a jar of Bourbon, a dozen loaves of bread, and two cooked salmon, with the necessary tin mugs, plates, knives, etc. Then Barrow marched them to the shed, and locked them in.

"They'll be as happy as —— cherubims in half an hour," he said to Morgan and myself, "and a good solid drunk will do 'em a power o' good, and keep 'em quiet for a couple of days. Now, come in, young fellows, and we'll have a cup of tea."

As soon as possible, leaving Morgan to tell our good-natured host the story of the cruise of the *Lancefield*, I started off to the city to buy him a new rig-out, for he had landed with nothing but what he stood in; but his garments, although so atrociously filthy and ragged, had one redeeming quality—there were but two, a print shirt and an alleged pair of dungaree pants.

In an hour or two I returned with a swagger suit of store clothes, beaver hat, boots, and every other requisite, and both Barrow and myself laughed most heartily at the wonderful metamorphosis the new rig-out effected. The old man seemed to have taken quite a fancy to Morgan, and, when I told him we intended having a stroll through the city, insisted on our drinking a couple of bottles of that delicious but heady native wine, called Angelica. As the liquor loosened his tongue, I soon discovered that Morgan was by no means a saint, and therefore I suggested to him that we should visit a certain dive in Vallejo Street, where there were a number of pretty Mexican girls of no particular virtue.

For by this time, young as I was, I was pretty well soaked in vice, and, in fact, rather proud of it. But withal I had all the necessary cunning to carefully study my social environments, and adapt my morals to my company. Brandon had taught me a good deal, and since we had parted, I had succeeded remarkably well in doing evil.

CHAPTER XX

ON THE SANDHILLS

MORGAN and myself took up our quarters with old Barrow, and before proceeding to amuse ourselves continuously for a week or two, we set to work and put the old sailor's boiler and engine in thorough going order, got up steam, and did four days' steady work for him. Then, changing our dirty garments for the swagger attire of Montgomery Street, we sallied out, and engaged furnished rooms in Pine Street, determining to have our meals where we listed. This accomplished, we next called upon Mrs. Raymond, who was, I am sure, sincerely pleased to see me and my brother as well; she reproached me in her gentle way for not having been to see her before, and then asked us to come and spend the evening with her at Oakland, for her salary having been increased, she was now living in her own house.

Poor Morgan, who was a thousand times more honest and straightforward than I, flushed with pleasure, and was stammering out an acceptance when I hurriedly interfered and said I had a business engagement in the evening, and should like my brother to come with me. She looked at me very searchingly for an instant, and I blushed inwardly, for I felt that she knew that I was

lying—as, indeed, was the fact. But lying and deceit, as far as the gratification of my own pleasure was concerned, had now taken so strong a hold upon me that I met her glance with the face of a cherubim, and then, as a salve to my conscience, I told her that I desired to renew my membership of the Association of Young Men for Christian Culture, and that Morgan also desired to join. She wrote out the necessary forms, and as she bent her head over the paper, I could see that she was trying hard to suppress a smile. Yet that quickly faded, as she handed us the certificates, and her soft eyes met mine. They were such strange eyes—so pure, deep, and appealing to all that was good in one's nature at one time, so laughing and dancing with almost childish merriment at another, and yet, in a sense, always the same. She could not have been more than four- or five-and-twenty years of age, but sometimes when I looked at her sitting in arm-chair in those quiet lodgings in Howard Street, with her pale cheek resting upon her little white hand, and her long, dark lashes drooping over the closed eyes, she seemed to look an old, but still a beautiful woman.

Leaving the abode of Christian Culture, I took Morgan with me along Kearney Street, till we came to the Plaza, on one side of which was the establishment of my faro-banking friend. We found him employed in pistol-practice with two young Germans. He was very pleased to see me, and bade me take Morgan upstairs and introduce him to the ladies, and get them to give us something to drink.

We found the cousins engaged in the task of counting money, and making it up into rolls. Like their owner, they were glad to see us, and sweeping the money—the bank's winnings of the previous night—into a tray,

opened a big bottle of champagne, and filled four glasses. As I have before mentioned, they were both very handsome girls, and although living in a gambling den, they looked and spoke like ladies. The elder, whose name was Sadie, had been especially kind to me when I was ill, and I was sorry to see that she looked very pale and thin, and the slightest exertion seemed to weary her.

“Have you been ill, Sadie?” I inquired.

“Not exactly ill, Billy, but for the past six months I have not been at all well—just running down steadily all the time.” Then she said with a smile, “Come over here, Billy, and tell me all about your life at Gilroy. Nellie will keep your brother going whilst you and I have a bit of a chat. How bronzed you have become since I last saw you.”

We went to the farther side of the room and sat down, quite out of hearing from the others. The moment we were seated she put her hand on mine and said :

“Billy, why did you come here again? You know what this place is, and that you ought not to come here. I’m a good many years older than you are, Billy, and I know you have a mother and sisters, and you will listen to me, won’t you?”

“Of course I will, Sadie.”

“Well, I want you to promise me you won’t come here again. You know as well as I do that we are not good women—outcasts and derelicts . . . Billy.”

“Yes, Sadie.”

“I’m dying—consumption, you know—and can’t live more than a month or two. Now, Billy, I nursed you, didn’t I, until Mrs. Raymond came and took you away?”

“Indeed you did, Sadie, and you saved my life. I should have died if I had been taken to an hospital.”

“ Well, I want you to make me a promise. I want you to promise me that you will not come to this place again. Hasard will destroy you body and soul——”

She had not time to conclude, for just then Hasard entered the room, and the conversation became general. We took our seats at the windows which faced the City Hall, and commanded a view of three sides of the Plaza, and Nellie amused Morgan greatly by pointing out and describing to him many of the promenaders on the Kearney Street side of the Plaza, for she knew all the notabilities in San Francisco, a goodly percentage of whom were frequent visitors to Hasard's faro establishment. Moving slowly about among the well-dressed crowd on the pavement was a harmless old lunatic known as “ Emperor Norton,” who was dressed in the uniform of a French general, and bore an extraordinary resemblance to the Emperor Napoleon III., whom he believed himself to be. As he marched along, he would raise his hand in salute every now and then, and sometimes stop and speak to some citizen, who would gravely ask his Majesty what Chanzy or Bazaine were doing (the Franco-German war was then in progress), and the “ Emperor ” would shake his head and say, “ Badly, badly. I am just sending fresh instructions,” and politely accept a quarter of a dollar to cover the cost of the cablegram.

In the evening we went to the California Theatre to see “ Enoch Arden.” I think the actor who played the leading part was Forrest ; anyway, whoever it was, his reputation drew a crowded house, and we had some difficulty in obtaining seats. However, we at last managed to secure two at fifty cents each, and found ourselves in the same row as half-a-dozen bluejackets

belonging to H.M.S. *Zealous*, the flag-ship of the North Pacific station.

The performance went along very well till the last act but one, in which the broken-hearted castaway sees the rescuing boat advancing to the beach; and then a disgraceful scene occurred. The moment the audience—or the greater portion of it—saw the British red ensign displayed in the stern of the boat, a perfect pandemonium of yells, groans, cat-calls, hisses, and variegated blasphemy burst out, and the rescue was carried out in dumb show by those on the stage. Then the hoodlum element in that part of the house in which we were sitting turned their blackguardly attention to the English bluejackets near us, and showers of orange-peel, peanuts, corks, and half-masticated chewing tobacco, accompanied by the foulest and most insulting epithets, fell upon us. In an instant the tars were on their feet, facing the enemy, and then one of them was deliberately struck in the face with a half-sucked orange hurled at him by a fellow a few seats away.

This was too much, and the sailor, with an oath, made a determined effort to get at the offender, but in vain, and then the uproar became general, and heavier missiles in the shape of bottles were thrown. The bluejackets were for a few minutes quite helpless, but presently closing up, and with Morgan and myself following, they succeeded in making a passage to the nearest exit. Here we were met by eight or ten toughs, one of whom, whipping out his pistol, made a blow at the nearest bluejacket's head; in an instant he received a straight from the shoulder blow on the chin, which sent him down like a dead man, and his companions at once drew back and let us pass down the stairway. At the street door we were met by

three policemen, and one of the theatre officials, who we thought intended to bar our progress ; we were agreeably surprised when they hurried us across the street into a saloon which was comparatively deserted.

At the bidding of the officers, the proprietor at once locked his door, else we should have been badly mauled by the hoodlums and other loafers who had followed us, bent on mischief. One of the bluejackets was bleeding profusely, some cowardly ruffian having stabbed him on the back of the neck with the half of a bottle ; others had some severe bruises and kicks, and Morgan's new overcoat was ripped up at the back from top to bottom, and, as one of the officers sympathisingly remarked, was now "only fit to 'shoo' ducks with." A doctor was sent for to attend the wounded man, and, after staying in the saloon for half-an-hour, the friendly policemen, reinforced by a couple more, took us (after partaking of refreshment at our expense) out into the street by the back entrance, and then escorted us right down to where the men-of-war's boat was lying. We protested at not being allowed to go our way without an escort, but one of the officers said that that very evening two of the men belonging to the *Zealous* had been half killed by rowdies in the Oxford Music-hall in Bush Street, and the city authorities were anxious to prevent any further attacks being made upon the numerous parties of bluejackets who were on shore enjoying liberty. Bidding the sailors and officers good-night, and having no fear of being recognised as Britishers, Morgan and I returned home to our lodgings.

As we had promised Hasard and his houris to have breakfast with them at ten o'clock, we rose at nine, and walked leisurely down to the Plaza. Hasard himself was standing at his doorway, smoking a cigar as usual.

“Come in, boys,” he said in his drawling voice, which never changed except when it was husky with whisky—which event, to do him justice, did not often occur—“come into the bar and have a drink.”

He mixed three cocktails, and seemed to be unusually quiet while doing so. Sitting down at a little marble table, he nodded to us and drank his liquor, set the glass down, and said :

“We’ll hev to let that breakfast stand over for another time, boys. Reckon you’ll be sorry to hear poor Sadie is dead.”

“Dead!” I exclaimed.

“Died at eight o’clock last night,” he said, as he rose and walked over to the window and looked out upon the street. Then, without turning his head, he added, “You go upstairs, Billy. Nellie will be glad to see you.”

Stepping very lightly on the thickly-carpeted stairs, I went. Nellie met me on the landing, and pressed my hand in silence, and tried to speak, and then began to sob quietly.

I led her to a seat, and sat down beside her, and waited till she became more composed before I asked her any questions. Then she told me that poor Sadie had been seized with a violent fit of coughing, burst a blood-vessel, and died in an hour.

“There is no one in there now with her, Billy. Will you come in?”

We went into the next room and stood beside the bed on which the dead girl lay, and as I looked at the pale waxen face, so exquisitely chiselled in its lines, and the thick mantle of glossy, jet-black hair which lay in waves against her cheeks, I tried in vain to restrain my tears.

“I will come back presently, Nellie,” I whispered, as I turned away, and descending to the bar, I motioned Morgan to come with me.

In Sacramento Street there was, I knew, a large florist's, and thither we went and made heavy purchases of all the most beautiful flowers we could get. Poor Sadie had always been very fond of roses, and the florist filled one large box full of the best—dark red in colour. We waited till the various boxes were ready, and, telling the florist we would take them ourselves, hired a carriage and drove back. Hasard was still sitting in the darkened bar, smoking, but came to the door and helped us to carry in the parcels, which I at once took upstairs to Nellie. She was deeply moved, and could only thank me in a whisper when she saw what I had brought. Then I went down to Morgan and Hasard again, for the latter had said he would like us to stay awhile. Placing a box of cigars and some decanters on the table, he sat down with us, and he tried to put us at our ease by getting Morgan to talk about his whaling adventures, then himself telling us something of his experiences in the late war. Half-an-hour later, Nellie called to us all to come up. She had arranged the flowers as only a woman's loving hand can do, and as Hasard stood, hands in pockets, looking at the beautiful features showing so deathly white against the dark hair and blood-red roses, I saw his lips move and heard something like a sigh escape him.

Both Hasard and Nellie came downstairs with us, and when Morgan and I said goodbye to them, promising to attend the funeral on the morrow, she took both my hands in hers and kissed me, and Hasard himself, who walked some way down the street with us, silently chewing his cigar, said as we parted :

"Say, Billy. Would you care to have one of poor Sadie's rings?"

"I should value it very much," I said with sincerity.

"Well, you shall have it to-morrow."

Sadie was buried in Lone Mountain Cemetery. There were but four persons present at the funeral—Hasard, a gambling friend of his who ran a saloon at San José, Morgan, and myself. On the way back Hasard asked us to come in and see Nellie and have some supper. During the meal he told us that he was breaking up the establishment immediately, and going to Europe with Nellie, as he had enough money to last him a considerable time. He gave me the promised ring, and Morgan a beautiful sixteen-shot Winchester rifle, and Nellie presented us with a brace of ivory-handled Colt's revolvers in a case, on which was engraved, "Republica de Mexicana," which had somehow come into Hasard's possession—most probably in liquidation of a gambling debt.

We only saw this strange pair once more after this—when they were leaving in the steamer for New York *viâ* Panama. I heard long afterwards that they had settled for good at Turin, but under another name, which my informant could not remember, or else I should have written to them. For the man and the two women were kind enough to me, and I shall always remember poor Sadie—poor derelict as she was—with both gratitude and respect; for not only did she nurse me through a long illness, but she sought to save me from ruining myself, by warning me against again frequenting her dangerous house; and her sudden death had certainly had a beneficial effect on my brother and myself, for we gave up our lodgings in Pine Street and returned to old Tod Barrow's "Menagerie," where we

received a hearty welcome from the ancient mariner, and were introduced to an old ex-skipper named Scott, who agreed to teach Morgan navigation in return for his breakfast and a dollar a day.

Soon after I had made Mrs. Raymond's acquaintance I had told her of Harry Brandon and of my failure to discover anything about him, and at her suggestion I had kept a standing advertisement in the personal columns of the *Alta California*, asking him to write to me to the care of the secretary of the society of which she was the librarian; and I also visited the shipping office every now and then in the hope that I might see his name or his assumed name in the official books, but without success, and I came to the conclusion that he had gone on some lengthy voyage.

By this time, although we had free board and lodging at "The Menagerie," we had made a considerable hole in my small banking account, and I was delighted to receive a letter by the Australian mail-boat *City of Melbourne* from my father, in which there was not a single reproach for my not having written to him for over seven months; only an appeal to me to "keep straight, and learn all you can about the Yankee style of saw-milling, which I am told knocks ours into a cocked hat."

Then he added that, as things might not be going well with me, he enclosed a draft on a San Francisco firm for eighty-five pounds, which he said he could well afford, as he was piling up money out of the cedar business, and went on to say that he hoped I would give up the idea of going to sea—which was always latent in my mind—and follow some other pursuit at which I could make money. "Stay in America as long as you like, my boy, but don't fail to write to those

at home. And keep clear of grog, Bill. Don't be tempted to drink, and if you *are* tempted and refuse, and some fellow pokes borak at you, tell him to go 'somewhere,' and plug him in the eye, even if he is as big as a church and you get a nasty licking. A licking is nothing if you keep your self-respect. Also avoid women of any kind if you want to make money. You were always a good boy for work, and if I was a bit hard on you and your brothers at times, you must remember that I was being robbed every day of my life by those blackguards of timber merchants in Sydney, who are now, thank God, crawling to me and asking me to sell them our cedar."

But what pleased me most of all was the news that Dr. Mariner (Fan's husband) was confident of curing Ada's lameness, and that she was in Sydney to undergo an operation. The letter concluded with a somewhat startling piece of news:—

"Your Aunt Selina, I am sorry to say, has made a fool of herself by marrying that measly idiot of a parson, Bonham Joyce. She and the devil-dodger no doubt think they are going to handle some of my money after I am gone, but they won't, I can assure you. Your mother is very much disgusted with her; but anyway your aunt was only fit to marry a parson. I don't like the breed, William, they are all on the make; but as poor Captain de Lisle used to say, they are a necessary evil and the women keep them. Now don't forget to send me an account of the big mill at Port Townsend; also tell me the usual rate of wages for mill hands."

As soon as possible Morgan and myself cashed the draft, which was on the firm of J. C. Merrill & Co., California Street. Mr. Merrill himself, a very hand-

some man about fifty, and a genuine native-born American—not a German or Irish whitewashed one—paid us, and we had quite a long and friendly talk with him about Australia, with which country he was familiar. Then, asking us to come and see him again, and advising us to be careful of what acquaintances we made in San Francisco, and to bank our money, he bade us goodbye.

That afternoon, by some malign influence, I suggested to Morgan that we should walk out to the Presidio, and have a look over the famous old building, and return in the evening across the sandhills. We went off about five o'clock, spent an hour or two at the Presidio, and then started back. When we had walked about half a mile or so, and just as darkness was coming on, we met a sergeant of the 12th Artillery, who stopped and spoke to us. He warned us that it was not at all safe to be walking about at night time anywhere between the Presidio and the City, as a great many robberies with violence had been committed of late.

“There’s a gang of about ten or a dozen toughs who live in the sand-hills,” he added, “and they generally work in couples. They usually ask any one they meet to tell them the time, and as soon as the unsuspecting person takes out his watch, he gets a crack from behind with a slung shot. So you had best be careful. Are you armed?”

“Yes, we each have a derringer.”

“Well, that’s all right. But get along as slick as you can, and keep to the road.”

We thanked him, bade him good-night, and went on again, feeling somewhat anxious, as it was now dark, and no light was visible except those of the Presidio and the ships in the bay. We walked on in silence for

about a quarter of a mile without seeing or hearing anything, when just as we were ascending a hill, I caught a glimpse of three or four figures standing in the centre of the road. In another instant they had disappeared.

I whispered to Morgan and told him.

"I saw them too, Billy," he said in low tones. "Get your pistol ready, but let us keep walking on slowly."

Our derringers were no mere toys, but weapons carrying a bullet as big as that of a Snider rifle. We had bought them the day after the *fracas* at the theatre, and they were the best of their kind that could be obtained.

We walked along very cautiously, our footsteps making no sound upon the soft sand, when presently a match was struck just ahead of us, and we saw two men standing on the edge of the road, and one of them lighting a cigar.

"Keep a lookout behind, Billy," muttered Morgan as we drew near them.

"Good evening," said one of them, walking across the road so as to interrupt us; "say, can you tell us where the turn-off is to Black Point?"

"Look out, Morgan!" I shouted, "they mean mischief!"—for before he could reply to the man's query I had heard swift steps behind us, and turning, saw two other fellows not ten yards away. I think both Morgan and I fired together, for I heard but the one report and then a loud cry. Then two or three shots were fired at us, and our assailants vanished down the road towards the fort, Morgan and myself reloading and firing after them.

Suddenly Morgan stumbled and gave a loud cry. "Oh, come here, Billy, quick, and strike a light. Here's one of them lying on the sand!"

I struck a match, and there, lying with his face in the sand, was a man. Seizing him by one shoulder, Morgan turned him over on his back, and one brief glance showed us that he was covered with blood from his face to his chest. He lay perfectly quiet.

"Strike some more matches, Bill, and let us have a good look. I do hope he's not dying." Then he spoke to the man, who made no answer.

A second match was sufficient to dispel any doubts—the gentleman was as dead as ever he could be, for Morgan's bullet had struck him fair in the throat, passed through it, and broken his neck. He was a very big, burly fellow, with a straggling grey beard, and rather decently dressed. In one hand was a slung shot.

"He's done for, Morgan," I said. "Let him alone, and let us get out of this as soon as possible."

We ran swiftly away from the road across several sandhills, and then sat down to get our wind and consider what was best to be done. Morgan's hands were covered with blood, and I had some on my boots and some on the knees of my pants, through kneeling down to look at the poor devil.

"We must tell old Tod," I said; "he'll tell us what to do. But we ought to try and get inside without being seen by any one. We had better wait till his bar is closed, and then go round to his bedroom window and call him."

Morgan was no coward, although just then he was terribly excited, but he did not relish the idea of our remaining out on the sandhills until one or two o'clock in the morning. Then a happy inspiration came to him.

"How far are we from the water?" he asked.

"About half a mile."

“Can we get along the shore to Barrow’s?”

“Yes, but it’s dangerous. There are no lights, and the mud is awful.”

“Mud! That’s just the thing. Come on.”

We started off and soon reached the shore, and at once stripped and went in the water up to our waists, and washed ourselves—as well as we could in the darkness—from head to toe. Then we gave our clothes and boots a rough but thorough scrubbing, dressed ourselves, and headed for home, as we called old Tod’s place. We had a fearful time of it in getting over the ground, or rather mud, in some places, but it served a good purpose in thoroughly concealing any traces of blood which may have remained on our boots or clothing.

About midnight we reached “The Menagerie,” passed in quietly through the back gate without being noticed, and went to our room, where we at once changed our clothes.

Calling the housekeeper and telling her my brother was not well, as we had both fallen in the water and he had taken cold, I asked her to get us something to drink. In a few minutes she returned with hot Angelica, lemons, and sugar, and was quickly followed by Barrow.

“Mr. Barrow,” I said, “we’ve got ourselves into a howling mess, I’m afraid. Give us some Angelica first, and we’ll tell you.”

The old man discerned at once that something serious had occurred. He shut the door and poured us out each a big drink of wine. Then we told him what had happened.

“Sure the cove is dead?” was his first question.

“Quite—his neck was broken as well, and we saw bits of bone sticking out of the bullet hole at the back of it.”

“Well, that’s lucky anyway. *He* won’t have nothin’ to say. But you’ll both have to clear out, an’ I’m the man to help you.”

Then he went on to say that the administration of justice was so notoriously corrupt in San Francisco that it would go hard with us once we were in the hands of the police, even though we had only acted in self-defence.

“They’d keep you in gaol, and delay your trial on one excuse or another until they and the lawyers skinned you of every dollar. And bein’ Englishmen would go against you very much just now. Why, to get money out of you, they would prove, or try to prove that the cove you settled was a poor harmless gentleman as wouldn’t hurt a fly, a good citizen, a church member, and respected by all who knew him, and all who didn’t know him, or had never heard of him. Now let me think.”

The good old man proved a true friend to us by soon providing us both with the means of escape from San Francisco. Time was everything, he said, for the man’s body was sure to be found at daylight, and the artillery sergeant with whom we had spoken would be sure to connect us with his death, and we must either get away quickly, or else remain in hiding for an indefinite time.

“I’ll get you aboard a ship before daylight, boys,” he said, “there’s a hermaphrodite brig, the *Shelehoff*, to sail early to-morrow for Tahiti. She’s short handed, and the skipper will be glad to get a couple of men. Will that suit you?”

We thanked him, and at once set about getting our gear together, and donning sailor’s togs once more. Fortunately we had not banked our eighty-five pounds, and we offered the old man five twenty-dollar pieces,

He refused it indignantly, with such feeling that we were truly sorry to have so wounded him. Furthermore he consented to forward me to any address, the money still in the bank, if I gave him a cheque for the balance, which I did. Then the good old soul gave us two decent chests, and put in half a dozen bottles of wine, some tobacco, and many other useful articles.

At three o'clock the boat was ready, and the old man and we had a parting drink together of such dimensions, that both Morgan and myself were half-seas over in ten minutes. Moving quietly out of the house, we descended the wharf steps, and entered the boat. It took us nearly two hours to get to the *Shelehoff*, owing to the tide, but the good Bourbon made us enjoy pulling. Coming alongside just at dawn, Barrow asked to see the captain, who at once made his appearance when he heard Barrow's voice.

"Here's two bully boys for you, Captain Leaske," he said; "I know them both well, and you'll find they're the right chop."

Leaske, a sleepy-faced, but rather pleasant looking young man, nodded, told us to get some coffee, and then said he would get under weigh at once.

We bade the proprietor of the "Menagerie" farewell with genuine sorrow, and saw his boat push off.

"Man the windlass, Mr. Boyd," said the captain to his mate; and then Morgan and I were sent aloft to loose sails, and by breakfast time the Golden Gate lay astern, and we were once more chewing salt horse, but chewing it with a good heart, cracking jokes with our new shipmates, and determined to take the world easy.

That evening, as Morgan was on the lookout, pacing to and fro, waiting to be relieved, he turned to me with a troubled look, and said he feared he would not sleep

for many a night—he would always be seeing the dead man's face. I consoled him as best I could, and going below, got him a stiff dose of old Tod's Bourbon in a tin pannikin. Half an hour later, he was sound asleep in his bunk.

CHAPTER XXI

CAPTAIN GIRARD OF THE "HIKUERO"

WE made a rather smart run to Tahiti, for the *Shelehoff*, though a very ancient craft, could sail like a witch. Her captain was quite a young man, a fine seaman, but the laziest creature and greatest glutton I ever came across. He spent most of his time on his back in the deck-house reading, getting up at intervals to eat, and then going back again. However, he was very good-natured, and would always lend the hands any books they wanted, and also fed us well, so at a general meeting in the foc'stle, we unanimously voted him one of God's noblest works, and did our duty by him like men. I subsequently heard that on the voyage back to California the poor fellow was washed overboard, deck house and all, and drowned, and the poor old *Shelehoff*, being thrown on her beam ends, was abandoned.

As soon as we reached Tahiti, events moved pretty quickly with Morgan and myself. The brig was to load oranges for San Francisco, and the captain was anxious for us to sign on and stay with him, but we told him frankly that we wanted to see something of the South Seas, so he let us go.

Before we had been on shore two hours, we made the

acquaintance at the hotel of the captain of the New Bedford whaler *Sea Breeze* then lying off the port, which she had visited for the purpose of landing her first officer, who had been seriously injured by a fall from aloft. The captain, whose name was Allonby, was well-known by name to my brother, to whom he offered the berth of third mate, vacant by the accident to the chief officer.

After a little hesitation about leaving me, Morgan, who was very keen about going home with some money, accepted the offer, and we at once went off with the captain to the U.S. Consulate. Here both Morgan and Allonby pressed me to join the barque, but I was not at all inclined to ship on a whaler, so my brother and I parted, and in an hour he was on board the *Sea Breeze*, which at once filled, and stood away for the Marquesas in continuation of her cruise. Morgan would only take ten pounds out of the money in my hands saying he would want no more, as Allonby's was a lucky ship. He was away with her for three years, and I am glad to say returned home after a long absence with a good deal of money, and then went on his next cruise as second mate of a Hobart whaler.

Feeling somewhat disconsolate as I saw the white cotton canvas of the *Sea Breeze* disappear, I went back to the hotel, engaged a room, dressed myself carefully, and made the acquaintance of a fat, podgy little Frenchman, wearing the uniform of a captain of Marine Infantry. He shared a bottle of wine with me, and seemed an agreeable person, for though we could not understand each other, we had a common thirst which was a bond of sympathy, as the day was very hot, and we were both perspiring freely.

Presently another Frenchman came in—a young, deeply-bronzed and good-looking man who spoke excellent

English, and who I found was Captain Girard, master and owner of a schooner named the *Hikuero*, which was lying just astern of the *Shelehoff*. He was, he told me, leaving in a day or two for a cruise among the pearl-shell islands in the Paumotu Group, and was then going on to the Austral or Tubuai Group. I asked him if he would take a passenger for the round trip, and the terms. Yes, he could, and the terms would be one thousand francs. But would I come on board first, and see his vessel?

Off we went and boarded the schooner. She was a fine American-built craft of about two hundred tons, with good cabin accommodation, and kept like a man-of-war. In the cabin we were received by a very pretty young half-caste girl, whom he introduced to us as Madame Girard. She spoke both English and French very well, and was at that moment entertaining some of her Tahitian female friends. She herself was a native of the Gambier Islands, and the daughter of an English trader, whose surname, she artlessly told me, she did not know—"as he went away when I was quite a little girl."

I soon decided to make the voyage, and paid Captain Girard seven hundred and fifty francs down. Then, never able to resist temptation, I returned ashore with the podgy little soldier man, and hiring two horses, we rode out along the coast to the village of Papawa, where we found two of his brother officers enjoying the society of some young native girls—half-caste, and full-blooded—in a very comfortable bungalow belonging to a bachelor. They made us very welcome, and as there was a piano in the place, and all the girls could waltz very well, we had a very amusing time, especially myself, for the young ladies—either because I had provided them with a large

amount of liquid refreshment, or merely to tease the Frenchmen, made much of me on account of my being *a taata Peretane* (Englishman), and tried to teach me Tahitian by surrounding me in a circle and all talking at once. They were a merry lot, and although they had absolutely no regard for modesty, there was something so spontaneous about their fun that I laughed till my sides literally ached, especially when one of them, putting on my podgy friend's tunic and pith helmet, mimicked him on parade.

It was nearing dawn when we got back to Papeit , for my soldier friend kept falling off his horse, and I had much trouble in putting him on again. Finally I secured him firmly to his saddle, and reaching the hotel, consigned him to the care of the landlord, and went on board the *Hikuero*. Some of the native crew were having their morning bathe alongside, and stripping off, I jumped in among them, my vanity being gratified at their expressions of surprise that so young a white man could swim and dive so well. This detestable feeling of personal vanity, to which I have before alluded, was no mere youthful desire of emulation, it was deep-seated and ingrained, and though I usually pretended diffidence and extreme modesty in everything, from seamanship to my personal appearance, I was in reality eaten up with pride at my own abilities, physical and mental; but the time was to come when I was to have a bitter, humiliating, and appalling awakening.

Early one morning we hove up and ran out through Papiet  Pass, then stood to the east to thrash our way against the south-east trades to the Paumotu Archipelago. There were but two other white men on board besides myself—Captain Girard and his mate, an Irishman named Jimmy Montgomery. The crew were all natives

—either of the Society Islands, or Cook's Group, and were a thoroughly reliable lot of men, as far as obedience to orders went. Montgomery also had a native wife on board, a very intelligent Samoan, who was devotedly attached to her husband, and had followed his varying fortunes since almost her childhood.

After being on board a week I could see that Girard, though a very pleasant fellow, was not a good seaman, though he did not know it, and was somewhat patronising to his mate. He (Girard) had made but one previous voyage in the *Hikuero*, and Montgomery told me that he had nearly lost her on two occasions through never before having sailed in a fore and aft rigged vessel. He was, however, a most competent navigator (he was an ex-officer of the French Navy) and in all respects a gentleman, except when he tried to learn Tahitian from his wife Hino (otherwise "Madame"): then he became an insufferable nuisance and annoyance to us by his uxorious display of affection during the lesson.

We made a slashing beat against the trades to the beautiful Anaa Lagoon or Chain Island, the most southeasterly of the Paumotus, where we landed stores for one of Girard's traders, an American. I went ashore and spent some hours at this man's place, and enjoyed myself most thoroughly.

My host had been living in the South Seas for over thirty years, and was a refined and cultured man, and his family of half-castes (born of a Marquesan mother) were strikingly handsome young people. More than this, they were well educated; the eldest girl, who was about twenty-three years of age, having been educated in New London, Connecticut, of which town her father was a native. They were certainly a most amiable and delightful family, and their house,

though native built, was a model of cleanliness and comfort, furnished like any well-ordered English home, and containing such luxuries as a piano and a good library. In one of the younger boys—a lad of fifteen—I was much interested. He not only spoke English and French, but half a dozen Polynesian dialects with proficiency. And yet this otherwise happy family had, until a few months previously, laboured under a depressing tyranny.

The father, who had married his Marquesan wife according to the rites of the Protestant Church, nearly thirty years before, had lived in the South Seas ever since, done much to develop the trade of the islands, and civilise the natives, and was a man of the most spotless reputation socially and commercially, yet was banned by the Roman Catholic priests of the Paumotu Group simply because he would not permit his children to be brought up as Roman Catholics. So far had their priestly persecution gone that his servants were first taken away; then the natives were forbidden to sell or even give him and his family food, and he and his children had literally to fish for their living, by going out upon the reef day after day for many months and catching fish. His protests to the Governor-General at Tahiti met with but a cold response, and he was just on the point of emigrating to Samoa, and abandoning a lucrative business when an American man-of-war, commanded by an energetic and determined officer, called at the island. She arrived at a critical and most opportune moment, for a French gunboat was at the island at the time, and the priests and her commander had so terrified the natives under a threat of bombarding the village unless they insisted upon the American and his family leaving the island, that the

unfortunate people, who were much attached to them personally, came in a body and besought him to save them from destruction by at once leaving the island in a small cutter belonging to him—a craft of less than ten tons.

The American commander went about business in a practical manner. First of all he boarded the French gunboat, told her commander that the United States Government had no knowledge of a French protectorate over the Paumotu Archipelago, and warned him against the serious responsibility he was incurring by interfering with "a citizen of the greatest country on the earth," or other judicious words to that effect. Then he sent an armed force ashore, hoisted the stars and stripes over the American's house, and ran a line of spun-yarn from one post to another completely round the land (which the American had bought and paid for from the original native owners) and had notices written in French and in the native dialect, warning all and sundry that Baxter Clayton was a citizen of the United States, and under the protection of his country's government. Then, leaving one solitary marine posted at Clayton's door as the visible and outward sign of the might of the American Republic, he steamed off to Papieté, and asked the Governor-General for an explanation of the "aggressive actions committed by France upon the citizen of a friendly power." The Governor sent for the gallant Admiral Clouet, then in command of the French Pacific Squadron, and the admiral, I was told, not only promptly disavowed the action of the commander of the gunboat, but rated the Governor for refusing to reply to Clayton's complaints against the tyranny of the French priests, whom he described as being "like a great many missionaries, potent factors for disturb-

ance and mischief, irresponsible gentlemen, who from misguided zeal for their sacred profession, are likely to, and capable of, bringing about serious international complications." It was this same Admiral Clouet who, during the Franco-German war, sent a message throughout the South Seas to the various European consuls, asking them to inform German shipmasters that they need have no fear of being seized by French men-of-war, as "France did not desire to molest defenceless merchantmen." This message was the cause of much jubilation, and a great flow of lager beer in Samoa, where a number of German ships were lying, expecting to be seized by the French Pacific fleet.

Clayton, as I have said, was a man of education and refinement, and although living on this lonely isle, so far away from the centres of civilisation, he kept his family and himself in touch with the outer world as far as lay in his power. When I was bidding him goodbye, he gave me the following verses, which, he said, had been written by the dying wife of a soldier friend of his named Reay, who committed suicide through grief on the following day. Reay left the verses on his table and then shot himself. I thought them very beautiful, and have preserved Clayton's pencilled copy, which he had taken from some magazine, to this day.

FOR THE LAST TIME.

THERE comes an end to everything, my dearest:
The longest hour of agony must pass,
The sweetest hour of joy must end, alas!
And not the strength of all the love thou bearest
Can motion back from me the solemn dawn
Of this new journey, whither I am drawn,
By force resistless and invisible.

How the dim light weaves shadows in the room,
 And sounds mysterious tremble through the gloom!
 Thou art so brave, Death hath no fears for thee,
 And love supreme waits in the awful hush,
 Listening with jealous fears for the dark rush
 Of angels' wings in this hour given to me
 For the last time.

Thou hearest, my beloved—well I know,
 By the mute agony in those sad eyes—
 My soul's voice speaking unto thine so low
 That it seems unto others echoing sighs.
 What words would not be cold at such a time?
 But, love, I understand thee, lying here,
 And closer hold thy throbbing palm in mine,
 And wait with thee the end which draweth near.
 Yet I, that am so quiet, well can feel
 The pain for thee of this last hour on earth,
 Nor would I leave thee lonely by our hearth,
 For all the knowledge dying can reveal,
 If my will was unto my soul a law.
 We are two children; over us the whole
 Commanding universe of God doth roll.
 Draw close and hearken, for methought I saw
 An aureate light, and heard a stir of wings—
 Dear love, I see and hear so many things
 For the last time.

I have no fear of that which is to come—
 Hast thou had fear when thou wert nearing home?
 If my last sleep be dreamless and profound,
 Is it not well with me? Or if it be
 Rich in fulfilment of God's promises,
 May not my spirit murmur unto thee,
 Coming at eve, upon some gracious air,
 To touch thy lips and bring the visions fair?
 I will be with thee when the roses blow,
 And all the richness of the year doth flow,
 In gorgeous waves of colour through the land.
 When daisies star the sod, or snow-flakes shroud,
 When the low sun-gold edges some bright cloud,
 Or the pure dawn uprises at command,
 Let things speak of me; make me a part
 Of all thy life, of all thy loving heart,
 And keep me always in thy memory
 As closely as to-night thou holdest me
 For the last time.

Yet even at this hour there comes a thought—
 A vision of the time when I shall fade
 To a dim spectre in thy memory's shade ;
 But ah ! thy loving eyes too oft have sought
 The light in mine to wholly lose the trace
 Of absent features ; thou wilt keep a place
 In thy heart's temple sacred to thy dead.
 Dost thou hear music ? Bend thy patient head
 Closer to mine—I cannot see thee now,
 Though thy mute lips are pressed upon my brow ;
 The dark death-angel, Israfel, is near,
 And a strange light from outer worlds shines clear ;
 I see the glow around thee softly creep—
 Kiss me once more, dear love, before I sleep,
 For the last time.

We left Anaa on the following day, bound for the island after which our schooner was named—Hikuero—two degrees to the eastward. Here, in bringing to, so as to anchor in five fathoms on a coral patch, the French captain lost his head, and only Montgomery's able seamanship saved the vessel from drifting into the surf on the reef and being pounded into matchwood in five minutes, for a terrific sea was running, and had we once struck, I doubt if any but our native crew would have escaped with their lives. Some very hot words passed between Girard and his mate, for the former was an extremely conceited man, and the latter a hot-tempered Irishman ; and I, who had no business whatever to interfere, unfortunately did so, and told Girard that his mate was right and he was wrong, and that he (Girard) did not haul his head sails to windward soon enough to check the schooner's headway.

Naturally enough, the captain was furious at my presumption, and to make matters worse his wife Hino (who was in some respects as good a sailor as himself) sided with Montgomery and me, and then Girard, Frenchman-like, slapped her face, and in his passion,

applied an exceedingly opprobrious Tahitian epithet to the poor girl—an epithet the meaning of which I am sure he did not understand (so gross and foul was it) or he would never have used it, for he was, as I have said, a gentleman. But the flood of tears from Hino, as she sank on her knees on the deck and covered her face with her hands, was too much for me, and I struck Girard on the mouth and knocked him back again against the wheel which spun round, and he fell heavily on the deck, nearly stunning himself. But he was up quick enough, and made a rush at me, and though, like most Frenchmen, he had no more idea of fighting than has a cat—by its claws and teeth—he managed to get me by the throat, and would have strangled me—being the stronger man—had I not given him an upper cut under the chin, taught to the Breachley boys by Paddy Minogue. This made him loosen his grip on my swallowing apparatus, but he then seized my hair and dragged out a handful by the roots, which so infuriated me that, getting him down, I pounded his face into a pulp, and believe I should have half-killed him had not Jimmy Montgomery given me a blow on the ear which stretched me out on the deck beside the Frenchman.

“D’ye call that sort av thing foightin’, Mr. Breachley?” he said indignantly. “Shure ye’re no better than a Chinaman or a Dago, and forget yourself entirely. Ye ought to be ashamed.”

I certainly was ashamed of acting in such a contemptible manner, and at once became a good Samaritan, and asked Hino to help me to carry her husband to his berth and attend to him generally. She brusquely declined, told me not to trouble about him, and said many uncomplimentary things about Frenchmen in general, and her husband in particular.

The captain, by reason of his difference with myself, not being able to go on shore, Montgomery took his place in the schooner's boat, and I went with him. As soon as we landed we were met by the captain and crew of a Norwegian barque which had been wrecked on the island a few weeks previously. The captain, whose name was Gunderson, literally wept down the back of Montgomery's neck when the latter told him that Captain Girard would certainly take him and his crew on board the *Hikuero*, and give them a passage to Tahiti.

The Norwegian had saved all his boats, had provisioned two, and was about to start for Tahiti or Samoa—he did not know which—when we arrived. One—the longboat—was lying in the lagoon and I went off and looked at her. She was fitted out and provisioned so well that she could have voyaged to Australia, and I remarked jocularly to Montgomery that I would not mind making a voyage in her.

I little knew what was to happen in a few hours.

CHAPTER XXII

HINO GIRARD—AND MYSELF

THERE were but thirty natives living on Hikuero ; they were employed in diving for pearl-shell for Girard, and after Montgomery had gone back to the schooner, taking the Norwegian captain with him, I took a stroll about the island, and entered into conversation with the head man—a native of Aitutaki in Cook's Group. He was a very intelligent old fellow, and spoke excellent English, and told me that he had sailed in English ships nearly all his life, did not like Frenchmen, and that Girard did not pay him and his fellow-divers a fair price for the pearl-shell and pearls he bought from them. Simply because I was an Englishman, the old fellow talked very freely to me, and presently, inviting me inside his hut, he bade one of his children stand at the door to prevent intrusion. Bidding me be seated, he produced from a chest in the room a blue silk handkerchief, in which were twenty-seven splendid pearls ; and two wooden match-boxes each filled to the brim with seed pearls. Spreading out the twenty-seven large pearls on the handkerchief, he asked me what I thought they were worth—were they worth no more than ten dollars each ? I laughed, and said that little as I knew about pearls, I should think three

times that sum would not approach the value of a single one.

He nodded. "I been thinking so myself for a long time, but Captain Girard tell me that pearls very cheap now, because at some place called Ceylon, men dig them up in the sand, and fill buckets with them. Is that true?"

"I don't think so."

"Well, Captain Girard only gives me ten dollars for every large pearl, and pays me by weight for the little pearls. Now, will you buy these big ones from me? What will you give me for them?"

I said that I had not much money, but if he liked to pick out ten pearls I would give him twenty dollars each for them in American gold, but told him frankly that I was sure they were worth much more, and that he had better keep them. He replied that to do so would be of no use to him. No English ships were likely to come to Hikuero, and he had no choice but to sell his pearls to Girard, or take them to Auckland, and he was now too old a man to leave his family and make a long voyage, and perhaps find out when he reached New Zealand that what Captain Girard had said about the cheapness of pearls was true. Then he asked me to pick out the ten largest pearls. I did so, and he then added five others—the next largest in size, and insisted upon my accepting them. This I refused to do, but after much good-natured argument, he consented to accept a Winchester carbine and a thousand cartridges from me in return for the five extra pearls.

I at once went off to the schooner for the money. Girard was lying on the skylight, and as I was ashamed of my brutality to him, I went up to him, and in a few words expressed my sorrow for what had occurred, and

proffered him my hand. He rejected it, and said that as soon as he was well he should expect me to give him satisfaction—unless," he added, "like all Englishmen, you are too much of a coward, and have no sense of honour."

"Don't say that, captain," I said; "I am really very, very sorry for what has happened. Mr. Montgomery told me that I was most impertinent to you, and I do hope that you will accept my apology."

"Ah, you are afraid! You fear to meet me! You are a pig! A coward! You have no courage."

As he leant upon one arm glaring at me like a tiger, with his two blackened eyes, a cut lip, and sundry abrasions upon his features generally, he looked so intensely ridiculous, that I could not resist a smile. This made him furious, and he declared that I was not only a coward, but an imbecile; and—what cut me to the quick, made a gross and utterly unfounded accusation concerning the relations of his wife and myself.

This was serious, and I emphatically assured him that he was doing his wife a great wrong (I had certainly, in a playful manner, kissed her one night) and that he had no cause to make such an insulting insinuation. He made no answer, beyond repeating his parrot-like statement that I was a coward, his wife was as perfidious as myself, and that I was afraid to meet him.

"Oh, go and hang yourself," I said at last, indignant at the man's stupidity.

Descending to the cabin, I took the money to pay for the pearls I had bought, tied up the Winchester carbine and cartridges in a native mat, and was about to go on deck again, when Hino met me in the companion way. Her eyes were red with weeping, and the poor girl looked thoroughly distressed and unhappy. She told

me that she had been compelled to marry Girard by her relatives, that she had no affection for him, and that his unfounded jealousy had caused her the greatest misery. In another moment—so quickly do these unfortunate things happen—our lips met, and then she agreed, as the novelists say, “to become mine for ever,” and after some passionate embraces, we made our plans.

Returning on shore, I paid the Aitutaki native his two hundred dollars for the pearls, and handed him the Winchester carbine and the case of cartridges. Then, feeling sure that he was a man to be trusted, I asked him if he would help me and my newly-found lady love to get away from the island. He assented most cheerfully, and complimented me by saying that such a splendid and beautiful young woman as Hino Girard was intended by Nature and the Almighty to be the mate of an Englishman like myself, instead of being wedded to a miserable Frenchman.

Then I went to the Norwegian skipper, and asked him what he would take for his boat as she stood, ready for sea. Knowing that he could not take her away in the schooner, he said I could have her for one hundred and fifty dollars (she was really worth double), but I shook my head and turned away, saying that after all his boat would be no use to me, though I did not mind giving him seventy-five dollars. The poor man, recognising that seventy-five dollars was better than nothing, closed with me, and I paid him the money, took his pencilled receipt, and went on board again to make my final dispositions. I may mention here that had the Norwegian refused to sell me the boat, I should have taken her just the same, and left the money with the old head man.

On counting my money, I found that I had still more

than enough wherewith to pay Girard the remainder of my passage money, though as a matter of equity he was not entitled to it, as the voyage had scarcely begun, and I had already given him seven hundred and fifty francs. However, as I did not want to see him again, I wrote him a curt note, saying I was going ashore, and enclosing the money, and asking for a receipt. I sent the note to him by the steward, who in a few minutes brought me the receipt without a word from the captain.

Just then Montgomery's Samoan wife came below, and I asked her if she would like to see the pearls I had bought. Taking her seat beside me at the cabin table, we opened the handkerchief, and whilst she was gazing at them with delight, Montgomery himself joined us, and reiterated his wife's expressions of admiration, and told me that had he the money to spare, and I would sell them, he would give me one hundred pounds for any three of them. He then asked me why I had "bought the Dutchman's boat." I merely said that I could not get on well with Girard, and told him of how the man had insulted me after my overtures towards a reconciliation; and added that as I now had a good boat, I felt in a measure independent, as when I tired of living on Hikuero, I could easily find a crew who would sail with me to Tahiti, or any other island I wished.

The good-natured mate and his wife both expressed their sorrow at my intention of leaving them, and Montgomery, learning that the compass in the boat had been that in the wrecked barque's binnacle, and was an awkward, clumsy affair, gave me a proper boat compass in exchange; he also provided me a general chart of the Paumotu Group, by which I saw that Tahitic

lay due west from Hikuero, and was distant three hundred and eighty miles, and as the S.E. trades were now very strong, I remarked to Montgomery that the voyage to Tahiti would be but a pleasure trip.

Just then we heard footsteps on the companion, and Captain Girard, who had been looking down upon us from the skylight, descended. His face was very pale, and not at all improved by sundry strips of black plaster on the lips and chin. As he looked at me, his dark eyes shot such a glance of passionate resentment into mine, that I felt sure the man would have tried his best to kill me had I acceded to his wish to a duel. He paused for an instant, and then, pointing to the pearls lying on the cabin table, demanded in a voice shaking with rage, whose property they were.

“They are mine,” I said coldly.

“They are not,” he said passionately; “they are mine. You, Mr. Breachley, are a thief as well as a coward—yes, a miserable thief!”

Montgomery quickly interposed, and besought the captain to be more moderate in his language, saying he was sure that I could give him (Girard) proof that the pearls were mine.

“Proof, proof! Pouf! for his proof! He has as good as stolen the pearls, which would have been brought to me had he not made the old head man drunk——”

I had some difficulty in restraining my temper at this utterly unfounded charge, but appealing to him to listen to me calmly, I said—

“Captain Girard, these pearls were offered to me by the old Aitutaki native Marama. I gave him two hundred dollars, a Winchester carbine, and a case of cartridges for them. And that he had a right to sell,

and I a right to buy, you will, I am sure, admit, for he showed me his agreement, whereby, although he is bound to sell you all his pearl shell at a fixed price, he has the right of selling his pearls to any buyer. I have done nothing improper."

"Bah! you are a liar as well as a sneak!" and slipping past Montgomery, he struck me on the mouth with his open hand with such violence that I nearly tumbled over on my back.

"Now, will you fight? you *misérable!*" he demanded in a voice so hoarse with fury and hatred that his utterance sounded as if his interior was lined with cotton wool.

Wiping my bleeding lips as I listened to Montgomery's earnest injunctions not to forget myself and strike a man who was beside himself with rage and excitement, I made no answer to his challenge, beyond saying that he would know my decision in a day or two, and then wrapping up my pearls again, I went into my berth, packed up my belongings, and carried them on deck.

Hino was seated in a cane chair under the awning, and shot me a quick approving glance from under her dark lashes. She had been watching the proceedings below all the time.

I thought I was getting away quietly, when suddenly she gave a warning cry, and Girard, carrying two navy cutlasses in his hands, and shaking like a man in a fit of ague, bade me stay and fight, throwing one of the weapons, not at my feet, but in my face. Hino sprang to her feet, and although the maddened man pointed his cutlass at her bosom, and warned her to stand aside, or he would run her through, she prevented him from getting near me, for which I was

sincerely thankful, for I knew as much about the use of a cutlass as I did about Chinese metaphysics. In another moment Montgomery came to her aid, and I was able to get into the schooner's boat with my belongings, and go ashore.

Marama, though somewhat fearful of Girard's anger, should he learn of it, sold me a keg of beef, and some tinned potatoes, and two 50lb. tins of biscuit—as an addition to the provisions already in the boat. These I at once took on board my craft, of which I now made a more thorough examination, and saw that she was so well-found that my spirits rose, and I smiled maliciously to myself as I thought of dark-eyed Hino, and my extraordinary ability in stealing another man's wife under such exciting circumstances.

I hoisted the mainsail and jib, lifted the anchor, and then sailed the boat about a mile further away from the village, to a spot where she was nearly abreast of the one narrow passage through the reef leading into the lagoon. Here I anchored in five fathoms, in water as clear as crystal over a coral bottom of such strange beauty that, leaning over the gunwale, I surrendered myself to a silent ecstasy, and fancied that in the depths beneath, Hino's oval face, with her love-red lips and melting eyes, was looking into mine. Then once more I went over the boat, and overhauled her from stem to stern, and finding a wicker-worked two-gallon jar of the Chilian spirit called "Pisco" in one of the lockers, I opened it and took some, and in ten minutes felt more exhilarated than ever, and that Hino was Hino the Beautiful, and that there was no other woman in all the world to compare with her, and that Harry Brandon and Madame de Langle were but poor creatures compared to sweet Hino and William

Breachley. The "Pisco" was certainly very strong, but it had one good effect of sending me to sleep for two or three hours.

When I awoke, and found the boat lying on water as smooth as glass, and as restful as that of a mountain lake, and that my head was feeling pretty clear, I undressed—I was wearing pyjamas only—and as I was but half a cable's length from the beach, and no canoes were about, swam ashore, first tying my clothes and canvas shoes up on my head.

I had hardly reached the shore when I saw half a dozen natives running towards me, shouting and gesticulating; the foremost man, as soon as he reached me, grasped me by the hand, and in his mongrel Tahitian-Paumotuan-cum-English, besought me to come quickly to his house, where a white man had been killed, or was dying, or in some parlous state. Associating every current event with my own affairs, I at once jumped to the conclusion that Girard had shot himself, or Montgomery, or that a tragedy in which the Frenchman was the principal factor had occurred.

Slipping on my pyjamas, I ran along with the natives, and, mentally congratulating myself with the idea that if Girard was dead I was doing no harm in running away with his widow, and, in fact, was a very deserving person, we reached the house, which was filled with the entire population of the island.

They were clustered around the body, or rather the greater portion of the body, of the mate of the Norwegian barque, who, when swimming in the lagoon, had been seized by a shark which had practically bitten the poor fellow in half, for only some skin and integuments on the right side connected the upper with the lower part of the body. It was such an

appalling sight, that it made me feel quite ill. The poor fellow was a handsome, stalwart man with a long yellow beard (he was the captain's son), and his face bore such a dreadful expression of agony—his eyes being still wide open and staring—that I could scarcely look at him, and was glad when Marama covered his body with a mat, and sent the natives away.

I left the house at once, feeling that I could not witness the grief of his father, who was expected every moment, and returned to where my boat was anchored, and again studied the trend of the passage through the reef, for as I intended to leave at night, I had need to be careful.

About four in the afternoon I saw Girard and Hino come ashore, go to Marama's house, and then walk through the village. Carrying a fishing-line in my hand, and calling to a small intelligent-looking boy to come with me, I sauntered towards the landing-place. Passing through the village I met the Girards, and raised my hat to them. Hino gave me a slight inclination of her head, but her husband looked straight before him, ignoring me entirely.

I remained fishing for an hour, momentarily expecting a message from Hino, and had not to wait much longer, for presently I saw her coming towards the landing-place, accompanied by Marama's wife and three or four young native girls. Girard was standing outside the house, talking to Marama, but keenly watching his wife to see if she spoke to me. But she passed me without even looking at me, or I at her, and getting into the schooner's boat with the native women, was rowed on board.

By this time I had caught three or four fish, which I told the native boy who was with me to take off to the

mate and his wife. He at once jumped into a canoe, and paddled off, returning in a quarter of an hour with a note from Hino, which he quietly slipped into my hand. It was to say that Girard was remaining on shore to weigh Marama's pearl shell, and would most likely sleep on shore, as he seemed to be suspicious of my movements, and had ordered her to return to the schooner. But I need have no fear, she added. She would be with me by eleven o'clock or sooner, especially if the night turned out wet and squally, of which there was every indication, as the glass had been falling steadily all day.

As soon as it was dark I went off to my boat again, and waited. At seven o'clock rain began to fall heavily, accompanied by sharp squalls of wind, which by nine o'clock had settled down into a very stiff breeze, and the shore, only a hundred yards or so distant, was quite hidden from view. Just in front of me I could see the tumbling surf on the reef showing unpleasantly white, but it was impossible for me to discern the small narrow passage. The rising tide and the wind together had now raised a heavy swell, which made the boat jump and roll and strain at her cable in a most uncomfortable manner, so I gave her another fifteen fathoms, which brought me rather too close to the shore; but at that moment, to my delight, I heard Hino's voice. She was on the beach, not ten yards away, and, followed by my small native boy acquaintance, she came boldly into the water, and in a few seconds was on board.

"Quick, Bill dearest," she panted, "Marama says we need not try to find the passage, as the tide is so high we can sail over the reef anywhere."

Seizing the cable, we hauled out upon it, no easy task under such conditions, and by good luck got our anchor

up. Then running up the jib, which was all the sail we wanted just then, I put the boat before the wind at the white line of reef, and in less than five minutes we were right into the surf, which, to our joy, was not as bad as it looked, for not a drop of water came aboard, and we passed over safely without touching the bottom once.

We ran on in the thick blinding rain for another ten minutes, then close reefed the mainsail and hoisted it, and I put the boat's head N.N.W., which brought the wind on her quarter, and sent her spinning along in great style. By this time, although we were only about a mile and a half from the village, we could not even see a light, let alone the land itself, and there was no possible chance now of the boat being seen from the shore.

Marama's wife had sold me several changes of clothes for Hino, who, as soon as possible, put on some dry things, for the rain was very cold. Then, making her lie down aft, I covered her with my oilskin coat, and let the shivering native boy, who was wearing but a grass girdle around his waist, creep in beside her, and bade them sleep.

About two in the morning, the rain ceased and the blue sky came out, star-studded. Then whilst Hino steered, I made some coffee for us all, and we ate a few biscuits. At daylight we were nearly forty miles away from Hikuero, and were making good progress before a steady breeze.

CHAPTER XXIII

POOR HINO

MY first inquiry of Hino was to ask how she came to bring the boy with her, and I had to laugh when she replied that she did not bring him—he simply came with her and begged her to ask me to let him come with us in the boat. His parents were both dead, and he was eager to get away from Hikuero. He was, as I have said, a smart little fellow, his age was not more than eleven, and he soon proved his usefulness by lighting the fire in the little Norwegian boat stove, and, instructed by Hino, boiling water for our breakfast coffee. His name was Tapoa, and we, to his intense delight, appointed him cook, steward, and crew.

I must mention that I was steering a N.N.W. course for very good reasons. Hino had told me that she was sure that Girard, when he discovered her flight, would conclude we should make for Tahiti, and give chase in the schooner; and had his surmise been right, could not have failed to overtake us. Ninety-five miles to the N.N.W. of Hikuero was the atoll island of Marutea, where Hino had some relatives on her mother's side, and it had at once occurred to her that that place would be a safe refuge for us for a time, as even if Girard came there, her relatives would protect her with their lives if

he tried, as she naïvely expressed it, "to steal me from you, Billy." If, however, it should so happen that these relatives (whom she had never seen) were dead, then we should bear away a little more to the westward for the great lagoon of Fakarava, whose people, she said, so detested French people generally that they would give us a warm welcome. After that I was to decide as to our future.

"Fakarava is a hundred and thirty miles further on than Marutea," I said on looking at Montgomery's chart, "but we can do it easily enough in such a boat as this if we do not find friends at Marutea." Then I added vaingloriously, for her kisses were firing my blood, that if she was not afraid, I would sail the boat to Samoa. She smiled brightly, but said she feared such a long voyage—nearly eighteen hundred miles—would be too dangerous, though she would love to go to Samoa and live there with me.

I did not know then, as I did in after years, that Samoa to the educated Polynesian mind was as Paris is to the American—at least to see Samoa once in their lifetime is the dream of not only all the people of Micronesia and Eastern Polynesia, but that of the more prosaic minded native of Tonga and Fiji as well. Even in the equatorial islands of the Pacific—the Gilbert, Kingsmill, Tokelau, and Ellice Groups, both sexes of the youth of these groups long to visit Samoa, which to their simple minds is the Place Beautiful of the world, where enjoyment and happiness wait hand in hand to welcome the stranger. This belief certainly was not entirely ill-founded, for Samoa possessed strong attractions for the natives of other island groups. There was no religious tyranny—a Protestant Church (in those days at any rate) might stand cheek by jowl with a Roman Catholic

chapel, and the Methodist minister, half a cable's length away, could in his own place of worship say what he pleased about the adoration of graven images, and the heathenish customs of Rome without fear—the Samoans liked religion generally, of whatever brand, and were liberally disposed and open-minded to anything new, from theology and tinned meats to a travelling circus. But, nevertheless, their affection for English missionaries and Englishmen generally, and their sense of the freedom of English customs, was remarkable, and from one end of Samoa to another the poorest white man who called himself an Englishman would meet with politeness and friendship denied to a German or Frenchman.

After breakfast we went over in detail the stores which the Norwegian skipper had put in the boat, and estimated that there were quite enough provisions to last the three of us for three months at least; as for water, there was a hundred gallons. Every bit of space in the boat had been utilised for something or other likely to be needed on the long voyage Captain Gunderson had contemplated, and even the bottom boards were covered with a layer of blankets, strips of canvas, &c.; in fact, he and the twelve men he intended taking with him could have reached New Zealand with ease. The sails, running gear, &c., were in perfect order, and the only fault I had to find was that we were rather too light, and would have to be careful that we did not carry too much sail at night time. However, I was well pleased with my purchase, for she was almost a new boat, oak built, and though very heavy to pull, sailed exceedingly well, and I decided that when we got to some place where there was a carpenter I would have her raised a plank higher, decked, and turn her into a proper cutter for trading purposes, or else sell

her, for I knew she would then be worth at least a hundred pounds. Hino was a remarkably clever girl, and knew what she was talking about, and entered into my plans with eagerness, and said that I could certainly make a good deal of money with such a boat if I could get some one to supply me with the necessary trade goods to make a start.

I have said that she was very pretty, and although a half-blood, her skin was hardly as dark as that of an Italian or Spaniard of the darker type. Her features, though not regular, were very expressive and engaging, and when she smiled and showed her pearly teeth, she looked almost beautiful. She was, I found, about three years older than myself, and had been married to Girard about eighteen months. When her English father, whose name she did not know, had left her native land (Mangareva, Gambier Islands) she was a child of five years of age, and was then adopted, and fairly well educated by another white trader and his wife—both French people. She told me that her mother by adoption—her real mother was still alive, but had married a native—when she grew up, was very anxious for her to go to Papeit  to the French sisters, and take the veil. The dread of this future made her twice run away and hide herself with some native friends, and finally to escape the persistent efforts of her guardians, backed up by the local priests, she agreed to marry Girard, who had fallen in love with her.

I asked her if she did not love Girard when she married him, and she said no, and candidly told me that the one man she wanted to marry, or run away with, was a young English half-caste Maori sailor, who was mate of a small trading schooner; "but," she added, "although I wanted very much to run away with him,

his captain would not allow him to take me on board, for fear that the French priests would get his trading licence cancelled. So he had to give me up, and I married Girard."

"What made you like me, Hino?" I asked, as she sat beside me with her chin on my knee, and I steered the boat with one hand and stroked her head with the other.

"I don't know, Billy," she replied simply. "Henri" (Girard) "was always very kind to me, but he was always so jealous of me that sometimes I was quite miserable. And the first time I saw you I liked you and told Selema" (Montgomery's wife) "that I wished I had seen you before I married. You were always nice and kind to me; and then you are an Englishman."

My vanity was hurt. I had expected a tender outpouring of affection, instead of being told in a matter-of-fact sort of way that I was "liked" simply because I was an Englishman. My ill-regulated, and, in a manner, unsophisticated mind, could not grasp the fact that this poor girl, who could so quickly surrender herself to me, and who looked upon the marriage tie as a mere conventionalism, was an altogether different being from such women as Madame de Langle and May and Jessie Flemming. So for some minutes I sulked and did not speak, until she put her arms around my neck, and asked me if I was sorry she had come away with me. The boat coming up into the wind and the flapping sails were, I trust, a conclusive proof to the contrary, for I at once let go the tiller, and we made mutual promises of undying attachment.

"Hino," I said presently, looking at her pretty little hands, "what have you done with all your rings?"

"I took them all off—every one—and left them, with

everything else that *he* had given me, in his cabin, together with some money; so you see, Billy dear, he cannot say that I have done anything wrong. But I did feel so tempted to bring some of my clothes besides those I came away in—I have such a nice lot of things—but I was afraid and thought it would be as bad as stealing. But I brought away some pearls which really are my own, for they were given to me before I was married by Madame Rabardy, and I have kept them ever since. They are worth a lot of money, I know; and we shall sell them when we get to Samoa, and the money will help you to start trading. See, here they are.”

Taking up the dress she wore when she came off to the boat, and which was now dry, she showed me thirteen very handsome pearls quite as large as those which I had brought from Marama.

“They are real beauties, Hino,” I said, “and as you say, are worth a great deal of money. So with the pearls we have and the boat and stores we will get on very well, I am sure. But,” I added with a laugh, “thirteen is an unlucky number—as superstitious people say.”

“Oh well, I’m not superstitious, Billy. Besides, you must now put them with yours, and then the unlucky number will be lost, won’t it, dear?”

About four o’clock on the following day, to our intense delight, we sighted the low, long line of trees, which, fringing the shore, and apparently growing out of the sea, was Marutea Lagoon. So elated was I at what I thought was my wonderful skill in making the island, that I poured myself out a drink of more Pisco than I could stand, in spite of Hino’s protests that I was taking too much. That she was correct was soon made manifest to me, for a quarter of an hour later the wind

suddenly died away, and when both she and the boy Tapoa told me that a hard blow was coming upon us from the eastward, I was barely able to understand the danger such an event would involve, and in a maudlin way suggested that we should lower the mainsail and jib, and go to sleep. At this time, Marutea was about seven miles distant to leeward, and Hino roused me to a sense of our position by impressing upon me that if we could not bring to under the western reef—the lee side of the island—and anchor, we should have to run before the gale for Tahiti.

Her anxious face and the undisguised terror of the boy helped to sober me, and we closer reefed the mainsail, and then scandalised it, leaving the jib standing. The boat, as I have said, was very light, and consequently steered badly when under too much canvas in a strong breeze, though, had I a steer oar instead of a rudder, she would have been manageable. In a light wind and a smooth sea she was right enough, but in a lumpy sea, even when under a reefed mainsail and jib, she would continually keep broaching to, and if a sea struck her on the lee bow, go off on the other tack. I had tried to alter this by putting the two water barrels aft, but even this expedient was not of much use, and I had used many improper expressions at the Norwegian skipper not having fitted the boat with a proper steer oar.

We were becalmed for nearly an hour, and then, as Hino had surmised, the wind came away from the eastward quite suddenly, and blowing so strongly that soon after sunset we were close in to the reef on the lee side of the island, and in smooth water. Bringing to in five fathoms, we anchored and made all snug for the night, thankful that the wind had brought no rain with it, though disappointed that we had not been able to run

into the lagoon through the passage on the north-east side and have slept ashore in the village. The lagoon was formed by a series of low, wooded islets on the northern, eastern, and southern sides; on the west or lee a curved line of reef twenty miles in length completed the enclosure. From where we were anchored, we could not of course see the lights of the village, which was on the eastern side, and ten miles distant across the lagoon, but we consoled ourselves with the thought that the people had no doubt seen the boat running for shelter, and would send a canoe across the lagoon to pilot us round in the morning. Covering ourselves over with a blanket, for the wind was chilly, we were soon asleep.

About ten o'clock, however, I was awakened by the heavy pitching and jumping of the boat, as she strained at her cable, and, sitting up, saw that it was now blowing half a gale. Overhead, however, the sky was wonderfully, beautifully clear, and studded with myriad stars. Going for'ard, I paid out another ten fathoms of cable, so that we might ride the more easily, and then turned in again, wishing that the three of us were able to get the heavy mast down for the night.

I think I had not been asleep more than an hour when the boat began to roll so heavily that I was again awakened, and discovered that our cable had parted, and that we were adrift. Hino and the boy at once helped me to make sail, but by the time this was done we were far off the land, and the boat, owing to the short, choppy sea, would not lay to the wind, and presently falling off, a huge sea tumbled on board and half filled us, and to make matters worse, the lower rudder gudgeon carried away. Then there was nothing else for us to do but run before the wind, and steer with an oar. By two in the morning it was blowing so hard

that we were under the jib only, and yet the boat was racing along at such speed that I was hardly able to steer, and anxiously waited for daylight, so that we might lash half-a-dozen oars together as a sea anchor and wait till the gale—for it was now a solid gale—blew itself out.

“Let us run, Billy,” said Hino; “we can’t beat back to Marutea now, and we are bound to sight Motutuga or Tahanca by to-morrow, and can stay at either place for a few days, and then go on to Fakarava.”

I was glad to follow her suggestion, and when day broke we were simply tearing through the water on an easterly course for the great lagoon island of Tahanca—sixty miles distant—and about noon sighted the land right ahead. In another hour we were so close that we could see the russet-hued thatched houses of a small village, right abreast of which was an opening in the reef into the lagoon. There was, however, a fearful sea running, and even on the beach, protected as it was by the outer reef, the waves were dashing with great violence. But we had no choice but to go straight on, and run ashore on the softest spot we could find.

As we tore through the passage the natives ran down to the beach, and we could see them signalling to us to keep further to the northward. Almost exhausted, I strained at the short steer oar, and brought the boat up a couple of points, as poor Hino and the boy hauled in the sheet of our close-reefed mainsail. Then a lumping sea knocked me off my feet, and sent me overboard, and when I rose to the surface again I saw that the boat was lying capsized on a patch of coral, with the seas breaking over and pounding her into matchwood; as for Hino and Tapoa, they were nowhere visible.

Eight or ten natives had dashed into the surf to our

rescue, and good swimmer as I was, I was on the point of drowning, when two of them seized me and brought me ashore, badly cut in the small of the back and on my head, and rendered unconscious by being dashed against a coral boulder.

When I came to again, I found myself in a native house with Hino lying quite near me, surrounded by a number of weeping women. Her face was covered with a piece of navy blue calico, and a deadly fear smote my heart when I saw how still she lay, and that the boy Tapoa, sobbing heavily, was pressing his lips to her feet.

Lifting the cloth which covered her face, I saw that she was quite dead. She had been killed either by being dashed against the reef, or by one of the boat's timbers or oars, which had struck her on the temple.

CHAPTER XXIV

WANDERING

I REMAINED on this island for about four months after the death of poor Hino, feeling very miserable and dejected. The people treated me kindly enough, and when the New Bedford whaler *Europa* touched at the island, and the captain consented to give me a passage to either the Gilbert or the Marshall Group, I parted from them with no little regret.

I went on board the whaler with some decent clothing, it is true, but nothing else, for even the little money I had had when we ran ashore was lost, as also were the pearls when the boat broke up. The boy Tapoa, who had now become greatly attached to me, wept profusely when he found he was not to accompany me, and at last I went to the captain, just as we were pushing off, and begged him to let the boy come with me. To my great pleasure, and Tapoa's wild delight, he consented, and told the youngster to jump in.

We cruised slowly through the Society, Tokelau, and Ellice Groups, during which time we took four whales, one of which was of an enormous size, and, at the end of three months, made the Gilbert Islands, where I wanted to go ashore, knowing that I should soon get employment

there as a trader. The captain of the whaler told me that the Gilbert Islands were a "cut-throat place," and that I had better stick to the ship.

I thanked him, and said that Captain Allonby of the *Sea Breeze* had also wanted to make a whaleman out of me, but I thought that one in the family was enough, and that my brother Morgan, having the most brains, was the best man. The American skipper, whose name I think was MacKenzie, took this quite seriously, and said that that was so—it wanted a man with a good headpiece to become a whaleman, but he thought I could get on very well if I tried, as I seemed to be "real smart" at times. However, when he found I preferred to go ashore, he pressed me no longer, and gave me as a present a 50lb. box of tobacco, and a few dollars in silver as well, and the same day landed Tapoa and myself at the lagoon island of Apaian, one of the trading centres of the Gilbert islands, advising me to at once call on the principal trader there, an Englishman named Bob Randolph.

I followed his advice, and found Randolph at home in a very comfortably though rudely furnished house, which was surrounded by a throng of wild-eyed, black-haired natives of both sexes, the men all carrying fire-arms, and wearing but an *airiri*, a grass girdle, round their waists. They, however, quickly made way for me, for they were all dependents or customers of Randolph, who was a man of great *mana* or prestige in the Gilberts. He was a fine, sturdy specimen of the wandering, adventurous Englishman, and received me very kindly. Having heard my story (I did not, in telling it, think it necessary to mention anything about Hino Girard) he said he could give me employment right away. I was to take charge of one of his trading

boats which went from village to village in the lagoon, and was to be paid by commission; he, however, giving me quarters and provisions for myself and Tapoa. For the tobacco I had brought ashore, he gladly allowed me fifty dollars, as he was quite run out of this necessary trading commodity.

I remained with this man for over a year, and, I believe, gave him great satisfaction, raising myself in his estimation by not following the usual custom of most young white men, and taking a native wife immediately upon landing. Randolph, though rough in his ways, and forcible in his language, was a man of principle—and discernment as well—and nothing angered him so much as the glaring licentiousness of the lives of his fellow traders.

“By and by,” he said to me one evening as we were smoking in his sitting-room after a hard day’s work with the boats, “if you decide to keep on at this sort of life and settle down, you will have to get a wife; a single man who is always fooling about with unmarried girls, as do C—— and S——” (mentioning two traders living on the adjacent island of Tarawa) “is, in reality, secretly despised by the natives, and, besides that, it lowers his prestige with them—the common sort regard him as no better than themselves, and take liberties with him that they would not dare to do with me. Any native who insulted me would have sudden death—not from me, but from the chiefs. Now, when you decide to take a wife, you must get a girl who will be a help to you in your business—not some common slave who will only be a hindrance to, and a drag upon you. Let me know whenever you are ready, and I will get you a girl with some land, and a good lot of fighting relatives to protect it.”

That all he said was true I was well aware, and I have no doubt but that I should have followed his advice had I remained in Apaian. The wild, intractable, and warlike natives had the utmost respect for Randolph, not only for his fair dealing with them as a trader, but for his physical strength and courage. A few years after I left him, an event occurred which well shows the man's resolute character:—

An old white man named Keyes, with a young English wife, came from New Zealand and settled on the island as a trader, at a village quite near to that in which Randolph lived. A young native chief, smitten with the Englishwoman's good looks, and despising her husband's age and feebleness, one day frankly told her that he would kill the old white man and take possession of her. Regarding the man's words as an empty threat, and fearing to repeat them to her husband, she said nothing about the matter. But at dusk that evening, the chief came to the trader's door and knocked, calling out that he had brought him some sharks' fins to sell. The unsuspecting old man opened the door, and the native, placing a horse-pistol against his chest, shot him dead. The poor terrified wife fled to Randolph's wife for protection, and Randolph himself buried the murdered man on the following morning, and a few days later sent an account of the tragedy to the naval authorities in Sydney, and asked that a warship might be sent to the island to investigate the case. Nearly five months passed, during which time the murderer boasted that he would kill Randolph himself if the latter crossed his path. Randolph made no sign, and took no notice of many insulting messages; the criminal belonged to another village, and had a large and influential following of young bucks, all well armed and eager to fight, and the trader did not want to plunge

the island into internecine warfare, though his own native connections were anxious that he should lead them in an attack on the murderer's village, and literally wipe it out by burning it, and putting at least the murderer himself to death. At last, however, a small gunboat, the *Reynard* (one of four similarly useless craft employed in endeavouring to control the illegal practices indulged in by vessels engaged in the Kanaka "labour trade") arrived from Sydney, and her commander, after consultation with Randolph, gave the natives four hours in which to bring the destroyer of poor Keyes on board his vessel for trial. They refused, despising the size of the *Reynard*, which was but a small fore-and-aft rigged vessel, carrying one fifty-pounder Armstrong gun, a tube, and a crew of five-and-twenty men. Then Randolph, whose own native following, he saw, was impressed by the defiance given to Commander P—— by the rest of the islanders, and were showing an inclination to be saucy to himself for backing up the demands of the gunboat, urged the chiefs generally to accede to the request of the naval officer before worse befell them, and Commander P——, who was one of those officers to whom Exeter Hall and its denunciations mattered nothing as against a question of emergency apart from duty, warped his little vessel in right abreast of the offending village, and threatened to blow it into the empyrean unless the man he wanted was brought on board by the time indicated. This, apparently, had the desired effect, for in a few minutes a boat put off to the gunboat. In her was a stalwart young native, bound hand and foot. He was lifted on board.

"That is not the man," said Randolph to Commander P——. "He is only a poor slave beggar. They will

most likely send off another substitute or two before we get the man we want."

He was quite right, for two more poor devils were sent off, bound hand and foot, as the actual murderer, but Randolph identified them so easily that at last the natives gave up the game, and asked the trader to come ashore and get the real Simon Pure.

This he did without the slightest difficulty, for the culprit at once gave himself into his hands, and, expressing regret at the trouble he had caused, asked Randolph to beseech the captain of the man-of-war to shoot instead of hanging him. He also expressed a wish that Randolph would tell Mrs. Keyes that he (the killer of Keyes) was very sorry he had shot the old man with a pistol so suddenly. Had he poisoned him, he said, Mrs. Keyes would not have been so terrified, and they—the murderer and the widow—would have lived happily afterwards. He incidentally mentioned that it was his brother who had prompted him to shoot Keyes, on the understanding that one was to have the white woman for a wife, and the other Keyes's Winchester rifle, boat, and other effects.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, the trial was over, and Commander P——, at Randolph's suggestion, decided that the execution should be carried out on shore without further delay by the natives themselves. An old carronade, which stood in front of the trader's house, was brought into requisition. The murderer, arrayed in his best costume, walked proudly to the gun, surrounded by his admiring friends, and was lashed with his back to its muzzle, thanking Randolph for his trouble, and requesting that his own brother might be his executioner. This matter having been arranged—the brother being much flattered by such distinction—a

match was applied to the vent, and the admirer of the charms of English female beauty went away in small fragments into the air.

Randolph's fox terrier (so I heard long afterwards), that night brought in a piece of the man to his master, and deposited it at his feet when he was having supper with Commander P——.

This execution had a very beneficial effect on the turbulent natives of the Gilbert Group, and poor old Keyes was the last European ever murdered there. Yet the part which Commander P—— had taken in the affair was grossly misrepresented by sections of the English and American press, some religious papers (whose editors were either misled or ignorant of the facts of the case) stigmatising it as a "dreadful outrage." As a matter of fact, Commander P—— merely demanded the man's punishment after he had been found guilty, and the penalty inflicted was suggested by Randolph as one that would have a terrifying and lasting effect upon a people prone to deeds of bloodshed.

I am convinced he was right, and the sentimentalists wrong, for the native mind would not have been impressed had the culprit been hanged in the usual respectable Christian manner, even had a bishop in his gaiters been present to assist in sending him off to the other world. Death by hanging, to the Equatorial islanders of the Pacific, is a silly and ineffective way of killing a man, and to other races, such as the Fijians, Tongans, etc., publicly to hang a man who might be perhaps some common slave, is conferring a high distinction upon him, inasmuch as strangulation was the manner of death reserved for the wives of chiefs of high rank, or men of political influence.

I left Randolph with a feeling of regret, for he was a

man of sterling character, strong and masterful, and possessing a heavy hand for the man who affronted him. Through him I gained a great amount of information about the natives, and, so to speak, the native mode of thought. He was a capable linguist as far as the diversified dialects of the islands of the Equatorial Pacific went, and much of what he knew I rapidly acquired from him. Only once did we come into collision, and that was when I one day thoughtlessly ascended a coconut tree and threw down a dozen or so of young nuts for my boat's crew to drink. Randolph was with me at the time—though not present when I climbed the tree—and to my surprise, when he learned what I had done, he so passionately reproached me for “acting like a damned slave,” that I lost my temper, made an angry retort, and wound up by saying that, although I was in his employ, I “was not his nigger.”

“No,” he replied cuttingly, “you are not my nigger, but you are acting the nigger to your boat's crew of savages, who instead of being grateful to you as you imagine, are laughing at you as a poor fool of a white man, who, for the sake of showing off before them, so far lowers himself as to climb a coconut tree to give them a drink! You ought to be damned well ashamed of yourself.”

He was quite right, and I shall always remember him with gratitude for his many kindnesses to me.

Some few years after the *Reynard* episode, he went to Sydney to place his young half-caste children at school there, and was voyaging to New Britain with a party of traders—all of whom I knew personally—in an overmasted hermaphrodite brig named the *Francisco Felix*, when she capsized in a squall, and every soul on board was drowned, for no trace of the vessel, beyond a

stove-in boat, which drifted ashore at Tanna, in the New Hebrides, was ever seen after.

I left Apaian in a Fijian schooner engaged in the Polynesian labour trade — generally known as the “blackbirding” trade. The master was an English ex-naval officer, and I had not been on board more than twenty-four hours when I discovered him to be one of the most anointed scoundrels that ever trod a deck. He had been tried by court-martial and kicked out of the navy for embezzlement, and his first effort, when he found out that I was possessed of a thousand Mexican dollars, was to try and make me drunk, with a view of dropping me ashore at the first island, and getting rid of me, minus the dollars. But I had sense enough by this time to decline such blandishments, and positively refused his invitations to drink or play “a friendly game of cards,” whereupon he became somewhat rude, and said he would like me to pay him at once my passage money to Samoa—the place at which he had agreed to land Tapoa and myself for a hundred dollars.

I brought him one hundred dollars, and asked him (per advice of Bob Randolph) for an acknowledgment, which he gave me by hitting me a blow on the left eye that closed that optic for a week. He was a miserable, long-legged creature with red eyes, and a drink-besotted face, and his audacity in striking me so enraged me that, taking him by his Vandyke beard, I dragged him on to the main deck—he trying to draw his pistol and shoot me—and, asked him to put his hands up. He called upon the mate, the boatswain, and the labour recruiter to come to his assistance and put me in irons; but they being all Englishmen, and decent sort of fellows, besought him to let the matter drop, and “shake hands with Mr. Breachley.”

“I’ll shake hands with the sweep when I’ve finished with him, Mr. Potter,” I said to the mate, who gave me an approving wink as plain as an earthquake, and then telling Captain M—— that his action in drawing a pistol on me—an unarmed man—was very cowardly and un-English like, I again asked him to put up his hands, which, seeing that his officers and crew were not inclined to back him up, he did, and in one round he “went to sleep” as the devotees of the P.R. say, with two such beautiful-in-the-morning black eyes, that my own single injured visual organ gave me no pain, as he was carried below by the steward and boatswain.

Three days after leaving Apaian, we made Naura (Pleasant Island) the western outlier of the Gilbert Group, and as I felt that I could not possibly live on board the *White Cloud* on amicable terms with Captain M——, I told him that if he would return me fifty dollars, I would leave the vessel and go ashore with my servant boy Tapoa. His good points came out at once, and he admitted that he had behaved very badly to me, but pleaded as his excuse that he was heir to an earldom (which was absolutely true) and that he often made a beast of himself through drink, of which fact I had had ample evidence. Then, because I refused to leave my boy Tapoa with him for a price of twenty pounds, he again became insolent, and told me that he would not let me go ashore, and added insult to injury by calling me a “damned Botany Bay convict.” (I had previously told him that I was born in Australia.)

This was the last straw on the camel’s back. M——, as I have said, was a long, weak-backed creature, but his physical weakness was excelled by his profound conceit and insufferable insolence to all whom he considered his inferiors in rank, and how such a man

managed to exist in the South Seas in command of a "blackbirder" was a puzzle to me. However, the "Botany Bay" allusion was too much for me to stand from such a man, and, exasperated to the last degree, I struck him in the face. He closed with me at once, and, getting the fingers of his left hand into my lips, he actually tried to tear my cheek asunder in his mad fury. The agony his long nails caused me, as they cut into my flesh, was so great that I showed him no mercy, for getting him down on the deck of the cabin, I knelt upon him, and after re-ebonising his eyes, shouted for the mate and steward to come and take him away, exclaiming that I had had to serve a Frenchman the same way once, but I did not think that an Englishman would try to tear my cheek off. And indeed my face was streaming with blood.

A few hours afterwards, I landed on Pleasant Island with Tapoa and my belongings, and a white man named Terry, who was one of the six Europeans living on the island, took possession of me and brought me to his house, telling me that I was very welcome, especially as I had some firearms and ammunition.

I learned from him that the people of Pleasant Island were formed of six clans or tribes, all of which were at warfare with each other. Each clan possessed a white man, who was associated with the chief of each village, and who, though not always taking part in the actual fighting, gave his assistance and advice, and supplied his native friends with arms and ammunition—at a big price—to exterminate their enemies.

It was a most curious condition of affairs, as Terry explained to me—for all of these six traders, though knowing each other personally, were, by their connec-

tion by marriage with the natives and their rival trading interests, supposed to be deadly enemies to one another. When a trading vessel visited the island to buy their coconut oil, each white man, attended by his following of armed natives, would board the ship, which was regarded as neutral territory, and together would come to an amicable arrangement of the division of firearms, spirits, tobacco, and other goods to be purchased. Then, once on shore again, fighting would begin. Each district of the island was surrounded by a stone wall, and day and night the rattle of musketry went on, as the natives of one village fired at another, the white men attending to the wounded of their respective villages, and borrowing a case of Hollands gin from each other occasionally (though surreptitiously) under the plea that it was needed for wounded men.

Terry told me that he was sure I should like the place, but added that though the white men as a rule did not fire at each other during the native fights, there was one man—a new comer—who was not playing fair, inasmuch as he had killed eight or ten of his (Terry's) people during the past six months.

“Ye see,” he explained, “it is this way. We white men go with the natives, and fire a few shots now and again, but we don't try to hit anybody. We get a quarter of a dollar for every Snider cartridge we sell, and every native who is killed means a loss to one or another of us. But this new man is a terror. He came here two years ago, and doesn't understand the thing at all. He says he is going to make his people at the north end of the island wipe the other five clans out, and, with a native chief named Tebau, become boss of the island. And, as I have said, he has killed some of my people when he need not have done so, and so me

and the other traders sent him word a month ago, that if he comes down this way, and any of our people shoot him, he has only himself to blame."

"What did he say to that?"

"Sent back word that he would shoot any one of us who came in sight of him. And then to show us what he could do, he and his natives made a descent on my place here in the dead of night, made me a prisoner, and took my wife's youngest sister. And this chap Blake had the d——d cheek to tell me that only because my wife was so good-looking he would not burn my house over my head—just for her sake."

"Blake!" I said. "What is he like?"

"Quite a young fellow, dark and mighty good-looking. He's a sailor man, I believe, and came here in a Honolulu labour schooner two years ago. He's a bad lot, and I wish I could put a bullet into him."

"I believe I know the man," I said. "Does he often walk with his left hand closed?"

"He does indeed. I've noticed that frequently."

Then I knew that I was on the same island as Harry Brandon, and determined to see him as quickly as possible, for the memory of our friendship and comradeship was ever strong within me.

CHAPTER XXV

A MEETING—AND A PARTING

AS soon as I announced my intention of visiting Blake, two of Terry's fellow traders tried to dissuade me, saying that he was a very dangerous man, and had acted so outrageously towards the other white men on the island, that they had serious thoughts of combining, and either making him a prisoner or shooting him. If they succeeded in accomplishing the former, he was to be sent away in his boat with such natives as cared to accompany him.

"The trouble is, though," said one of them, "we have to catch our hare before we can cook him, and Blake's natives will, I know, fight for him. He has about two hundred to back him up, and there's hardly one of them that has not a breech-loader of some sort—either a Vetterli or a Winchester, and we don't want to have unnecessary bloodshed."

"Let me go and see what I can do first," I said, adding that I knew the man well, and believed I could bring matters to a peaceable conclusion. Somewhat reluctantly—for they considered I was running a risk—they assented to my suggestion, and a little humpbacked native was sent for to act as guide, and to carry a white flag, otherwise I might be fired at when passing near the

other villages. Had the weather been favourable, it would have been much easier and quicker to have gone to Blake's village by boat, but a heavy surf was breaking on the shore of the island, which has no barrier reef to protect it—in fact, either landing at or putting out from Naura is difficult unless the sea is fairly calm.

Bidding my three new acquaintances goodbye for the time, we started off, the humpback (who was also deaf and dumb) getting over the rough stony ground at such a pace that I could hardly keep up with him. Every now and then he would turn round and give me an encouraging grin, and a sound between a squeak and a grunt would come from his enormous mouth, which nearly divided his gargoyle-like head in halves. We passed or met numbers of armed natives, all of whom were going to or returning from the stone walls dividing the various districts, and from behind which they fired at each other day and night, and enriched the honest traders by using cartridges costing a quarter of a dollar each.

Our white flag was everywhere respected, and the natives, men and women alike, repeatedly invited me to stay and talk, and have something to eat and drink, but I pressed on, and only delayed to speak to the two white men living in the two villages near to Blake's. They were very hospitably inclined, and when they learned the object of my mission, wished me every success, and the last man—who evidently was a nautical person—informed me that Blake was the "two ends and bight of a bloody scoundrel, and was a-carryin' on as if he was the Emperor of Russia."

With my gargoyle-faced guide leaping and bounding in front of me like a monkey in hysterics, I at last reached the wall inclosing Blake's village, where I was

confronted by some twenty or thirty natives, who were armed with Vetterli rifles. Speaking to them in the Apaian dialect, which is much like that of Naura, I asked them to take me to their white man's house.

One of them at once darted off, I following with several others, and a few minutes later I saw Harry Brandon come out of his house. He was dressed in a suit of white duck, and looked so different—having grown a pointed beard—that I should not have recognised him had we met in a city. That he did not recognise me at first was certain, for, seeing that I was unarmed, he took off his revolver and belt and handed it to a very handsome girl who walked by his side.

“Who are you?” he began; “and what the blazes do you want?”

“Don't you know me, Harry?”

He sprang forward, and in another instant we were wringing each other's hands and trying to speak. Then his natural cynical nature asserted itself:

“By Gad, Billy, old boy! how damned curiously things do happen, so damnably curiously and so out of place! I'm now a drunken scallywag of a beachcomber, calling myself a trader, and not fit to shake hands with you—or any other decent person.”

“Don't say that, Harry,” I replied, as, putting his arm in mine, he led me inside; “and now that I have found you, we must not part.”

In a few minutes we had told each other our stories, and Brandon's, to be brief, was no better than mine.

After leaving the *Nebraska*, he went upon a drinking bout, became all but penniless, and stowed away on board the Honolulu mail boat. At Honolulu, when loafing about on the pier, looking for another ship, a

very old gentleman named Hesse, and his equally elderly wife were standing on the edge of the wharf, looking at the shipping in the harbour when a violent puff of wind sent the lady over into the water. Brandon at once sprang over after her, brought her ashore, and placing her in her husband's care, marched off quietly without a word, to the Chinaman's sailors' boarding house at which he was staying.

At ten o'clock that night, Mr. Hesse, who had been scouring the town to discover him, found him, and in another hour Brandon was in clover, for the old gentleman was a wealthy sugar planter, and insisted on Brandon becoming his guest at his house in Nuuanu Valley. Mr. Hesse had a large family, and Brandon was made so much of for saving the mother's life, that, as he said, his own life became a burden to him, and finally the old gentleman urged him to enter his employment as overseer of one of his plantations, at a handsome salary. This Brandon declined, and then Hesse—to whom he had told something of his history, I imagine—asked him to accept a gift of five thousand dollars as a token of his gratitude. This Harry also declined; but in the end took a loan of a thousand dollars, and with this thousand dollars, he had made his way to Pleasant Island in an Hawaiian labour schooner, and established himself as a trader among the wild and intractable people. Since then, he candidly admitted to me, he had "gone wrong" entirely, and under the influence of drink, had not only estranged himself from his fellow-traders, but committed acts that would justify them in shooting him at sight.

We talked long and earnestly, and Brandon, who I could see had been drinking heavily for many months, and looked worn, haggard, and old, agreed to leave the

island with me, admitting that he was fast killing himself by his mode of life.

I at once sent off a note to Terry, telling him to inform the other white men that "Blake" was leaving the island in his whale-boat on the following day if the weather was favourable, and that I was going with him; also that he (Blake) was that day returning the girl Teratiko, whom he had abducted, and would make him ample compensation for the wrong he had done him. The compensation consisted of trade goods, such as tobacco, cutlery, and arms and ammunition, to the value of two hundred and fifty pounds, which I assisted Harry to pack in several boxes, and messengers were sent to the various villages, asking the chiefs to let the bearers of the peace offering pass through their lines.

To this they agreed, and then Harry, calling the girl to him, bade her goodbye with some little emotion, and told her to accompany the bearers of the boxes. She flatly refused to go, and piteously besought him to take her with him in the boat. In vain did he point out to her that one of the boxes was filled with goods which were her exclusive property, and that she would now be a rich girl, and practically independent. She shook her head and wept still more. Then he mendaciously asserted that we were going in the boat to a country of cannibals, where the people were fond of eating young women; she did not care, she said, she could only die or be killed once, and was not afraid. Finally Harry lost patience, and made a sign to some women, who seizing the poor girl by the arms, dragged her away, she fighting with silent fury.

In the afternoon Terry sent Brandon an acknowledgment of the safe arrival of the goods and his wife's

sister, said that he (Harry) had acted "very fair," and that to prevent him being annoyed, he (Terry) had had to tie the girl up, and would keep her tied up till we were safely away in the boat. He also sent me my own traps by the returning carriers, with Tapoa in charge.

In the morning, the weather being fine, Harry distributed nearly all his remaining goods amongst his native friends, being especially liberal to the rest of his harem of four attractive young ladies. Quite a number of young men wanted to come with him and follow his fortunes wherever he went, but he chose but two—stalwart young bucks, who had both been to sea in whaleships—so in all we made a company of five: Harry and his two men, Tapoa, and myself—quite enough for an ordinary-sized whale-boat, pretty deeply loaded with provisions, water, &c.

We had a most exciting send-off, the regret of the natives at losing Harry moving them to tears super-induced by the distribution of half-a-dozen cases of Hollands gin amongst them. Every man, as the boat pushed off, fired his rifle in the air, and shouted out farewell and good-luck to us, and in another hour we had rounded the north end of the island, and were steering for Drummond's Island (Taputeauea) in the Gilbert Group, at which place we thought we might possibly remain and settle as traders.

On the second day out, we spoke the American missionary brig *Morning Star*, and asked the captain to take us and our boat on board, as the brig was also bound to Drummond's Island, offering him one hundred dollars. He seemed willing enough, but half-a-dozen saintly gentlemen on board protested so strongly against the godly vessel being polluted by the presence of mere traders, even for a couple of days, that Harry sharply

told the leading missionary—an ex-ship's carpenter—that we wanted no favours from them, and could get along very well in the boat.

Just as we bade them a cool “good morning,” and were about to get over the side again into our boat, a young gentleman, with a particularly long and melancholy face, stepped forward and asked us to “con-tribute a few dollars” towards the training-school at Ponapé, in the Caroline Islands.

The discourteous and unfeeling manner in which we had been treated by these gentlemen—when in an open boat, a hundred miles from land—made us somewhat careless in the wording of our reply to the request; I, in particular, so far forgetting myself as to make a pointed allusion to the young man's lack of personal beauty.

“May God be with you and turn your hearts, young men,” said one of the missionaries, holding up his hands in such a horrified manner that I had to laugh, especially when Brandon promptly followed with:

“And may you all be damned, individually and collectively, and this rotten old hooker of yours be piled up on the rocks, and drown the lot of you.” (Curiously enough the *Morning Star* was wrecked about ten days later by drifting ashore on the western side of Strong's Island during a calm.)

About three in the afternoon, when we were becalmed, we sighted another vessel, and getting out the oars, pulled up to her. She proved to be the German barque *Goddeffroy*, from the Gilbert Islands, bound to Samoa with a cargo of coconut oil. The captain told us that the natives of Drummond's Island, and, indeed, throughout the whole group, were fighting, and that nearly all of the traders were leaving and going away to the islands of the North-west, as they were doing no business.

This was bad news for us, so after discussing what was best to be done, we asked the skipper if he would give us a passage to Samoa for two hundred dollars. He agreed, our boat was hauled up and secured, and Harry and I were given a cabin between us.

The *Goddeffroy* was a splendid type of the German merchantman—as clean as a yacht—and her master and officers were all very decent fellows, and not only they, but many of the crew as well, were good musicians and singers, so that we had some very pleasant evenings, for in addition to a small piano, there were violins, cornets, flutes, and other instruments on board. From the day we boarded the vessel till we entered Apia Harbour in Samoa, seventeen days later, we had the most perfect weather imaginable, every one from captain to cabin-boy sleeping on deck at nights, under a sky so serenely and beautifully blue, that I often found it hard to close my eyes.

We arrived at Samoa at a fortunate time. The price of coconut oil and copra (the dried coconut from which coconut oil is expressed by machinery) had gone up so much in Europe that many small traders were making fortunes, and we had not been on shore an hour before three or four offers were made to us to take charge of trading stations, either in Samoa or on islands to the westward.

The manager of the great German firm of Goddeffroy and Sons, a Herr Theodore Weber, meeting Brandon one evening in the leading combined hotel and gambling house, and finding that Harry spoke both French and German, offered him the managership of a new trading business he was starting in the New Hebrides, where the Germans were very anxious to cut out a newly-established French trading com-

pany, whose headquarters were at Noumea, in New Caledonia.

Harry, feeling sure that I would come with him, and being perhaps a little muddled through having mixed his drinks too freely, there and then signed an agreement with Herr Weber to proceed to the New Hebrides at a salary of one thousand dollars a year, with considerable allowances.

Learning what had occurred, I at once offered myself to Mr. Weber as a trader, but he very frankly told me that while he would gladly give me a station in Samoa or Tonga, he did not approve of two friends going to the same island, and that therefore I would have to part company with Harry. This was a blow to us both, but there was no help for it, as Harry, having signed the agreement, could not withdraw; so to our mutual sorrow, we again parted a few days later, when my comrade sailed for Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides, in the brig *Iserbrook*, and Tapoa and I, standing on the beach under the coco-palms at Mulinu'u Point, saw her sails gleam white in the rays of the setting sun, as she sailed westward, for the Straits of Savai'i.

With my faithful boy Tapoa by my side, I turned sadly away and walked along the beach back into Apia, feeling miserably depressed, for I had a strong and heavy premonition that I should never see my friend again. Tapoa, too, as if he entered into and sympathised with my thoughts, put his brown hand into mine, and together we went on in silence till we reached the town, and went to the hotel. Here for an hour or two we sat on the verandah, looking at the placid waters of Apia Harbour, and listening to the singing in the Rarotongan church near by, for it was the time of

evening service. So strangely morbid, and yet so restless did I feel, that the melody of the well-attuned voices of the natives only served to still more depress my spirits; so calling Tapoa to come with me, I again went out for a long walk, first passing through the town, crossing the brawling little Vaisigago River, and skirting the semi-European town of Matautu, we struck out along the beach to the eastward.

The night was very, very beautiful, and as we walked along on the firm, hard sand, with the palm trees overhead rustling gently to the dew-laden land breeze from the mountains, my spirits began to rise. We had filled our pockets with biscuits, and coming to a little stream called the Vaivasa, we sat down on its banks, drank of the pure, sweet water, and made our supper.

Then, as I lay on my back and smoked my pipe, a lady and gentleman came along on horseback, and crossed the stream. They both bade me a pleasant good evening, as they stopped, and I saw that the man seemed to be ill and weak, and that the lady, whom I took to be his daughter, was a very beautiful girl, with short curly hair clustering about her cheeks. Wondering who they were, I saw them ride on, and disappear along the track in advance of us.

Resuming our walk, we kept steadily on for some hours, till we came to one of the sweetest little native villages I had ever seen, standing on the snowy-white beach of a lovely bay, encompassed by gently undulating hills clothed with verdure. Although so late at night, the people were all awake, sitting on the village green, singing, and watching a number of youths and girls dancing. They made us very welcome, and the chief and a native teacher both insisted upon us remaining for the night. We were taken to the former's house,

given some fine sleeping mats, and a mosquito screen, and slept soundly until dawn.

I found that the name of the village was Lauili, and that its inhabitants—about two hundred people—were very proud of its beauty, and of the wonderful fertility of the surrounding country.

CHAPTER XXVI

DORA CHANNING

ABOUT ten in the morning, as we were having some breakfast in the house of the native teacher, a young Samoan, riding bare-backed, galloped into the village, and jumping off his horse to light his *sului*—a cigarette of black tobacco enrolled in a strip of dried banana leaf—conversed with my host for a minute or two, and then started off again, evidently in a great hurry. On inquiry the teacher told me that he was a messenger sent into Apia for a doctor to come out at once to see a gentleman who was very ill at a place a mile or two away. The gentleman, he said, was a Mr. Channing, a cotton planter, who had come to Samoa from Fiji a year before, and had been ill ever since.

“He has always been very kind to the people of this town,” added the teacher, “and many of the young men work for him on his plantation, and one of my own daughters is *tāvini* (servant) to his wife. So I must go and see if I can do anything. Would you like to come with me?”

We started off as quickly as possible, and following a forest path for about two miles, emerged upon a cleared space of some two hundred acres, which was part of Malauli Plantation. Mr. Channing's house

was a small bungalow standing among a clump of breadfruit trees, and the moment we stepped on to the verandah, the young lady whom I had seen on horseback the previous evening, came out to us, bowed to me, and shook hands with the native teacher. She was very pale, and looked so harassed and distressed that I apologised for my intrusion, and said that from what the teacher had told me, I thought I might be of some possible assistance.

“Oh, how very, very kind of you,” she said.

Her voice was so soft and sweet, and sounded so strangely like that of my little lame sister Ada! “I shall indeed be glad if you will stay here till Dr. Ford comes from Apia. I fear my husband is dying. I am Mrs. Channing.”

“My name is Breachley, madam. Is there anything at all that I can do?”

She said she would be glad if I would help her to move her husband from the bedroom into the dining-room, which was the coolest apartment in the house. The moment I entered, I recognised him as the man I had seen the previous evening. He was fully dressed, and certainly seemed to be in a serious condition. With the assistance of the teacher, we carefully lifted the mattress off the bed, and carried him into the dining-room. Then for the first time he spoke, thanked us in feeble tones, and asked his wife to throw all the windows open, so as to get as much breeze as possible.

Finding there was nothing else that I could do, I was slipping quietly away, when I saw little Mrs. Channing crossing a paddock with a bucket in her hand, evidently with the intention of milking one of two cows grazing there. Overtaking her, I begged

her to let me do the milking. She thanked me, and said that the only man on the plantation who could milk was the one whom she had sent for the doctor, and she wanted to give Mr. Channing some milk and soda as soon as possible. Glad to be of use, I soon had the cow milked, and then asked her if I could bring anything for her from Apia, and felt quite pleased when she said no, but asked me if I would remain until the doctor came—she was so afraid of having no one with her but natives, although they were very eager to do all she asked of them.

As soon as Dr. Ford arrived, I left, and calling at the village for Tapoa, returned to Apia.

Not caring to idle away my time, and having but very little money, I took an engagement as trader with an American named Frank Lee, who lived at the town of Aleipata, on the north-end of Upolu. He was a very steady, respectable man, and I liked him from the first. He was engaged in building a schooner, he told me, and wanted me to look after his store and trading business. As we were not to leave for Aleipata until next day, I called at Dr. Ford's house in the evening to ask about Mr. Channing. He was at home, asked me in, and we had a pleasant chat. He first of all, however, told me that Channing could not live very long, as he was suffering from some internal complaint which was incurable. Mrs. Channing, with whom I saw he deeply sympathised, was, he told me, but nineteen years of age, and was, he said, one of the "best and sweetest little women in the world." But what pleased me most was that she sent a message by him to me, saying that when her husband was a little stronger, both he and she would be glad if I would come and see them.

After I had been with Lee two months or so, I heard that Mr. Channing had died, and that his widow had gone to stay with Mrs. M——, a missionary's wife in Apia, and that Malauli Plantation was to be sold. When I next went to Apia—I had to go there about every four weeks—Lee was with me, and leaving him to attend to business, I sent a note to Mrs. Channing, and asked her if I might call.

“Indeed, I shall be most pleased,” she wrote back.

She was, I believe, really glad to see me, and introduced me to the Rev. Mr. M—— and his wife, and instead of remaining for the usual conventional ten minutes, I spent the entire afternoon there. Mr. M—— was one of those sterling, manly English missionaries one so often meets in the South Seas, respected by white men and natives alike. His house was one of the most comfortable in the Pacific Islands, and, being a man of private means, he had a splendid library. There were, of course, people in Samoa, who spoke sneeringly of his “lazy existence,” &c., little knowing, or else not having the grace to remember, that for ten years (ever since he had left England) he had not drawn one farthing of his stipend—which was poor enough—from the funds of the missionary society in London which had sent him out, and that he had founded, and kept up at a heavy expense to his private purse, native schools, which he personally superintended—schools in which something else than mere Scriptural teaching was given to the pupils. Broad-minded, liberal, fond of athletic sports, a born naturalist, and deeply versed in Polynesian mythology and native lore generally, no wonder was it that such a man was a power for good in such a country as Samoa—just then about to

enter on an internecine warfare destined to last for many years—down to 1898 in fact.

The merest trifle, it is said, truly enough, will turn the whole current of a man's life, and a mere trifle was to be the primary factor in changing the current of mine.

As Mr. M—— and myself were walking about his garden, he pointed out to me, a few hundred yards away, a magnificent specimen of a *temanu* tree, and remarked that its wood was very suitable for building purposes, but no one in Samoa had ever troubled over the fact that the mountain forests were filled with *temanu* and other valuable woods, and the merchants and traders imported all their building timber at a heavy cost from New Zealand and California.

“What is wanted here,” he said, “is a saw mill, with some men who understand how to work it. The German firm here had a complete plant sent out from Hamburg some years ago. It has never been used, and I suppose is now valueless from rust and neglect.”

“I wish I could buy it, if it is any good,” I remarked with a laugh. “My father and nearly all my brothers are mill men and timber getters, and I was brought up to the business. I remember when I went with the native teacher to see Mrs. Channing, at the time of Mr. Channing's illness, we passed through a forest of such splendid timber that I quite felt a longing to see a mill at work there, and once more hear the buzz of the saws, the rip, rip of the big logs, and the throbbing pant of the engine.”

Mr. M—— stopped in his walk for a moment or two, then asked me, in an apparently indifferent sort of manner, if I would care to walk down with him to Goddeffroy's establishment at Matafêle, look at the saw mill machinery, and see if it was any good.

Matafèle is the German quarter of Apia, and in half an hour, Mr. M—— and myself were conducted by one of Herr Weber's clerks to a huge shed filled with all sorts of merchandise and machinery, ships' stores, &c., and shown the saw-mill plant. It was small and certainly was very rusty, but everything was complete—a splendid set of circular and vertical saws, planing machine, belting, hauling gear, and an excellent portable engine. Mr. M——, I could see, by the very pertinent questions he put to me, was testing my knowledge, and that he was thoroughly satisfied by my replies was very evident when he asked me if I could erect such a plant and put it in working order.

“Yes,” I replied promptly. “If I had two good carpenters, and eight or ten labourers, those saws would be buzzing gaily in a few weeks—provided the timber was ready for them to ‘buzz’ upon.”

Then Mr. M—— took me into his confidence.

“You are very young, Mr. Breachley, but I am sure you are very practical—and, to be frank with you, I like you. Now listen to me. Mrs. Channing's estate is for sale, and if she could sell it for a reasonable price she would leave Samoa and return to England, where she has some few relatives. But it is hard to sell land in Samoa just now, when war is breaking out, and the only offer she has had was from the German firm, who have offered her such an insignificant sum that I have advised her not to part with it. Now this is what I propose: I will buy this plant, if you will undertake to have it moved to Malauli, put it up on the estate, and work it for her benefit on terms to be agreed upon later on. Malauli, as a cotton plantation, is not of much value, I fear. What do you think of the idea?”

I was delighted, and at once consented, but said that

I was under a monthly engagement to Frank Lee, and could not leave him without due notice.

“Bring Lee up with you this evening to dinner. I know him very well, and can talk him over in five minutes. Now you go and see Weber, and ask him how much he will take for the plant. Do not mention my name in the matter. How much is it worth?”

“It is a thoroughly good plant, and although it came from Hamburg, is of American make, as I showed you. I daresay it cost £800 at least.”

“Well, you can offer him as much as £300, and tell him you can pay him the money to-morrow. It is not necessary for you to mention what you intend doing with it; simply tell him you will give him £300 for it. Now, goodbye for the present, and good luck. Don't forget to bring Lee with you this evening.”

I went and saw Herr Weber—a fair-haired, blonde-bearded gentleman with gold-rimmed spectacles—one of the best and kindest-hearted Teutons that ever put foot on Samoan soil. He was seated at his office table reading a book. He bade me sit down.

“Mr. Weber,” I said, “I have been looking at that sawmill plant in the big iron shed. It is in a very bad condition; the leather belting is quite rotten, and the engine has been badly knocked about. But I should like to buy it. All the money I have is £100—five hundred dollars. Will you let me have it for that price instead of its rusting away?”

Weber laughed genially—“You are an American?”

“No; I'm an Englishman.”

“Now why do you want to buy that plant?”

“Well, I know a little—just a very little—about saw-mills, and . . . well, I should like to see if I cannot put it in order and make a little money.”

“If you will put it up for me and set it in working order I will give you fifty pounds, Mr. Breachley, and also give you employment in the Goddeffroy Company at seventy-five dollars a month.”

I became alarmed, but proceeded to lie artistically.

“I could not undertake to put it in working order, Mr. Weber; I may not have sufficient knowledge. But if you will sell it to me I can take my own time and see what I can do with it, and if I fail, then only myself will be at any loss.”

“You can have it for £150.”

“I’m sorry, Mr. Weber,” I said with a deep sigh, “I can’t offer you more than £100;” and rising from my chair, I bade him good afternoon.

“Well, then, you can have it. It has been an eyesore to me for the past two years.”

In the evening Lee and myself dined with Mr. M——, his wife, and Mrs. Channing. The missionary was highly pleased at my making such a satisfactory deal with the German manager, though I carefully avoided mentioning how I had achieved it, as I knew he would have strongly disapproved of my tactics. In the morning I set to work with a zeal; removed the machinery and had the boiler on its way to Malauli by nightfall. Lee was very sorry at my leaving him, and, indeed, I never worked with a better comrade.

In a little over a month, I had the plant erected, for the next three I seldom left the plantation, working very hard. To my secret delight I found that Mrs. Channing did not intend leaving Samoa, except for a short visit to Sydney. She often came to the plantation to watch the sawmill at work, and to look at the various improvements I was making generally; for I had induced her to buy some cattle, and we expected to

have the nucleus of quite a nice herd in a year or two. At such times she would often remain till the cool of the day, when I would ride back with her to Mr. M——'s; and at the end of six months, feeling sure that she must know I was very much in love with her, I resolved to ask her to marry me.

Ever since I had met her I had resisted all temptations to fall back into my former way of life, and, indeed, every time I saw her and heard her voice I was strengthened in my resolution. I do not mean to say that I turned into what Harry Brandon would call a "Pious Peter," and gave up smoking and drinking; but I became moderate as regards the latter habit and spent my evenings at home, studying the native language or in some other rational way, instead of wasting my time and my money at the various hotels in Apia, where vice flaunted itself gaily. She, or rather Mr. M——, who was one of her late husband's executors, paid me a fair salary, and nearly all of this money I had saved, instead of as hitherto gambling or squandering it in a still worse manner.

One afternoon, nearly a year after I had taken charge of Malauli, I determined to put my fortune to the test and wait no longer, for latterly she had become somewhat reserved in her manner to me (I suppose she suspected what was in my mind), and if she told me that she did not care for me enough to marry me, I would give up my position and leave Samoa, for by this time my feeling of affection for her had become very deep and sincere.

On this particular day a Sydney trading vessel, the *Magellan Cloud*, had arrived at Apia, and feeling sure I should have letters from home, I saddled my horse and rode into town, meaning to call on Mrs. Channing

in the evening—if I could but manage to screw up my courage—and learn my fate. Fortune was propitious to me, for when nearing the estate of a neighbouring planter, situated half way between Malauli and Apia, I saw her coming along the road with two other English ladies—my neighbour's wife and her children's governess.

“I'm glad we've met you, Mr. Breachley,” she said; “here are some letters for you by the *Magellan Cloud*; so I will not go any further to-day, it is too windy. Are you going into town?”

“Yes,” I said, as, bidding her friends goodbye, she turned her horse's head, and we went on together; I thinking how very beautiful and animated she looked with her short curling hair kissing her pretty round cheeks, and sometimes hiding from me the light in her beautiful dark eyes. I did not give my determination to speak to her time to cool, but waiting till we were in a shady part of the road, and our horses were walking very slowly, I put my hand on hers and said: “Mrs. Channing, do not be angry with me. I love you very much. I have always loved you from the very first.”

“I am not angry,” she said in a very low voice, and not trying to take away her hand.

It was all over in a minute! Dear, sensible little woman! I put my arm around her waist and kissed her like a true man, and then we became “Will” and “Dora,” and before we had gone another quarter of a mile she had promised to marry me at the end of six months, though I fought hard for three.

“No, no, you silly boy. You must wait till I come back from Sydney at least; but to please you and to get back sooner, I will go this very month instead of next. There, will that satisfy you?”

Of course it did, and when we entered Apia and she rode on alone, I felt I was the luckiest man in all Samoa as I made my old hair trunk of a horse gallop through the street, to his intense disgust and the wonder of the acquaintances I met. Too excited to stay at the hotel and eat some dinner, I looked up Dr. Ford, and he and I drank my future wife's health in a bottle of champagne; then, hiring another horse, I tore home again to Malauli and told the news to Tapoa, whose honest brown face expanded into a smile of delight.

I think that was the happiest night of my existence, for remembering the letters in my pocket, I took them out. One was from my mother, the other from Ada, and they both contained news that filled me with delight—Ada had been operated upon for her lameness, and was perfectly cured. “Do come home, Billy, dear old Billy. I am the happiest girl in Australia, because every one at home is so happy over me. And I am so strong now that I will give you such a bear's hug that you will remember to your dying day. So do come home. You have been so long away, and every time mother sees your handwriting her eyes fill with tears, and she sighs; oh, Billy, she *does* sigh so heavily, and always says the same thing—‘Whenever will he cease his wanderings, and come back to us?’”

CHAPTER XXVII

BLACK SHEEP ENTERS THE FOLD OF RESPECTABILITY

BEFORE the month was out Dora sailed for Sydney with Mrs. M—— in the very ship I should have chosen for her—the *Goddeffroy*—and I returned to Malauli feeling rather disconsolate that I should not see her for half a year or more.

But there was plenty of work to be done on the plantation, and I sometimes had visitors who spent a few days with me, and once I made a *malaga* (or pleasure excursion) as the Samoans call it, completely round the beautiful island of Upolu, accompanied by Tapoa, who was now growing a fine sturdy youngster, speaking both English and Samoan well, in addition to his own language.

So the time went by pleasantly enough, and then came a letter from home which filled me with the deepest sorrow. It was from my mother, telling me that my poor brother Fred was dead; he and his entire boat's crew had been cut off and massacred by the savage natives of Bougainville Island in the Solomon group. My mother again besought me to at least come home for a visit, as she and Ada were often very lonely at times, for my father and brothers were frequently away, either at Sydney or in the north of Queensland,

and they (she and Ada) were too fond of the old home to go and live in Sydney.

Knowing that by this time she had received a letter I had sent telling her about Dora and myself, and indeed had most probably seen my future wife herself, I felt sure she would not now urge me to return, when she understood how I was situated with regard to the management of Malauli. However, I wrote back and promised faithfully that she would see me within a year, all going well. So though sincerely grieving for poor Fred, I could do nothing beyond writing and promising to become a more frequent correspondent.

Brandon I had heard from twice. He seemed to be doing very well, but complained about the climate of the New Hebrides, and said he did not intend remaining after a twelvemonth, as he had had several attacks of fever, and had asked Herr Weber to send some one to relieve him. "If he does not send a man by the next ship to take my place," he wrote, "I shall take the liberty of leaving without his consent. I have done a heap of good work for the firm, but am not going to die of fever if I can help it. So don't be surprised to see me turn up somewhat unexpectedly."

The prospect of seeing Brandon again cheered me greatly, and whenever I saw a vessel beating up the coast from the westward against the trades, I rode into town in the hope of seeing him land, determining to bring him to live with me at Malauli. But month after month went by, and I could not even get any of the German clerks to tell me when the next ship was expected from the New Hebrides, and if a man had been sent to relieve Harry—for even Herr Weber, though such a good-natured man, felt very sore with me for getting the saw mill from him so cheaply and turning it to such profit-

able use so quickly ; so the German gentlemen were not exactly "playing speaks" with me.

However, I did not mind very much about offending the great Hamburg house, which was admittedly at the bottom of all the trouble then brewing in Samoa, and surreptitiously arming the rebel natives so that they (the Germans) could make the *coup* for which they had been so long waiting—the seizure of the entire group, hoisting the German flag, and crushing out the independent English and American merchants and traders. The native king, Malietoa, was anxiously hoping for some sign of help from England and America, but none came, and daily he saw the rebel faction gaining in strength, and being steadily supplied with arms by the German firm. The generality of the natives were well disposed to both the British and Americans, and openly showed their dislike to the Germans and their fear of their intentions very markedly, though during all the time I was in Samoa there was at that period no single instance of a native ever having committed an act of violence against a white man of any nationality. In later years, however, this condition of things was sadly altered, and the blood of English and American blue jackets, as well as Germans, ensanguined the ground. That there were a few bad characters (both Americans and Englishmen) knocking about on the beach was true, but all these gentry received a lesson later on that convinced them that Samoa was not a healthy place for them. Here is the story:—

A respectable white trader one day entered a saloon, and ordered a bottle of beer. While drinking it, he was accosted by a ruffian, who was known as the greatest bully and blackguard in the group. This man, whose name I cannot now remember, had only been in Samoa a few months, having come from San Francisco, but

had soon proved himself a curse to the community. Without the slightest provocation, he grossly insulted the trader in the presence of a number of people, and then, drawing his bowie knife, stabbed the unfortunate man through the heart. The murderer coolly walked away, but some hours later was surprised and seized by some whites and natives. He, being an American—or asserting he was—was brought before the American consul, who informed his capturers that all he could do with the man was to send him to San Francisco for trial. There was at the time an American brigantine, the *Ada May*, lying in Apia harbour ready to sail for California, and the fellow was conveyed on board, but not put in confinement. That night word went round the town for all white men to “roll up,” and a meeting was held. Only a few persons spoke, pointing out to the assembly that the moment the vessel arrived in California, the man would walk ashore and be free—there was no likelihood of the authorities there troubling over the murder of a man in Samoa! In half an hour, two boats put off, filled with armed men, boarded the brig, and brought their prisoner ashore. In a few minutes his trial was over, and he was given a quarter of an hour to prepare for death, and a messenger was sent off to ask the Rev. Dr. —, a medical missionary, to come and prepare the man for death. The murderer never for a moment thought that serious business was meant, and that the proceedings were not as he called them, mere bluff. His language and threats were of so horrifying and lurid a nature, even when the missionary stood by his side urging him to pray to heaven for mercy, that the beholders were overjoyed when the scoundrel had a rope slipped over his head, and in a few seconds more was dancing in the air from the top of a leaning coconut tree.

His execution had an exceedingly good effect, and practically cleared Samoa of its beachcombers and other loafers.

At last, however, the German brig *Adolph* arrived from New Hebrides, and a wretched, yellow-skinned creature, so worn down by fever that I could not honestly recognise him at first as Harry Brandon, was brought on shore. He hardly knew me, and was too weak to do more than mutter incoherently, when I had him carried into the hotel, and sent a message for Dr. Ford to come and see him. So exhausted was he, that several of my friends shook their heads when they saw him, and said he was too far gone to recover, and the doctor himself told me that the case was "a very grave one." I knew what those words meant, and my heart sank as I heard them. For two days he was either delirious or unconscious in turn, and then to my joy, Ford told me he thought he would pull through. And then little by little poor Harry began to gain strength enough to fight against death, and it was a happy moment for me, when he recognised me and made a hideous contortion intended for a smile, and whispered hoarsely, "Billy, old boy! is it a case with me?"

"Not this time, Harry. You'll be as fit as ever in a week or two."

But it took many months and not weeks, ere he regained anything like his former looks; however, as soon as he could bear moving, I took him to Malauli by boat. Tapoa was delighted to see him again, but heard with sorrow that both of the big stalwart Pleasant Islanders, who had accompanied their master in the *Iserbrook*, had died of fever on Espiritu Santo Island.

By the time Harry was well enough to sit a horse, the

war had broken out in earnest, and all the Samoans who were employed on the plantation went off and joined either the king's troops or the rebel forces, leaving Harry and myself to get along as best we could with nine Gilbert Islands natives—men brought from their own country two years previously, and indentured to Mr. Channing. They were excellent workmen, however, and as both Brandon and myself spoke their language fluently, and understood their disposition, we all got on very well together, especially now that our Samoans had gone, for they and the imported labourers never did agree, the former regarding the Gilbert Islanders as savages, and the Gilbert Islanders despising them as effeminate boasters, only able to fight with rifles and cannon at long range, and afraid of meeting a man knife to knife, and fighting to the death.

Brandon and myself saw something of the fighting—for the rebel lines were on both sides of Apia—and were not much impressed by the valour of the combatants of either party. We often visited the trenches of the king's troops on one side of a stream, drank a bowl of kava with some chief, and then tying our handkerchiefs to our walking sticks, crossed over to the other side, where we were treated with equal hospitality, each party trying to "pump" us as to the enemy's movements; and many of them whose rifles were out of repair, asked us to mend them. This of course we declined—as delicately as possible—and our refusal was always taken in good part.

At intervals of every few hundred yards along the trenches were square towers, or forts of observation, about 40 feet high, and usually mounting a nine-pounder gun, which kept pounding away at similar structures on the enemy's lines, whilst the rattle of musketry was con-

tinuous night and day; volley firing being much favoured, on account of the delightful noise it made.

One evening, just at dusk, as we were crossing the Vaisigago—a little river dividing Apia from Matautu—some hundreds of the rebels made an unusually plucky attempt to drive the king's troops across the river, and through the European town. Brandon, myself, and a German storekeeper named Volekman, were just in time to obtain some fairly decent cover behind half a dozen good sized orange trees growing on the bank, when the proceedings began to get very interesting. The king's warriors were undoubtedly in a fearful funk, and their chiefs, notably one named Patiolo, only succeeded in rallying them among the undergrowth on the banks of the stream, when they again gave way, as about fifty rebels, led by a chief of splendid physique named Asi (Sandalwood) charged right down on them, and literally drove them into the water. Here six of them were killed, and quickly decapitated, while many were wounded and carried down by the stream. One poor wretch, rifle in hand, whose ankle bone had been smashed by a Snider bullet, limped up the bank, and reached the orange tree under which we were standing, and to my surprise called to me by name, and moaning with agony, begged me to bind up his foot. "*Aue! Aue! Misi Pili!*" he cried, "*ua nunuti lo'u vae ma ni pulu!*" ("Alas, alas, Mr. Bill, my leg is utterly crushed by bullets.")

Volekman and I at once tried to do what we could to stop the hemorrhage, and we were in hopes of our not being observed, when four of the rebels saw us, darted up the bank, and fiercely bidding us stand aside, dragged the wounded man away from us, and with a few blows hacked off his head, and, carrying it with them, hurried

after their comrades, who were now chasing the king's demoralised troops right through the streets of Apia, firing most recklessly, and too excited to think that white people might suffer. Lifting the headless body of the man (whom I had recognised as one of the people of Laulii village) we carried it back again under the orange trees, and left it there, and as it was now dark, and bullets were still flying about, we decided to leave the scene, and go on our way, which was made clear enough by the flames of two populous villages, Moata and Matafāgatele. We reached Malauli feeling satisfied that we had had enough excitement that evening.

Some days after this, Harry, through getting a chill whilst out pigeon shooting in the forest, had a serious relapse, and again for two long weeks his life seemed to hang in the balance, for his once iron constitution had been terribly shaken by his previous habits of dissipation. Tapoa and I, however, nursed him through once more, and then I urged him to leave Samoa ere it was too late and go to a colder climate, as Dr. Ford earnestly advised him. At last he consented, and sailed for Sydney. A few days before, Dora had arrived, and both she and I saw him leave with some anxiety, he looked so like a death's head.

I am glad to say, however, that when I next heard from him he was staying at my own home with my mother, and was rapidly regaining his health. My brother Morgan, too, was home again, and he and Brandon had become fast friends, and to mother's and Ada's joy, were about to go into partnership in running a trading schooner which my father had bought for them, between New Caledonia and Sydney, Brandon being skipper, and Morgan mate.

I must mention that after Brandon's first illness—

when he arrived from the New Hebrides in the *Iserbrook*—he became very much changed, and serious in his thoughts and demeanour, and we had many long conversations on our past follies. One evening, after his second attack, and just as he was able to stand on his feet without assistance, we were sitting on the verandah looking out upon the starlit Pacific beneath, and talking about my marriage, which was to take place in a few months, when he said quite suddenly:—

“Billy, you are a fortunate man to get such a beautiful, and such a good wife as Mrs. Channing, who will always keep you on the right course.”

Then he became silent for a few minutes, and presently began to tell me fully of his past life—before we had met in Sydney and sailed as comrades together with my brother Ted for the Daintree. About one incident—the sad story of the betrayed Marcia Walenne—he did not spare himself, and turning to me, put his hand on mine.

“Bill, if that poor girl is alive, and I can find her, and she does not hate me now as much as she once loved me, I will marry her. If I find her on the streets, it will make no difference to me. But I fear she is dead.”

He spoke so gravely, yet with such intensity, that I knew that if Marcia Walenne was alive and he found her that he would certainly do as he said.

And now, as this story of my wanderings is drawing to a close, I may say that he did find her—earning her living as a school teacher in some wretched back block township in Victoria—and married her under his real name, which was *not* Brandon, and though he and I have not now met for many, many years, and he lives in England, and the wide ocean divides us, his children and mine know each other, and he and I are in spirit

the same true comrades as we were in the olden days, when we sailed together under the blue skies of the far-off Southern Seas.

Dora and I were married by our good friend Mr. M——, in the little iron-roofed church standing on the sward overlooking the brawling Vaisigago, and although those were troublous days in Samoa, and English and Americans and Germans eyed each other with sullen distrust, and the crackling of rifles still went on day and night, Dora, who was, as Herr Weber gallantly told her —“the best loved woman in Samoa,” succeeded in making them put aside their bitter differences for once, coming to the wedding, and giving us a great send off on the following day when we left for Australia by way of Auckland in the schooner *Dauntless*.

I need hardly say that our return was the cause of great happiness to my mother and my sister Ada, who came to Sydney to meet us, and during our stay there we were joined by my brothers Jim and Ted, who had returned to Sydney to recruit, leaving my father in North Queensland. He, however, although my mother told me he did not at first approve of my marrying a widow, wrote me a kindly but characteristic letter, in which after telling me all about various matters concerning his business, and how many thousands of feet of cedar he had had cut and shipped to Melbourne and Sydney during the years I had been away from home, went on to say :

“I daresay by the time this reaches you, you will be back in Australia with your wife. Now when I first heard that you were engaged to be married—and to a widow—I felt very much disappointed with you, and thought you had no more sense than a jackass. But when your mother and Ada wrote and told me all about

her" (Dora on her first visit to Sydney had stayed with my mother and sister for two months) "I was quite satisfied that your choice was a good one, and I look forward to meeting her, and loving her as my own daughter, for your mother tells me that Ada loves her, and any one whom Ada loves, must be worth loving. I am glad she has no children. Carvery sends his kind regards, and hopes to see you soon. I hope you will now try and settle down with your wife. I will help you along. I'm sorry you did not send me more information about the Californian saw mills. I hear your wife has some money, and trust you will let her keep it—I am giving you a good tip, my son, so don't disregard it. Cedar fell in price last year, but is going up again now."

Morgan and Harry Brandon were away at sea when Dora and I reached Sydney, but when they did return, we had a very happy reunion. I had taken a house in Sydney, and whenever they came back from a voyage, Harry was always our guest. From the very day he had returned to Australia, he had set an agent to work to try and discover Marcia Walenne, and after two years' persistent search, and the expenditure of a large sum of money, she was found, as I have before said, living in the country. Brandon at once set off to her, and in a week they returned to Sydney, and were married at my own house; and she, when her husband went to sea again, always lived with us.

I made several voyages with Morgan and Harry, for I bought an interest in their business, and found it impossible to remain at home. And indeed my wife, knowing my restless disposition, never tried to check me. For several years we ran two vessels, one to the Solomon Islands, and one to New Caledonia, Fiji, and Samoa, and sometimes both Dora and Harry Brandon's wife came with us.

In the larger of the vessels, a barque, we once went to San Francisco with a cargo of copra from Samoa, and Morgan and I went to see dear old 'Tod Barrow at the "Menagerie." He was as hale and hearty as ever, and we—he, Morgan, Brandon, and myself—spent many a jolly evening in the barque's cabin, ere we sailed out through the Golden Gate for the last time.

* * * * *

Malauli is still ours, though 'tis long years since we last went there on a visit with my sister Ada, who is still Ada Breachley, and now keeps house in Sydney for Morgan, who, despite my mother's protestations, refused to marry "and be worried" as he expressed it, when Ada was willing to remain with him. Ted and Jim are well and prospering—both having made money and bought station properties in the north of Queensland, and my old friend Paddy Minogue of fighting renown has a cattle run quite near them. Both my father and Captain de Lisle are dead. They made a fortune out of their timber-getting venture, and I was pleased that my sister Frances and her children, to whom, in his later years, my father had become greatly attached, were left half of his money—the rest of his family being amply provided for—and the other half went equally between my mother and Ada.

But before I close, I must mention one dear old friend of mine whom the reader may remember—my youthful companion, Mary Dick. Before Dora and I left Samoa my mother had written me that Mary had married very well—her husband being the proprietor of one of the principal hotels in Auckland, where she was then settled. So as soon as possible after the *Dauntless* arrived at that port, and we had booked our passage in the steamer *Phœbe* for Sydney, Dora and I set out for the "Waiwera

Hotel" in Queen Street, and I asked to see Mrs. Marsh, the landlady.

Showing us into a sitting-room, a chamber-maid went in search of her mistress, and in a minute or so the door opened and the red-headed, dear old Mary Dick of my boyhood's days entered the room, looking every inch the imposing and prosperous landlady. Not giving her time to even ask me my business, and seeing she did not recognise in the sunburnt, bearded man before her, the long, lanky Bill Breachley of the old days of her uncle's supplejack, I quickly stepped up to her, and slipped my arm around her now ample waist.

"How are you, Mary, dear old red top?" I laughed, as I tried to kiss her, my wife smiling the while. "Don't you remember me—your companion in crime?"

Her bright blue, brave Scotswoman's eyes opened wide with astonishment and delight, and then in an instant her mighty arms enfolded and pressed me to her ample bosom.

Then we all settled down, and had a long talk together over old times, and then, as she took my wife's little hand in hers to bid her goodbye, her eyes grew dimmed with tears—"You see, both Billy and I were a pair of Dreadful Black Sheep once, Mrs. Breachley."

"And I call him a Black Sheep still, Mary," replied Dora with a smile—"look at the colour of his face and hands."

"It matches well with your own fair, sweet face," she replied.

THE END.

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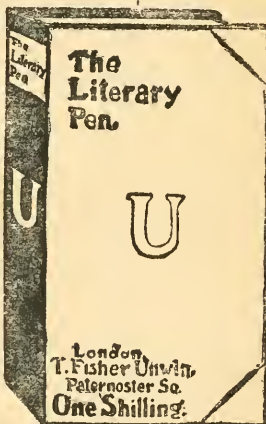
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